



Confidence and self-esteem

for 11-18 year olds

Understanding how to feel
good about ourselves



What is confidence?

Being confident means believing in and trusting ourselves, our abilities and ideas. It's also about understanding and accepting ourselves for who we are.

What is self-esteem?

Self-esteem is how we think and feel about ourselves. With high self-esteem, we have a positive view of ourselves and our abilities. When it's low, this is more negative.

What can affect our confidence and self-esteem?

Some things might **boost our confidence and self-esteem**, like:

- Being treated with kindness and respect
- Having a strong support network
- Learning new things
- Getting good feedback from school, college, work or other activities
- Positive interactions on social media

Other things might have a **negative effect on our confidence and self-esteem**, like:

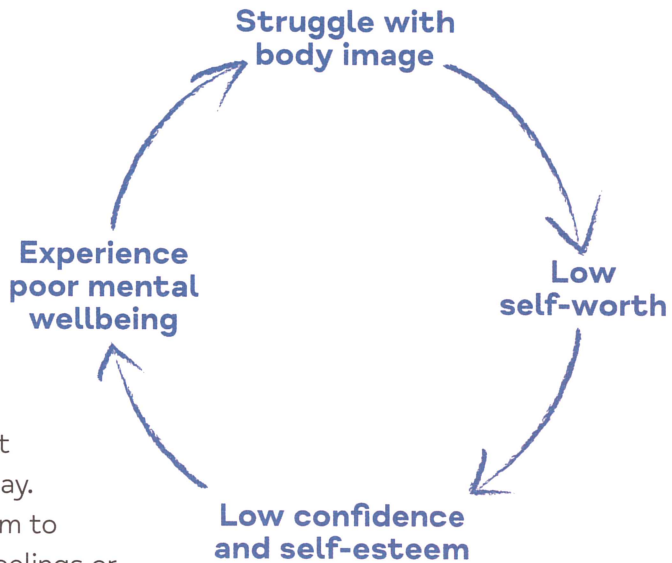
- Problems at home, school, college or work
- Things we see on social media or the news that worry us
- Problems in our relationships or friendships
- Being bullied or abused
- Struggling with mental or physical health
- Pressure from ourselves or others, like around exams

Body image, confidence and self-esteem

Body image is how we think and feel about:

- Our own body
- The way we look
- How we think other people see us

There might be things we like about our body or how we look, as well as things we don't like as much. These feelings can change from moment to moment, and day to day. But sometimes they seem to relate to other difficult feelings or experiences.



For example, negative thoughts about our body can lower our self-esteem. Or we might feel more negative about how we look during a time of poor mental wellbeing.

If you're struggling with body image, try to:

- Think about **how social media affects** the way you feel about your body.
- **Unfollow accounts** that make you **feel bad** about your body or the way you look.
- **Follow accounts** that make you **feel good** about yourself.
- **Stop comparing yourself to others** – remember that people don't always look the same as they do online.
- **Write or say** things about your body that **you're grateful for**.
- **Open up** about how you're feeling with **people you trust**.

How to build confidence and self-esteem

Building confidence and self-esteem can take time and practice. But there are lots of things you can try to help improve the way you feel about yourself and your abilities.

Making changes can feel like a big step. Start by trying 1 or 2 new things until you find what works for you. **Small changes can make a big difference.**

Recognise and challenge unkind thoughts Try talking to yourself as you'd talk to a good friend. Ask yourself 'What advice or reassurance would I give someone if they felt like I do?'

Celebrate yourself Try writing down things you like about yourself, things other people like about you, or your strengths and achievements.



Try making an online board or blog of motivational quotes and images.



Write a self-compassionate letter Write down why you're feeling bad about yourself or any challenges you're experiencing. Next, imagine someone close to you wrote these things about themselves. Finally, respond by writing a letter that offers words of comfort and support.

Compassion means showing warmth, understanding, care and love towards someone.

Self-compassion is about offering these qualities to yourself.

Try something new This can feel like an achievement, which can help us to believe in ourselves more. You could learn to play an instrument, learn phrases in a different language or try creative activities, like making videos or painting. You could also try physical activity like sport or movement. Or activities that make you think, like playing a new video or board game.



I have always relied on my hobbies and interests to keep me feeling good, even on bad days, and learning to understand my feelings has helped me learn to spend more time on things that make me happy!



Think about setting goals It might help to set goals for what you want to achieve from building confidence and self-esteem. You don't have to plan or reach all your goals at once, but small steps can lead to big changes.

Here are some tips for setting goals:

- Break up big goals into smaller tasks that feel easier to handle
- Focus on no more than 1 or 2 goals at a time
- Try to be specific about what you want to do
- Decide how you'll celebrate if you achieve a goal
- Think about how you'll show self-compassion if things don't go as planned



I have an achievements jar where I write at least 1 thing I achieved that day (and date it) and put it in the jar.



Learn to be more assertive We all have different ways of communicating, but everyone's ideas, thoughts and feelings matter. When we accept that ours matter too, it's easier to be assertive.

Being assertive is about speaking up for ourselves in a way that's honest and respectful. It also means letting people know what we want, but in a polite and positive way.

Try to practise:

- Giving your opinion or saying how you feel
- Asking for what you want or need
- Disagreeing with others in a respectful way
- Offering ideas and suggestions
- Saying 'no' without feeling guilty
- Speaking up for someone else

How to practise giving your opinion. For example, if someone asks whether you want to go to the park or cinema, instead of saying 'I don't know' or 'I don't mind', say 'I would prefer to go to the cinema.'

How to practise asking for things. For example, if you're struggling with schoolwork, ask your teacher 'I'm not clear on what to do, please could you explain it to me again?' Or if a friend is doing something that bothers you, ask them 'Please could you stop that? It's making it hard for me to concentrate.'

Keep connected Connecting with other people can make us feel more confident. You could get in touch with someone you identify with and trust, or do something fun with them. Or you could meet new people by volunteering or joining a club or class.

Think about your relationships Try asking yourself ‘Who makes me feel good about myself and boosts my self-esteem?’ or ‘Does anyone around me make me feel bad about myself?’ If you can, try to spend more time with people who make you feel good about yourself, and less time with people who make you feel bad.



Something that can really affect our self-esteem and confidence is the people we surround ourselves with, especially our friends.



Talk to someone you trust If low confidence or self-esteem affects your relationships and everyday life, it's okay to ask for help. Talk to a trusted adult, like a parent, family member, community leader, teacher or doctor.

Look after yourself Looking after our physical and mental wellbeing can help build our confidence and self-esteem. And feeling confident or having high self-esteem can be good for our wellbeing.

Try out some of our wellbeing tips:

- Do things that you enjoy and find relaxing
- Make sure you're sleeping enough and drinking enough water
- Get some daily exercise, like sport, yoga or walking in nature
- Spend time with other people
- Open up to friends, family, partners or other people you trust
- Take breaks from listening to, watching or reading anything that feels difficult

Where can I find more support?

If you want to talk to someone by phone or text, you can contact these free services anytime.

You can talk to them about things you've read in this booklet, or anything else about mental health and wellbeing.

Childline 0800 1111

Offers a 24/7 helpline, plus counselling in English and Welsh. You can also post on message boards to talk to other young people. **[childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk)**

Samaritans 116 123

Helpline open 24/7 for people to talk about any concerns, worries and troubles they're going through.

[samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org)

Shout Text SHOUT to 85258

A confidential and anonymous 24/7 text support service for anyone struggling to cope.

[giveusashout.org](https://www.giveusashout.org)

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