

The Self Esteem Series

Book 2

**Raising Self Esteem
in the Young**

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SECTION 1

SELF ESTEEM:

Helping Children With Special Needs

Introduction

'Raising Self Esteem In The Young' is a work book to enable teachers and carers to assist children who have special self esteem needs.

Many teachers and carers know only too well the frustrations and anxieties that accompany any of the following situations involving children in their care.

- I just know he/she is capable of a much better performance.
- He/she is just not motivated to do well at school. He/she doesn't try ... just goes through the motions ... is apathetic or lazy.
- Getting him/her to school is a real performance each morning. We have tears, tantrums, arguments, the whole gamut of emotions.
- He/she never joins in activities with his/her peers. He/she always hangs back and remains on the fringe of the group.
- He/she continually complains, 'No-one at school likes me'.
- They don't seem to have any real friends.
- He/she never does their homework. They never seem to complete a task; there are always numerous careless errors.
- I get so frustrated with his/her 'attention seeking' behaviour.
- I don't understand why he/she is so aggressive towards his/her brother/sister/peers.

Often the situations outlined above are a consequence of a child's inappropriate self esteem. They can be a reflection of an unnecessary 'fear of failure', inappropriate comparisons of themselves with others, inappropriate goals and expectations, distorted self images or an absence of appropriate feedback from 'significant others' in their lives.

I have described this situation as being confronted with the '**SELF ESTEEM WALL**'.

The purpose of this book is to clarify this situation for carers and educators and to provide them with activities which are designed to help children '**climb the self esteem wall**'.

Children's Ideal Image

This represents the child's collected thoughts, perceptions, ideas and knowledge of who or what they want to be. It represents their goals, dreams, aspirations, and expectations.

The child's ideal image is directly related to their self image. Many of their goals, dreams and expectations are set in place on the basis of their knowledge and perception of who they are.

EXAMPLES:

Self Image:

I can catch a ball with my Dad.

I can tell a story to my Mum and Dad from a picture book.

I have lots of fun with my brothers and sisters and cousins.

I got 4 Bs in my last report.

Ideal Image:

I want to play cricket

I want to read.

I want to make lots of friends at school.

I want to get 4 As in my next report.

The ideal image is a significant motivational magnet. It is the pursuit of such goals, expectations etc. that encourages children ...

To have a go!

To take acceptable risks.

To use their potential.

To cope with mistakes.

To stick at tasks until they are completed.

Healthy self esteem does not require children to actually reach every goal, expectation etc. They merely need to feel at any given time that they are moving in the right direction, i.e. towards their goals.

What Is A Healthy Self Esteem?

- A child has a healthy self esteem when he/she has a feeling or general sense of moving in the right direction towards goals, expectations and aspirations that are part of their ideal self image. In this situation children tend to:
 - ☆ Feel secure and confident.
 - ☆ Be appropriately motivated.
 - ☆ Have a valued sense of worth.
 - ☆ Have an appropriate perception of the consequences of their own behaviour.
- A child with healthy self esteem has access to accurate, positive, ongoing information about their self image. They are prepared to add to, modify and review their self image.
- A child with healthy self esteem will have an ideal image that not only is comprised of dreams and aspirations but a significant number of realistic, attainable goals and expectations.
- A child with healthy self esteem will continually be testing self, experimenting, taking appropriate risks to enrich both their self image and their ideal image.

The Key Processes Involved

Although the development of self esteem is a complex process two key processes have been identified.

❑ 1. Self Discovery

Children will build their self image and ideal image by having the opportunities to discover as much about their identities as possible. This requires them to have the opportunity to:

- ☆ Undertake new and novel learning experiences.
- ☆ Undertake challenge.
- ☆ Be involved in problem solving situation.
- ☆ Be involved in activities where 'it's okay to make mistakes and get things wrong'.
- ☆ Be involved in situations where they can push themselves to their performance limits.

❑ 2. Feedback from Significant Others

All children constantly examine their self image and ideal image via the **feedback** they receive from **significant others** in their lives.

Studies have indicated that for most children the following people represent the **significant others** they need access to:

- ☆ Mum, Dad and family members. (Brothers, sisters, grandmother, grandad etc.)
- ☆ Teachers.
- ☆ Peer group.

The order of choice of **significant other** will fluctuate according to what aspect of 'self' is being reviewed. Most importantly, children need to feel confident that all sources of feedback are accessible if they need them.

'At Risk' Self Esteem

The Self Esteem Wall

Underlying a child's low self esteem is a 'fear of failure'. This 'fear of failure' is not always readily apparent to parents or teachers, nor based on a child's realistic evaluation of his/her current performance levels.

For some children this inappropriate 'fear of failure' has its origins in a distorted or incomplete self image. For reasons that are sometimes obscure they conclude:

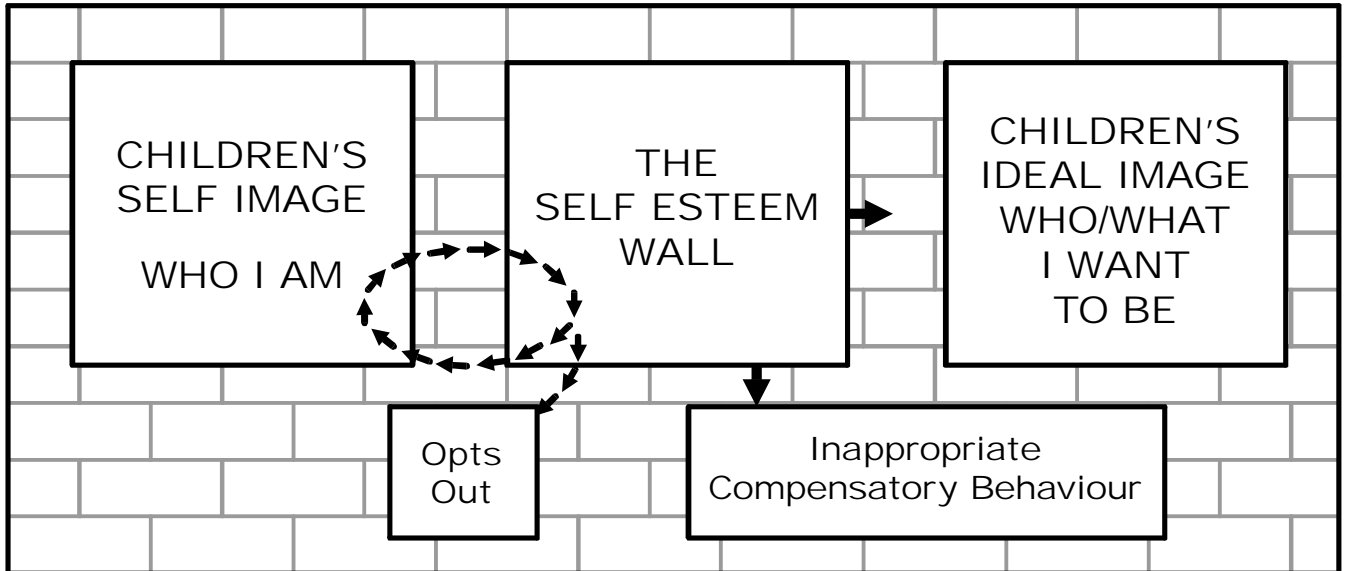
'I am different from others. This is unacceptable to others. I don't like my individual self. Others don't like my individual self. It is inevitable that I will fail. I wish I could change who I am.'

For children who have low self esteem because of an inappropriate self image, intervention needs to be directed at building up their awareness and acceptance of their 'individual self'. Activities that will assist with this process have been provided in Book 1 of the Self Esteem Series - 'Examining Self Esteem'.

For the majority of children who have an inappropriate 'fear of failure' the key source for the dilemma is related to an inappropriate ideal image.

If a child reaches the stage where he or she concludes ...

- ☆ I cannot meet the **expectations** that are part of my ideal image
 - ☆ I will not achieve the **goals** that are part of my ideal image
 - ☆ the **dreams** and **aspirations** that are part of my ideal image are meaningless
- ... they can hit the **SELF ESTEEM WALL**.



When a child hits the self esteem wall:

- ☆ Performance motivation drops off.
- ☆ Unnecessary and inappropriate self doubting can occur.
- ☆ Social distancing can occur.
- ☆ Inappropriate compensatory behaviour and risk taking can follow.

Which Children Can Have Self Esteem Needs?

It is not just the pursuit of inappropriate academic goals and/or expectations that can lead to the 'at-the-wall' situation. A child who has an inappropriate social or recreational ideal image can also be at risk of suffering from low self esteem.

Teachers and carers of children who experience learning difficulties at school are well aware that these children are susceptible to becoming failure orientated and thus sometimes hit the self esteem wall at an early age.

HOWEVER ...

Children from an early age can also be at risk when they lock into the pursuit of an 'ideal image' which they conclude requires them to achieve 100% success 100% of the time. Some such children internalise the belief that people expect them to perform according to this criteria, i.e. they become locked into the ideal of trying to please too many '**significant others**' too much of the time.

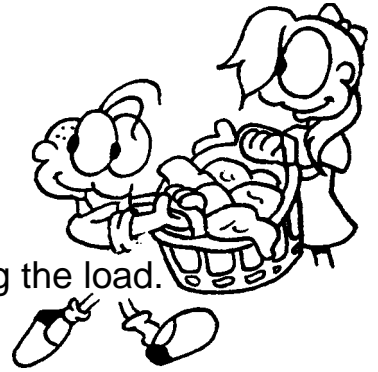
I have termed such children the **perfectionists**. They are **NOT** to be confused with children whose 'ideal image' is strongly influenced by the pursuit of excellence.

Children who **HAVE** an 'ideal image' that drives them to pursue goals that require them at appropriate times to utilise their maximum potential are **not perfectionists**. Children who have an 'ideal image' that drives them to pursue goals that require them to **overachieve** for significant periods of time **are perfectionists**. There is a danger that some such children hit the 'self esteem' wall even though they are currently achieving high grades; e.g. for such children a B Grade 70% could be interpreted as failure.

SHARING THE LOAD

If I were dad or mum what would I be doing around the house?

In our house a lot of work gets done by family members sharing the load.



If I were mum I'd do these things ...

If I were dad I'd do these things ...

But I'm ME and I do these things ...

We talked about this page.
Signed: (Tchr)
Signed: (Me)

Dr Positive's Parrots



Dr Positive's Parrots will help you decide what are good and bad responses or approaches in a discussion.

- Colour the parrots that you think show **good** approaches in warm colours (red, orange, etc.)
- Colour the parrots that you think show **bad** approaches in cool colours (blue, green, etc.)



That's a stupid comment.



We'll do it my way!



Let's talk more about it.



I can't agree.



Let's compromise.



Don't you ever listen?



I understand your point of view.



Let's try this first.



I'm not going to do it your stupid way.

We talked about this page.
Signed: (Tchr)
Signed: (Me)