

6 Self-Esteem Building Activities for Middle School Students

June 29, 2018 by [Guest Post](#)

No one finds it surprising to know that middle school is the period in which preteens and teens experience their most formative years. What they learn, how they behave, and how they interact with others during middle school can carry on into adulthood—whether positive or negative. Teachers have the opportunity to [facilitate positive thinking](#) and actions in their students, even when it comes to building self-esteem in teens. Self-esteem is an incredible component of successful performance in life, so teachers should be concerned about preparing them in this respect as well as academically.



What is Self-Esteem?

This is a question which can be posited to a class at the beginning of a year. Most students know what the term means and can define it, but if asked to describe their own levels some might have more difficulty. Before performing activities directed toward building esteem, it might be a good idea to collect worksheets for students to describe themselves to their teacher. This gives teachers a foundational analysis of each student to assess and compare throughout the year.

For all intents and purposes, self-esteem is both a recognition of self-worth and a healthy love of the self. It is the ability to know the self and to take actions which preserve, improve, and foster the self and one's relationships with others.

Now, let's look at some things that teachers can do in the classroom to help your [students feel more comfortable about who they are](#). These self-esteem activities are suitable for middle school students, but they could also work with students at any grade.

1. "I Am"

One of the most popular classroom activities to build self-esteem to facilitate at all grade levels is the "I Am" activity. It utilizes the effective and positive affirmation technique. Students are encouraged to think positively and with energy about what makes them who they are. The idea is that by writing down such positive

thoughts, they are reinforced in the students' minds, and by thinking about themselves and their attributes positively, their self-esteem is heightened.

To do the "I Am" activity, students will each need:

A sheet of paper

A pen or pencil

Some magazines or stencils

Scissors and glue

On the paper, students create a list of "I am"s. Some examples include: "I am a hard worker." and "I am good at basketball." Each sentence must begin with "I am..." The student writes down as many positive attributes and qualities about him or herself as he or she can think.

Then the students may decorate their list by adding magazine cut outs of things they like or by drawing, etc. The idea is that students will either keep these throughout the year, or they will be hung up in the classroom so they and their classmates remember to be positive throughout the year.

2. "We Are

To counteract peer pressure, this is one of the many self-esteem building activities for teenagers that could be used. A variation of the above activity, "We Are...", is completed as a group. Students find common ground amongst themselves and complete a list which demonstrates what makes them alike.

For example, a common answer will be "We are humans," but deeper probing might result in interesting things like "We are fans of [TV show]." or "We are each the middle child of our families.", etc. Finding commonalities may result in friendship, and like-minded people tend to raise each other rather than putting one another down, which also results in a boost of self-esteem.

3. Listing Traits

Another activity is "Listing Traits" It's fairly straightforward: students simply make a list of their positive character traits that make them a good friend, or good sister/brother to their siblings. Ask them to describe in detailed scenarios to why they fit those positive traits/titles, also ask students to explain how these traits are important to them and to people around them.

These can be added to some kind of journal, or on a piece of paper. A teacher should assure students that no one will see what they have written, so the students can be honest about writing something down.

The idea is that by writing down and/or sharing something that they have done for others, students feel more positively about themselves and their behaviours. They might discover something inside of them that they have never thought of. This is also a helpful way for students to start thinking about what kind of person they want to be.

4. Flip

The classroom activity is called "Flip". Students are to make a list of their mistakes, failures, and obstacles in life, but after having done so, they must "flip" them so that they are positive. The idea is to allow students the

opportunity to self-evaluate, problem solve, and improve themselves.

For example, a student might list "I failed a math quiz." A means of flipping this could be: "I will study harder to pass the next quiz" or "I will ask the teacher for help understanding the material on the last quiz."

A variation on this activity would be to have each student make a list of their mistakes, failures, and obstacles in life, but then place them in groups. Each group will brainstorm ideas to help individuals flip their listed items.

5. The Interview

"The Interview" is an activity which pairs up students, who interview each other. They are to ask questions with the intention of getting to know the other person, such as "What is your favourite colour?" or "If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?", etc.

At the end of the sessions, students "present" their partners to the class. Some teachers might hand out a list of diverse questions for students to use during the interviews. The idea behind this activity is to [form bonds with one or more classmates](#) from the start of the year.

6. A Letter to Yourself

An underrated (or, perhaps, outdated) activity is writing letters to the self. That is, students each write a letter to his or her future self, detailing whatever they wish, whether it details their life at the moment, a poem, or their future goals, etc. When the students receive the letter back again, they will be able to compare and contrast themselves after a year's worth of change.

Teachers may ask students to handwrite them and seal them in envelopes, which will be handed back at the end of the year. Or they may utilise an online service like FutureMe.org, which allows users to delay the electronic letter for one, three, or five years, or to choose a specific date of delivery.

Final Thoughts

Promoting self-esteem in the classroom can be beneficial for all students. Certain activities can help to form lasting connections among students, improve team performance, and [heighten students' empathy levels for others](#) as well as serve as a means to decrease stranger anxiety through "exposure". Other activities which focus on the individual's self-perceptions may foster the skill of self-reflection, which enables them to evaluate their own actions and pinpoint the attributes or habits which need improvement.

Gigi Wara is an inspired writer who loves writing about language and acquisition, career building and education-related stories in general. Her post comes courtesy of [Kids Helpline](#), an Australia's only free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people.