

A Leader's Guide to



Little
Laugh
& Learn™

Be Yourself, Like Yourself



free spirit
PUBLISHING®

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CHAPTER 1

You Matter!

Discussion Questions

- What are some of your favorite things? Think of foods, books, movies, games, and more.
- Who is in your family?
- Who are your friends?
- What else adds up to make you the person you are?

Activities

1. Who Am I?

Have children write a story or draw a picture about themselves. It could be a self-portrait that shows them doing a favorite activity or that shows them surrounded by people or things they love or identify with. What do these things say about them?



2. Who-Am-I Stories

Start by reading a few picture books about self-esteem, such as *I Like Me!* by Nancy Carlson, *Avocado Asks: What Am I?* by Momoko Abe, and *Only a Tree Knows How to Be a Tree* by Mary Murphy. (You probably have other ideas to add, or you can simply do a search for “elementary books about self-esteem” or something similar.)

Talk about the stories. Who are the characters? How do they learn about who they are? What do they learn? Ask children if they have ever had questions about themselves and who they are like the characters in the stories do. How did they answer those questions at that time? Do they have different answers now?



CHAPTER 2

All About Self-Esteem

Discussion Questions

- What's the difference between looking confident and *being* confident?
- Have you ever felt different on the inside than you showed on the outside? How did you feel different? What happened?
- Talk about a time when you had to be brave or show confidence although you didn't feel so confident inside.

Activities

1. Cracks in Confidence?

Put students in pairs or small groups and have them think of someone who seems very confident. Maybe it's a famous athlete or actor. Maybe it's an adult at school or in your community. It could be a fictional character from a show or a movie. You can assign a person to each group or let them come up with someone on their own. Then ask students to brainstorm things that person might *not* feel confident about. What are some questions or worries they might have about themselves?

Gather again as a large group and invite the small groups to share their ideas.

2. Chain of Confidence

Assign a partner to each student. Ask students to write messages of encouragement to their partners on strips of colorful construction paper. It could be a simple message like "You are a good friend, Omar!" or "Luisa, you always smile and say hi on the bus. It makes me feel good." Encourage them to be specific. Then collect the strips and glue them into interlocking rings to make a "Chain of Confidence" that you hang in the classroom.



CHAPTER 3

Look at You and All You Do

Discussion Questions

- What are some things you really enjoy doing? What do you like about them?
- What are some ways you show you care about others?
- What are some kind things to say to a friend?
- What is something nice you would like someone to say to you?

Activities

1. What I'm Good at and What I Enjoy

Have each student write a short essay or paragraph (or one or two sentences, depending on age and ability) describing something they are good at or something they love to do. Encourage them to be specific. For example, rather than “sports,” they might say they are a fast runner or they love shooting free throws. You might ask them to name two to four things or have them write in some depth about one thing. Why did they start doing this thing? How did they get to be good at it or to know so much about it? For something they love, have they always loved it? How did they first learn about it? Did someone tell them about it? Who?

As a follow-up, ask students to write about something they wish they could do better. Encourage them to use growth-mindset language. Instead of “I am no good at soccer,” suggest “I would like to be better at soccer. It’s my favorite sport, and I want to score a goal this year.”



2. Dear Me

Talk with students about goals. If you did the follow-up exercise above about things they wish they were better at, help them think of ways to get better at those things. They can practice their activity, read books or watch videos to learn more, or try new things if they want to make more friends or be more confident. Then have them each write a letter to themselves that describes their goal and how they will work on it. Students can write their letters as if they are giving advice and motivation to their future selves.



CHAPTER 4

Look at Who Loves Y-O-U

Discussion Questions

- Who are some adults who love you and believe in you? How do you know?
- Who are some people your age who you can depend on? How do you know?
- How would you like to spend more time with the people you care about?

Activities

1. My Family and Me

Have each student write a list of everyone in their family. You can encourage a broad definition of family: students may decide to include their immediate family, extended family, close family friends, or other people they live with or who care for them. Then have them draw a picture of their family and label it.

You might also ask students to bring in photos of their family and share about them. Start the discussion by sharing a photo of your own family.

2. Self-Esteem Team

Briefly discuss this question: How do you know a friend or family member cares about you?

Then put kids in small groups and have each group create and perform a short role-play about how people support each other. You can provide prompts, such as “your parent is there for you in a hard time” or “your friend always has your back.” Have or help groups assign roles for each group member, such as the parent or friend and the person receiving support. There might be other roles such as a third friend or other parent or family member.



3. A Recipe for Me

Share a couple of simple recipes to provide examples of “recipe language,” such as “Mix the ingredients in a bowl and stir gently” or “Combine flour, yeast, and water, and add a dash of salt.”

Then help each student create a “Recipe for Me.” Have them list ingredients from the prompts in chapters 2, 3, and 4—things they like, things they’re good at, things they know, ways they show they care, who their family and friends are. Then they can write a sentence or two, using the recipe-language model, to explain how to combine their “ingredients” to make them *them*.



CHAPTER 5

Three Ways to Keep Your Self-Esteem Going Strong

Discussion Questions

- What are some situations that can make someone, even a confident person, feel down?
- Talk about a time when you felt blue or down. How did you get back to feeling better?
- What does *respect* mean? What are some ways you show respect for yourself?

Activities

1. Self-Talk Board

Have each student write a line of positive self-talk on colorful paper and decorate it any way they wish. They might use example language from the book, or you can encourage them to come up with their own ideas. The more specific, the better! When everyone is finished, post the statements on a wall or bulletin board labeled “Positive Self-Talk” or “Ways I Talk to Me.”

As a variation, you could hand out pre-cut flowers for students to write their self-talk statements on. Hang the flowers or glue a craft stick to the back of each and “plant” them in a can of marbles. Now you have a Positive Self-Talk Garden!



2. Taking Care of Myself

Briefly discuss this question: What are some ways you take care of yourself?

Then give kids magazines or website printouts and have them cut out images of healthy behaviors and symbols, such as plates of fruits and vegetables, people exercising, people brushing their teeth and washing their faces, and so on. They can add images that they draw as well. Then have them put the images together into a “We Take Care of Ourselves” collage. Students can make individual collages, or you can have everyone contribute to a larger group collage.

CHAPTER 6

Six Tips for Bouncing Back from Setbacks

Discussion Questions

- Talk about a time you did or learned something that was hard. Did you ever feel like giving up? How did you keep going?
- Have you ever learned from a mistake you made? What happened? What did you learn?
- Do you sometimes compare yourself to others? What is a healthier way to measure your success?
- What can you do when someone is mean or says unkind things to you?

Activities

1. Support for Setbacks

As a group, brainstorm setbacks or “hard times” someone their age might go through. (Alternately, write a list ahead of time.) Try to direct the discussion so the examples are serious enough that a child might need support from a friend or adult, but not too dark. You will also want to avoid actual setbacks that students in the group have experienced. Ideas for your list might include: someone gets teased, someone can’t ride a bike but their friends can, someone is embarrassed about their appearance, someone wishes they had more friends.

Put students in pairs and give them craft supplies to make puppets: paper bags, construction paper and craft sticks, socks, googly eyes, markers, and so on. Have each pair choose one of the setbacks from the list and write a short puppet show in which one of the characters has this setback and the other one supports them. Encourage them to focus on the dialogue where the character with the setback asks for help. If you have time, do multiple setback scenarios, or have students reverse roles.



2. Talking Back to the Voice in My Head

Give students copies of the activity sheet from page 10 of this *Leader's Guide*. The sheet is modeled on pages 66–67 of the book. Ask students to brainstorm a short list of examples of mean or harsh self-talk and add them to the left column. These could be things they say to themselves sometimes, or they could be made-up examples.

In the column on the right, students then write a retort to the negative thoughts. Encourage students *not* to simply reverse the negative thought (for example, changing “I stink at gymnastics” to “I rule at gymnastics”), since the reverse thought might not be true. Instead, help them be specific and realistic in finding positive thoughts. For example, “I stink at gymnastics” might become “I love doing the bars and believe I can get better.”

You might choose to do this activity as a group. This will allow you to be more hands-on in directing appropriate positive thoughts.



<p>If the voice in my head says this:</p>	<p>I can tell myself this:</p>

CHAPTER 7

Full ESTEEM Ahead!

Discussion Questions

- What is self-esteem? Why is it important?
- What is something new you've learned that you like about yourself?
- What are some things you would like to try when you get older? Why?
- Who's awesome?

Activities

1. Poem

Put awesomeness into verse! Have students write poems about themselves—rhyme or no rhyme, it's up to them. The poem could be a series of words describing themselves, or it could be a statement of identity. It could even be a short narrative about overcoming a hard time. Display the poems in the room.

2. Spread the Goodness Challenge

Have a class discussion about spreading good feelings. How does it feel to support others or tell them what you like about them? How can they start a cycle of good feelings in their lives? Encourage kids to think of someone in their lives—another child or an adult—who they appreciate and like. What specifically does that person do that the student likes? Challenge kids to tell these people how they feel in the next week. They don't need to report back. This is an activity for themselves, to spread positivity and see how it feels.



About the Author and Illustrator

Eric Braun is a children's author and editor. He has written dozens of books on many topics, and one of his books was read by an astronaut on the International Space Station for kids on Earth to watch. Eric likes to toss the Frisbee with his sons and go on bike adventures. He lives in Minneapolis.



Steve Mark is a freelance illustrator and a part-time puppeteer. He lives in Minnesota and is the father of three and the husband of one. Steve has illustrated many books for children, including *Ease the Tease!* and *Make a Friend, Be a Friend* from the Little Laugh & Learn® series and all the books in the Laugh & Learn® series for older kids.

