

How Do I Figure Out Who I Am?

- Goals:**
- + To apply self-concept—the way we think and feel about ourselves—to our behavioral choices.
 - + To reinforce the Positive Action philosophy: You feel good about yourself when you think and do positive actions, and there is always a positive way to do everything.

- Objectives:**
- + To make the connection between our self-concept and what kinds of actions we choose to take.
 - + To take actions to develop a positive self-concept

Materials Needed Pens and paper; named/dated envelopes

Materials Provided None

Procedure

Say Yesterday, we discussed self-concept. What is self-concept?

Teacher *Wait for responses.*

Say Self-concept is the way we think and feel about ourselves. What we believe about who we are and what we can do creates our self-concepts. If we have a positive experience, we feel happy and successful, and create a positive imprint or image of ourselves. But if we have a negative experience, especially if we did the negative actions that propelled the event, we create a negative imprint about ourselves.

An example: you have trouble with math; you can't get it as easily or quickly as some of the others in your class. So you label yourself as dumb and say you just can't learn. Then, you check out, numb out and...you don't learn as much as you could. You've just created a negative imprint of yourself, especially about math, but maybe about even more.

Has this ever happened to anyone you know? Can anyone else give me an example of a time someone got an imprint—either positive or negative? Maybe playing sports or speaking in public?

Teacher *Wait for responses.*

Say We all create imprints about ourselves all of the time. Everybody does it. It's part of being human. Luckily, we are all perpetual learners—constantly learning, growing and changing. But if we choose to believe something negative about ourselves—something like "I can't learn, especially math"—then, that's what we project. We choose to act in negative ways that reinforces the negative thought. You probably won't be able to learn math. You might even stop learning that subject right then and there. And then you're stuck. That's how powerful our beliefs are about who we are and what we can do.

Teacher *Label the four corners of the room with four categories: Physical, Intellectual, Social, and Emotional.*

Say We’re going to explore our beliefs about ourselves through an activity. As you can see, I’ve labeled the four corners of this room with four categories: Physical, Intellectual, Social and Emotional—the same categories you wrote about during previous Positive Action lesson. In quick review, what is encompassed in each of these aspects of ourselves?

Teacher *Wait for responses. Physically describes how active we are, what we eat, how clean we are, and how we protect ourselves from risk. Intellectually means how we learn, what makes us curious, how we analyze and how we create. Socially describes how we connect with other people by treating others the way we want to be treated. Emotionally means managing ourselves, telling ourselves the truth, and living out our dreams and ideals.*

Say Think for a moment about which is your strongest, most positive corner. Then go stand in it.

Teacher *Once the students are in the corners, ask for several comments from each corner about why they are there. Encourage and confirm. If a student seems to be in the wrong corner, ask the class what they think about that. In a good-natured way, you might want to send that student to the corner where all agree he or she excels.*

Say Now, let’s take another look at these corners. I want each group to move clockwise to the next corner. Those of you in the Physical corner move to the Intellectual corner, etc.

Teacher *Provide a few moments for the movement.*

Say Now, you are in corners where you may not feel as strong. In these corners, I want you to move yourself by degrees. Those of you who feel equally strong in this corner as well, stay out at the outer edge. Those who feel weak in this corner, move to the middle of the room. Those who feel in-between, stay between the middle and the far corners. What do our positions tell us now?

Teacher *Wait for responses. Guide toward: Everybody is in a different development stage.*

Say Everybody has a wide range of strengths. Why is it important to identify and strengthen what we’re good at and what we’re not so good at?

Teacher *Wait for responses. Guide toward: our strengths and challenges provide some clues about how we are.*

Say Now, take your seats. We’re going to chart this exercise on paper.

Teacher *Draw a large cross on the blackboard. In the upper left quadrant write Emotional; the lower left, Social; the lower right, Intellectual; and upper right, Physical. Draw two dotted lines diagonally, corner to corner.*

Say Draw this schematic on a piece of paper. These are the four domains we’ll be working with during this course. Assume that the center is the number one (the weakest point) and the outside corners are number ten (the strongest point). Mark a point on each diagonal that indicates how positive or negative your self-concept is in each of these domains. For example, if you feel good about your social life, but there is this guy or girl that pushes your buttons, mark down a seven or eight. If you are soaring in chemistry, but taking a real dive in history, mark a five or six in the Intellectual corner. If you are depressed or angry all the time, put a one or two in the Emotional corner. If you feel pretty good, then mark it higher. If you go home and camp out in front of the TV instead of exercising, mark a one on the Physical. If you get outside and take a walk once in a while, mark it higher.

Teacher *Give students about three minutes to diagram. Demonstrate how to link their points with a line.*

- Say** Let's discuss our diagrams. If other students see us as being better in an area, let's listen to their perceptions.
- Teacher** *Wait for the response.*
- Say** So how do you discover who you are at an even more basic level than strengths and weaknesses?
- Teacher** *Wait for responses. Guide toward: your thoughts, actions, and feelings are evidence of your core self.*
- Say** Why is this true?
- Teacher** *Wait for responses. Guide toward: Because our thoughts, actions, and feelings arise from our minds and our hearts, our history and our culture, from our character, and our core self. They represent who we are, at our deepest levels.*
- Say** So when we get our thoughts, actions, and feelings pointed in a positive direction, our lives get on track too, and we create a positive identity, a strong character, and a healthy self-concept. One or two positive actions won't alter a shaky self-concept or provide a pathway through a hard time, but the practice of positive actions will, over time, change a lot of things for the better. The sooner you begin to focus on the positive ways to handle both your strong and shaky parts, the sooner you'll find a positive pathway, and the sooner you'll discover your identity and your destiny.
- Teacher** *Distribute the dated/named envelopes to each student. Ask them to insert their quadrant chart. Collect the envelopes and keep them in a secure place.*

Teacher's Toolbox

Vocabulary

Imprint: To impress or firmly establish on the mind.

Media Enrichment

Here are a couple of opportunities to look at *Positive Action's* concepts in the world. These activities are not required, but we've suggested them in case you need more follow-up on a particular lesson. Consider either reading or showing, *October Sky* by Homer Hickam, or *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. *October Sky* is a story of a teen who believes in himself and his abilities, despite the odds against him. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a story about belief, family, and identity.

Suggest that the students bring in music that demonstrates the power of positive thinking and actions. If there won't be time or ability to listen to the song(s), suggest the students just bring in the lyrics. Most song lyrics can be found online at www.lyrics.com or by searching for any part of the song title, artist and/or lyric in the search string of a search engine. There is power in music itself to inspire; there is also power in the words people choose to put to music.