

Cultivating Positive Self-Esteem in Middle School Girls

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Early warning signs of low self-esteem:

- Individuals with low self-esteem excessively seek reassurance about their self-worth from friends & peers.
- Individuals with low self-esteem seek negative feedback from their peers to verify their negative self-concept, which may further degrade their self-concept.
- Low self-esteem motivates social avoidance, thereby impeding social support from friends & peers.
- Individuals with low self-esteem are more sensitive to rejection.
- Individuals with low self-esteem engage in antisocial behaviors, including conflict, aggression, & substance abuse, that might contribute to their feeling excluded & alienated from others
- Low self-esteem often operates through rumination; the tendency to ruminate about negative aspects of the self is closely linked to low self-esteem & depression.

Interventions/Strategies Explored in this session:

- Tier II:
 - *In Favor of Myself*
 - *Confident Me!*
 - The Feeling Word Game
- Tier III:
 - Behavior Intervention Plan
 - Positive Affirmations for Self-Esteem
 - Utilizing Mentor Programs

Mindfulness Practice

~ Critical Self-Talk ~

How often do you criticize yourself?

Like it or not, we all criticize ourselves. It's a bad habit that we get into, and before long we don't even know we're doing it anymore. **Critical self-talk tears us down and keeps us from being the best person we can be.** If we want to change how we talk to ourselves, we need to be mindful, or aware, of when these negative thoughts are happening.

How can we be mindful of these self-critical thoughts? Think of the things that normally make you feel bad about yourself. Did you let someone down? Did you fail a test? Did you eat an entire pizza? When these things happen, chances are you follow them with self-critical talk. Notice what you are saying to yourself when these things happen.

Look at the self-critical statement in the box below. Circle the ones that you have said to yourself, or write in your own self-critical statements.

You're so stupid

I give up

**I'm the only person
with this problem**

*Why can't you
get it right?*

I'LL NEVER GET THIS RIGHT

Nobody really likes me

That person is better than me

Why can't I be like that person?

Circling those statements doesn't feel good, does it? Let's turn this around to something positive.

One way to combat these self-critical statements is to come up with **positive statements** that you say to yourself instead. This might feel silly at first, but it works! Think about it: if saying critical things to yourself makes you feel bad, then wouldn't saying good things to yourself make you feel good? Circle positive statements below that you could say to yourself instead of self-critical statements. Then choose one statement that you will say to yourself in our practice today.

I can figure this out

I know this is hard, but

**I'm not the only person with
this problem. I can talk to
someone who's been there.**

I'm going to ask for help.

I can fix this mistake I made

**HOW I REACT TO A MISTAKE IS MORE
IMPORTANT THAN THE MISTAKE**

Right now I can name people who love me

Nobody's life is perfect, and that's okay.

I can overcome challenges.

There is no one like me in the world



Let's Practice!

Name:
Parent:
D.O.B.
Telephone:

Date:
School:
Teacher:
Support Staff:

Target Problem Behaviors:

- ☐ Anxious, nervous, tense, worried, and uptight
- ☐ Poor self-esteem and self-concept, low confidence, and unsure
- ☐ Overwhelmed, flustered, confused, rattled, etc
- ☐ Other:

Intervention Plan:

Objectives:

- ☐ Improve coping, relaxation, and calming skills
- ☐ Increase self help and problem solving skills (asking for help, repetition, further explanation, verbalizing needs, etc)
- ☐ Increase self-esteem, self confidence, and participation
- ☐ Identify positive traits and strengths about self
- ☐ Other:

Preventative Strategies:

- ☐ Teacher will give student opportunities to choose when they would like to participate or volunteer
- ☐ Teacher may grade tests, quizzes, and assignments right after completion, informing and going over the student's scores with them
- ☐ Teacher will forewarn and/or speak with student about tasks, activities, etc that are likely to cause anxiety and other strong emotions and feelings, reminding them to utilize their coping strategies
- ☐ Teacher will forewarn and tell student how much time is left on an assignment, test, quiz, task, etc
- ☐ Teacher will maintain structured, consistent, and predictable routines and procedures
- ☐ Teacher will frequently emphasize the student's strengths and positive traits, gearing assignments and tasks to take advantage of them when possible
- ☐ Other:

Teaching Alternative Behaviors:

- ☐ Student and teacher will reduce the whole to parts, pieces, sections, steps, etc (student breaks directions down to parts, breaking math problem down to steps, etc)
- ☐ Student will develop and utilize a schedule, checklist, or visual schedule
- ☐ Teacher and student will develop a secret cue that the student will use to indicate to the teacher they would like to participate, volunteer, answer a question, add a comment, etc
- ☐ When student cannot control anxiety and feelings, they may ask to go to an alternative room or setting to take a break and re-group or calm down
- ☐ Student will take deep breaths, count to 10, stretch, or utilize other relaxation techniques when feeling anxious or overwhelmed
- ☐ Student will utilize positive self talk when feeling overwhelmed or anxious (positive internal dialogue)
- ☐ Teacher will help student begin a task, assignment, problem, etc
- ☐ Student may utilize calming nature sounds, music, white noise, or other assistive aides like weighted objects on lap or shoulders, tight vest, fidget toy, textures like VELCRO® brand hook and loop fasteners, etc
- ☐ Student may use alternate methods to complete assignments (typing, computer, drawing, recorded responses, verbal responses, etc)
- ☐ Student will utilize a chart to track and monitor their anxiety and stress levels, feelings of being overwhelmed, and/or feelings of low self-esteem throughout the day, reflecting on the data with the teacher to determine the source and cause of elevated levels and problem solving how to improve them
- ☐ Teacher will facilitate opportunities for the student to interact, work with, and model confident and friendly students
- ☐ Teacher and parents will challenge and reframe or rebut student's false logic, perceptions, exaggerations, harsh self criticisms, generalizations, and "all or nothing" thinking (for example, a student says everyone hates them because a student they asked to play with turned them down or for older kids they were turned down by a girl, then the teacher responds by

saying not everyone hates them and they just need to ask someone else, play another person's game, keep trying, and emphasize their positive traits and strengths, etc)

☐ Other:

Positive Reinforcement:

- ☐ Teacher will give positive praise and encouragement and emphasize student's strengths and positive traits (utilize clinically supported ratio of at least 4 positive to 1 correction)
- ☐ Teacher will send positive notes home, call parents to give positive feedback, or write positive notes on assignments and planner
- ☐ Teacher and parent will utilize rewards and incentives for utilizing coping skills, positive thinking, comments, and attitude, participation, and remaining in control of emotions and feelings
- ☐ Teacher will highlight the student's strengths, positive traits, skills, and talents as an example to the class when relevant and appropriate
- ☐ Teacher will provide positive feedback like high-fives, hand shakes, pats on the back, etc
- ☐ Student will help and work with younger students to boost confidence and self-esteem
- ☐ Teacher will emphasize and discuss how failure, low marks, and mistakes are normal, okay, and everyone experiences them (help to normalize this)
- ☐ Teacher and/or parents will teach the student a special talent, skill, tip, shortcut, trick, etc then highlight it with other students and adults and have the student teach or show it to others (or if the student has one of their own already, they can use this)

Other:

Consequences for Non-Compliance:

- ☐ Student will be subject to the school and class discipline policies and procedures
- ☐ Student will be subject to natural consequences
- ☐ When student cannot control anxiety and feelings, they may be sent to an alternative room or setting to take a break and re-group or calm down
- ☐ When student's anxiety and stress levels elevate, teacher may send student to get a drink, go to the bathroom, or run an errand
- ☐ Teacher may call parents or guardian when the student cannot calm down or regain control of their feelings and emotions
- ☐ Student may be sent home for the remainder of the day if they cannot calm down or regain control of their feelings and emotions, only after other options and procedures have been exhausted
- ☐ When student abuses or takes advantage of bathroom breaks, getting drink, sharpening pencil, etc, they will be limited to a certain number of opportunities for each
- ☐ Other:

Home Intervention/Support:

- ☐ Parent/Guardian will monitor student's academics, behavior, and attendance on Parent Connect
- ☐ Parent/Guardian will maintain regular communication with teachers, administrator, and school
- ☐ Parents will attend all behavior meetings and conferences
- ☐ Parents will follow through with rewards and consequences at home
- ☐ Parents will establish and maintain a structured daily homework routine, assisting their child with homework
- ☐ Parents will daily help student to keep materials and papers organized
- ☐ Parents will give student positive praise and encouragement
- ☐ Parents will practice, utilize, and reinforce coping and other strategies at home
- ☐ Parents will maintain a consistent bed time and morning routine
- ☐ Parents will help the student to maintain regular attendance and punctuality
- ☐ Parents will facilitate and provide frequent opportunities for the student to interact with peers, engage in activities with peers, invite peers to the house, etc
- ☐ Other:

Program Review Schedule:

The Behavior team will meet to review, assess, and revise the BIP (if needed) on:

Signatures:



How to create effective affirmations for students:

- 1. Affirmations start with the words “I am...”**
- 2. Affirmations are positive!**
- 3. Affirmations are short & sweet**
- 4. Affirmations are specific**
- 5. Affirmations exist in present tense**
- 6. Affirmations should be about yourself & your thoughts & behaviors**

How to effectively use affirmations:

- 1. Use positive self-talk concerning usage**
- 2. Write them down & place them somewhere you can see them multiple times a day, everyday (e.g.: bathroom mirror, locker door, inside agenda/books/binders, etc.)**
- 3. When you see them, say them (to yourself or aloud)**
- 4. Visualize your affirmations before going to sleep**

Name: _____

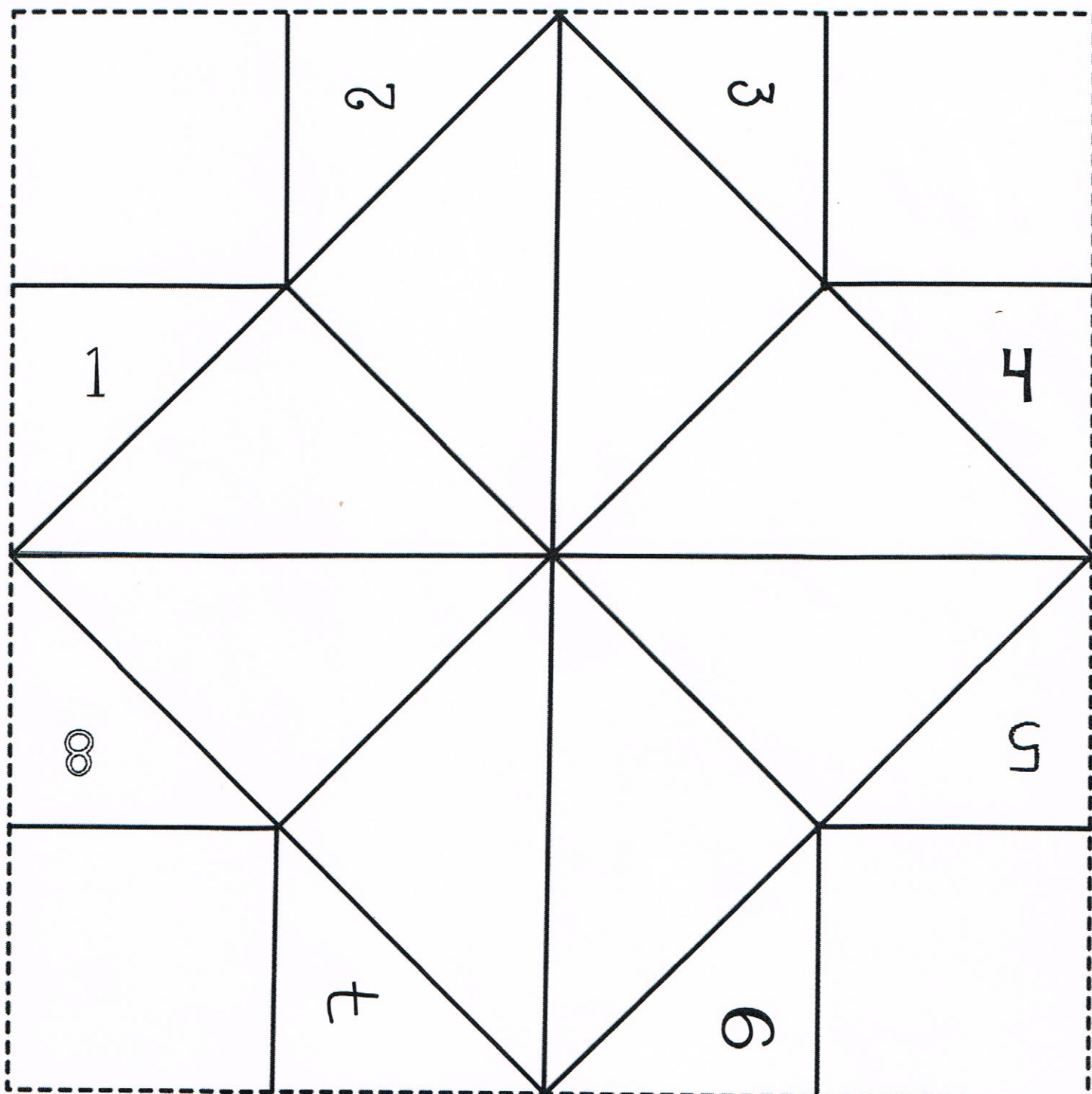
Date: _____

Positive Thoughts Fortune Teller



Choose a color name
for each square.

Write a positive message in
each triangle.



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Resources:

- For individual &/or small-group activities & worksheets:
 - Self-esteem-school.com
 - <https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheets/self-esteem/none>
- For download of Dove's *Confident Me!* 5-Session curriculum:
 - <https://www.dove.com/us/en/dove-self-esteem-project/school-workshops-on-body-image-confident-me/self-esteem-school-resources-confident-me-five-sessions.html>
- For more information on *The Girls' Index*:
 - <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/597249b6d7bdcec54c7fdd10/t/59cec40132601ed2cee562bd/1506722842794/Girls%27+Index+Research+Brief+Final.pdf>