Building Self-Esteem

(What's Important is how you see yourself.)

Through Positive Assertiveness

Teacher Packet

January 2007
Building Self-Esteem Through Positive Assertiveness

An important element in the process of building self-esteem involves using positive assertiveness. By identifying the personal attributes that others admire in you and by practicing open and honest responses to situations that occur at home and in the workplace, you can improve the ability to assert your rights and express your expectations. Knowing that you have a right to have opinions, to say no without feeling guilty and to be treated with respect is an important step in changing the way you feel about yourself.

Instructional Plan

Administer the Pre-Test.

Review the signs of low self-esteem on Worksheet #1. Ask students if they recognize any of these signs in themselves or in people they know. Explain to students that unlike in children (where self-esteem is developed externally with lots of praise and positive reinforcement), self-esteem in adults comes almost exclusively through achievement. Setting goals for themselves, no matter how small, and reaching them is the surest path to increased self-confidence and satisfaction.

Have students complete “Check Your Self-Esteem” on Worksheet #2 and score themselves. Discuss their results.

Direct students to Worksheet #3A. Ask them to write down the first name of someone they personally like and respect and to list all the positive interpersonal qualities of that person. Go around the group asking each student, in turn, to name one of the qualities each has written until all qualities have been named. Have a student record the responses on the board. When the list is complete, ask students to write down the qualities they believe they already possess in the left column on Worksheet #3B under the heading “Qualities to Build On”. Ask them to write down qualities they would like to possess in the right column under “Qualities to Improve On”. After students have completed their “Personal Balance Sheets”, explain that it is the interpersonal qualities that are valued universally, not beauty or possessions; most people already have a wealth of good interpersonal qualities. Each of us is a work in progress, and we can choose to develop the “assets” on our personal balance sheets.
Have students complete Worksheet #4 "How Assertive Are You?" and score themselves. Discuss their results.

Explain that since self-esteem is how we see ourselves when compared to other people, the effectiveness of our interactions with other people contributes to our self confidence. Some people might ask whether it takes self confidence to be assertive - a "which came first, the chicken or the egg?" conundrum. Luckily, positive assertiveness techniques can be acquired, even by a normally passive person, through practice. Review the three types of response behavior on Worksheet #5 including non-verbal behaviors on Chart #1. Draw a column on the board for each type of response behavior to directly compare elements such as direct v. indirect, honest v. dishonest, body language, voice characteristics, etc. Once students are familiar with the three types of response behavior, assign them, in pairs, to read the five statements from Activity #1 to their partners using the appropriate body language and behavior. Ask for volunteers to role-play the statements in front of the group.

Direct students to Activity #2. Ask them to jot down some assertive responses to the situations that they would be willing to share with the group. Remind students that stating their expectations is an important part of effective communication. Ask the group to evaluate each response with respect to its assertiveness.

Direct students to Activity #3, Case Studies. Discuss as a group the steps that both Natalie and Earl could take to improve self-esteem, including the use of positive assertiveness.

Administer the Post Test.
PRE/POST Tests for Building Self-Esteem through Positive Assertiveness
(Please circle which test you are taking.)

1. Define self-esteem using a short sentence or with a word that means the same. __________

2. List two signs of low self-esteem. A. ________________ B. ________________

3. List two ideas for building self-esteem.
   A. _______________________________________________________________________
   B. _______________________________________________________________________

4. List two positive consequences of being assertive. ______________________________________

5. What is an asset? Give an example of a personality asset. __________________________________

6. Give an example of an assertive behavior. ____________________________________________

7. What type of facial expression is associated with assertive behavior? ______________________

8. List two negative consequences of being unassertive or passive. _________________________


10. High self-esteem requires setting high goals and having success in reaching your goals. In other
   words, you must DO SOMETHING! List one goal that could start building your self-esteem.
   ___________________________________________________________________________
Building Self-Esteem Through Positive Assertiveness
Pre/Post Test Answer Key

1. How we see ourselves compared to other people; self-confidence

2. Answers will vary: depression, losing your temper, being afraid to try, etc.

3. Setting and reaching goals; using positive assertiveness to communicate

4. Open, honest relationships; cooperation without retaliation

5. Answers will vary: dependability, honesty, loyalty, kindness, etc.

6. Open posture, normal voice tone, pleasant expression, no profanity, etc.

7. Pleasant expression, slightly raised eyebrows

8. Being thought of as wishy-washy; creating lose-lose outcomes; being taken advantage of

9. It lets you communicate with self-respect, without feeling guilty and lets others know you count, too; projects self-confidence

10. Stop comparing yourself to others; make positive statements about yourself; choose to surround yourself with positive people
Self-Esteem

Put simply, your self-esteem is how well you think about yourself compared to other people. Low self-esteem means that you think you are not a valuable person, and that everyone else is better than you. It can also be a symptom of depression.

Some signs of low self-esteem are:

- Feeling “not good enough” even if you are
- Decreased confidence
- Putting yourself down all the time
- Being too scared to try new things
- Making no effort because you expect to mess things up
- Losing your temper
- Picking fights
- Worrying about getting even
- Blaming others for your problems
- Constantly bickering about petty issues
The first step to building self-esteem is to want to do it. You won’t succeed if you do it because someone tells you to or you feel like you have to; you must really and truly want to make a change to yourself – celebrate your achievements, however small you think that they are. If it is something you have done and achieved – make a big deal out of it, as it will make you feel better.

Also, try being nice, not only to others, but also to yourself. If you make a mistake, do something wrong, or something doesn’t go particularly well, then do not worry – part of being alive is making mistakes, and you will learn lots from them.

Try and concentrate on the things that you are good at and are talented in, don’t try and do things (or say things) just because you feel you have to.
CHECK YOUR SELF-ESTEEM

THIS IS AN EVALUATION - NOT A TEST!

This Self-Esteem Evaluation measures your current level of self-esteem, and serves as a gauge of your progress in achieving sound self-esteem. It is important to clearly understand all statements and be completely honest in your scoring to obtain a valid score. Answer all statements according to how you actually feel or behave, instead of how you think you “should” feel or behave.

INSTRUCTIONS:
Check the appropriate box for each statement based on how you usually feel.

☐ True ☐ False 1. I feel my life/work/career has progressed more because of luck and not because I deserve it.

☐ True ☐ False 2. I often find myself thinking, “Why can’t I be more successful?”

☐ True ☐ False 3. I do not believe I am working up to my potential.

☐ True ☐ False 4. I consider it a failure when I do not accomplish my goals.

☐ True ☐ False 5. When others are nice to me I often feel suspicious.

☐ True ☐ False 6. Giving others compliments about their strengths often makes me feel uncomfortable.
☐ True  ☐ False  7. It is difficult to see co-workers promoted because I often feel I am more deserving.

☐ True  ☐ False  8. I do not necessarily believe that my mind has a direct influence on my physical well-being.

☐ True  ☐ False  9. When things are going well, they usually will not last for me.

☐ True  ☐ False  10. I place a high value on what others think of me.

☐ True  ☐ False  11. I like to impress my supervisor.

☐ True  ☐ False  12. I find it difficult to face up to my mistakes.

☐ True  ☐ False  13. I am not comfortable always saying what I mean.

☐ True  ☐ False  14. I find it hard to say I am sorry.

☐ True  ☐ False  15. I tend to accept changes in my life slowly because of fear.

☐ True  ☐ False  16. Procrastination is a good word to describe my work habits.

☐ True  ☐ False  17. I often find myself thinking, “Why even try, I won’t make it.”

☐ True  ☐ False  18. When someone praises me, I usually do not believe him or her.

☐ True  ☐ False  19. I do not think others want me to advance professionally.
20. I avoid people who I think do not like me.

21. My attitude towards life could improve.

22. If honest with myself, I tend to blame my parents for how my life is turning out.

23. I find it difficult to look for the good in others.

24. I do not think people can change their attitudes.

25. I really do not believe that a training session will make a difference in my self-esteem.

Add up all your True and False Statements.

TRUE: _____  FALSE: _____

If you scored over half of the items “TRUE”, you may want to spend some quality time with yourself thinking about your life. Think about why you have these feelings.

If the majority of your answers are “FALSE” you seem to have good self-esteem and are on your way to greater success and satisfaction.
Worksheet #3A

First name of someone I personally like and respect ________________.

Interpersonal qualities (such as kindness or honesty) I admire in this person:

1. ________________
2. ________________
3. ________________
4. ________________
5. ________________
6. ________________
7. ________________
8. ________________
9. ________________
10. ________________
11. ________________
12. ________________
Worksheet # 3B

Personal Balance Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>Liabilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualities to Build On</td>
<td>Qualities to Improve On</td>
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HOW ASSERTIVE ARE YOU?

Before learning how to develop your assertiveness, it is important to take a few minutes to get some idea of where you are right now. Answer the questions below honestly. They will help you gain some insights about your current level of assertiveness.

Using a scale from 5 to 1, assign a number to each item below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALWAYS</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. I ask others to do things without feeling guilty or anxious

2. When someone asks me to do something I don't want to do, I say "no" without feeling guilty or anxious

3. I am comfortable when speaking to a group of people

4. I confidently express my honest opinions to authority figures.

5. When I experience powerful feelings (anger, etc.), I verbalize them easily.

6. When I express anger, I do so without blaming others for "making me mad".

7. I am comfortable speaking up in a group situation.

8. If I disagree with the majority opinion in a meeting, I can "stick to my guns" without feeling guilty or being abrasive.
9. When I make a mistake, I will acknowledge it.

10. I tell others when their behavior creates a problem for me.

11. Meeting new people in social situations is something I do with ease and comfort.

12. When discussing my beliefs, I do so without labeling the of others as “crazy”, “stupid”, “ridiculous”, or “irrational”.

13. I assume that most people are competent and trustworthy and do not have difficulty delegating tasks to others.

14. When considering doing something I have never done, I feel confident I can learn to do it.

15. I believe my needs are as important as those of others and I am entitled to have my needs satisfied.

TOTAL SCORE (SUM OF THE 15 NUMBERS)

If your score is 60 or higher, you have a consistently assertive philosophy and probably handle yourself well in most situations.

If your total is 45-60 you have a fairly assertive outlook. If you total is 30-45 your natural response is often passive or aggressive.

If you total is 15-30 you have considerable difficulty being assertive.
Three Types of Response Behavior

Real life is full of twists and turns and no one is consistently assertive. The good news is that we can learn to become more assertive most of the time. Let's look at the definitions of each the three categories of behavior: Nonassertive or Passive, Aggressive, or Assertive.

*Passive behavior* is nonassertive and indirect. It communicates a message of inferiority. By being nonassertive we allow the wants, needs, and rights of others to be more important than our own. Nonassertive behavior helps create "win-lose" situations. A person behaving passively will lose while allowing others to win (or at best be disregarded). Following this road leads to being a victim rather than a winner.

By being passive, we seem wishy-washy, or like a pushover or a complainer. People think we don't take ourselves seriously or we don't really know what we want.

*Aggressive behavior* is more complex. It can be either active or passive. Aggression can be direct or indirect, honest or dishonest - but it always communicates an impression of superiority and disrespect. By being aggressive we put our wants, needs, and rights above those of others. We attempt to get our way by not allowing others a choice. Aggressive behavior is usually inappropriate because it violates the rights of others. People behaving aggressively may "win" by making sure others "lose" - but in doing so set themselves up for retaliation. No one likes a bully.

Being aggressive makes us come across as cocky, too bossy, and dismissive of other people's rights and feelings. It can mean hurting or alienating other people, too. We don't get our rights because we make people mad.
Assertive behavior is active, direct and honest. It communicates an impression of self-respect and respect for others. By being assertive we view our wants, needs, and rights as equal with those of others. We work toward "win-win" outcomes. An assertive person wins by influencing, listening, and negotiating so that others choose to cooperate willingly. This behavior leads to success without retaliation and encourages honest, open relationships!

Being assertive means that you stand up for your rights while respecting the rights of others. Assertiveness means believing we have a right to have ideas and feelings and that we have a right to express those ideas and feelings. Maybe we got the wrong change at the store, or we need to return something that didn't work right. Maybe we want to tell somebody honestly how we feel about something.

Assertiveness is an antidote to fear, shyness, passivity, and even anger. Many people recognize they are being taken advantage of and/or have difficulty saying "no." Others do not see themselves as unassertive but do feel depressed or unfulfilled, have lots of physical ailments, have many complaints about others but assume others have the right to demand whatever they want. Nothing will change until the victim recognizes his/her rights are being denied and s/he decides to correct the situation.
Chart # 1

**NON-VERBAL BEHAVIORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PASSIVE</th>
<th>AGGRESSIVE</th>
<th>ASSERTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biting Fingernails</td>
<td>Shaking fist</td>
<td>Eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No eye contact</td>
<td>Chin jutted forward</td>
<td>Sitting up straight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head down</td>
<td>Arms crossed</td>
<td>Smiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muffled or mumbled speech</td>
<td>Standing uncomfortably close</td>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed body posture</td>
<td>Raised voice</td>
<td>Looks interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slumped shoulders</td>
<td>Using swear words</td>
<td>Eyebrows lifted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervousness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity # 1

As you read these sentences, think of actions and body language that would make you sound, act, and look assertive, then passive, and then aggressive. Practice saying each sentence each of the three ways. Stand up when it's your turn to practice. Use the non-verbal behavior chart to demonstrate the behaviors associated with each of the three types of responses.

"I DON'T WANT TO DO THAT FOR YOU"

Example: Passive - look down

Aggressive - loud, yelling

Assertive - stand up straight and tall

"I'M RETURNING THE MONEY YOU LOANED ME"

Example: Passive - mumble, slumped shoulders

Aggressive - frowning, loud

Assertive - clear voice

"YOU DID THAT WORK WRONG"

Example: Passive - whisper

Aggressive - point finger

Assertive - strong, firm voice

"I'M NOT SURE WHAT TO DO ABOUT THAT"

Example: Passive - shaky voice

Aggressive - look mean
Assertive - keep eye contact

"WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO BE BACK?"

Example: Passive - wringing hands
Aggressive - screaming
Assertive - stand squarely on both feet
Activity #2

Develop one or more appropriate assertive responses to the following situations:

SITUATION One: A friend repeatedly makes plans with you and then cancels at the last minute.

SITUATION Two: You have just been introduced to someone, but you did not learn his/her name.

SITUATION Three: Your spouse or significant other comes home from work and talks nonstop during dinner about her/his fellow workers and all the rivalry at work.

SITUATION Four: Your spouse or significant other looks (excessively) at attractive members of the opposite sex.
CASE STUDIES

Below are two case studies. Read them carefully and then discuss as a group your thoughts on how to improve the self-esteem of the people in these cases.

Case Number #1

Natalie always seems to be down on her abilities and her appearance. For some reason she does not look as good to herself as she does to others. If Natalie were to rate her self-esteem on a scale of one to ten, her rating would be three or four.

Her low rating is partially due to the fact that Natalie truly believes her parents did not expect her to achieve much because her older sister had disappointed them and their expectations for Natalie were also lowered. Another reason is because Natalie seldom sticks up for herself at work or during family situations. Rather than communicate her true feelings she usually just walks away.

Natalie, in her first job since leaving school, is underemployed based on her abilities and skills. If her self-esteem had been higher, management would have provided several promotional opportunities in the past three years.

If you had a close relationship with Natalie how would you assist her to go about building her self-esteem to a higher level?
Case Number #2

Earl is a highly respected and competent worker. He is a consistently high producer, seldom absent, and works well with other employees. He frequently works overtime because co-workers depend on him for help during regular office hours. He is conservative in his grooming.

Earl hopes to eventually become manager of the fast food restaurant where he is employed, but he refuses to see himself as a leader. Although others might consider him to be a "soft touch", he will take a firm stand on important matters. A high school graduate, Earl, is currently taking classes at night at the community college for an associate degree in business management.

On a scale of one to ten, Earl would rate himself about a five as far as self-esteem is concerned. He recognizes that he needs to communicate a more positive and assertive image; but, so far, he is content to remain as a likeable member of his work group. Social acceptance is more important to him at this stage than a big career-step upward.

What suggestions would you make to Earl if he came to you for help in improving his self-esteem?