

Self-esteem

Guidance and activities for professionals

What is self-esteem?

Self-esteem is how we value and perceive ourselves. It's based on our opinions and beliefs about ourselves, which can sometimes feel really difficult to change.

Your self-esteem can affect whether you:

- like and value yourself as a person
- are able to make decisions and assert yourself
- recognise your strengths and positive attributes
- feel able to try new or difficult things
- show kindness towards yourself
- move past mistakes without blaming yourself unfairly
- take the time you need for yourself
- believe you matter and are good enough
- believe you deserve happiness

What can cause low self-esteem

The things that affect our self-esteem differ for everyone. Your self-esteem might change suddenly, or you might have had low self-esteem for a while – which might make it hard to recognise how you feel and make changes.

Difficult or stressful life experiences can often be a factor, such as:

- being bullied or abused
- experiencing prejudice, discrimination or stigma
- struggling with your school or college work
- family problems
- ongoing stress
- physical health problems
- mental health problems
- relationship problems
- worries about your appearance and body image

You might have had some of these experiences, and you might also have had difficulties that aren't listed here. Or there might not be one particular cause.

Is low self-esteem a mental health problem?

Having low self-esteem isn't a mental health problem in itself, but they are closely linked. If lots of things affect your self-esteem for a long time, this might lead to mental health problems such as depression or anxiety.

Some of the experiences of low self-esteem can be signs of a mental health problem, particularly if they last for a long time or affect your day-to-day life. For example:

- feeling hopeless or worthless
- blaming yourself unfairly
- hating yourself
- worrying about being unable to do things.

Having a mental health problem can also cause you to have low self-esteem, and it might feel harder to cope or take steps to improve your self-esteem. See our information on mental health problems and seeking help for a mental health problem for more on these topics.

How can I improve my self-esteem?

- Be kind to yourself
- Look after yourself
- Try to notice the good things
- Build a support network
- Learn to be assertive
- Talking and art therapies
- Set yourself a challenge
- Find support for connected issues

Session one

Getting to know the CYP.

Discuss with the CYP how they see themselves.

Have the CYP draw themselves and discuss their interpretation of themselves. Keep this as CYP will draw themselves again at the end of the intervention to compare.

After this, finish the about me sentences. Discuss with the CYP about their answers and encourage them to think deeply about their answers.

Homework

Go home and think about the answers to the questions. Can they think of more examples?

Activity: about me

Finish the sentences below

I was really happy when...

Something my friends like about me is...

I'm proud of...

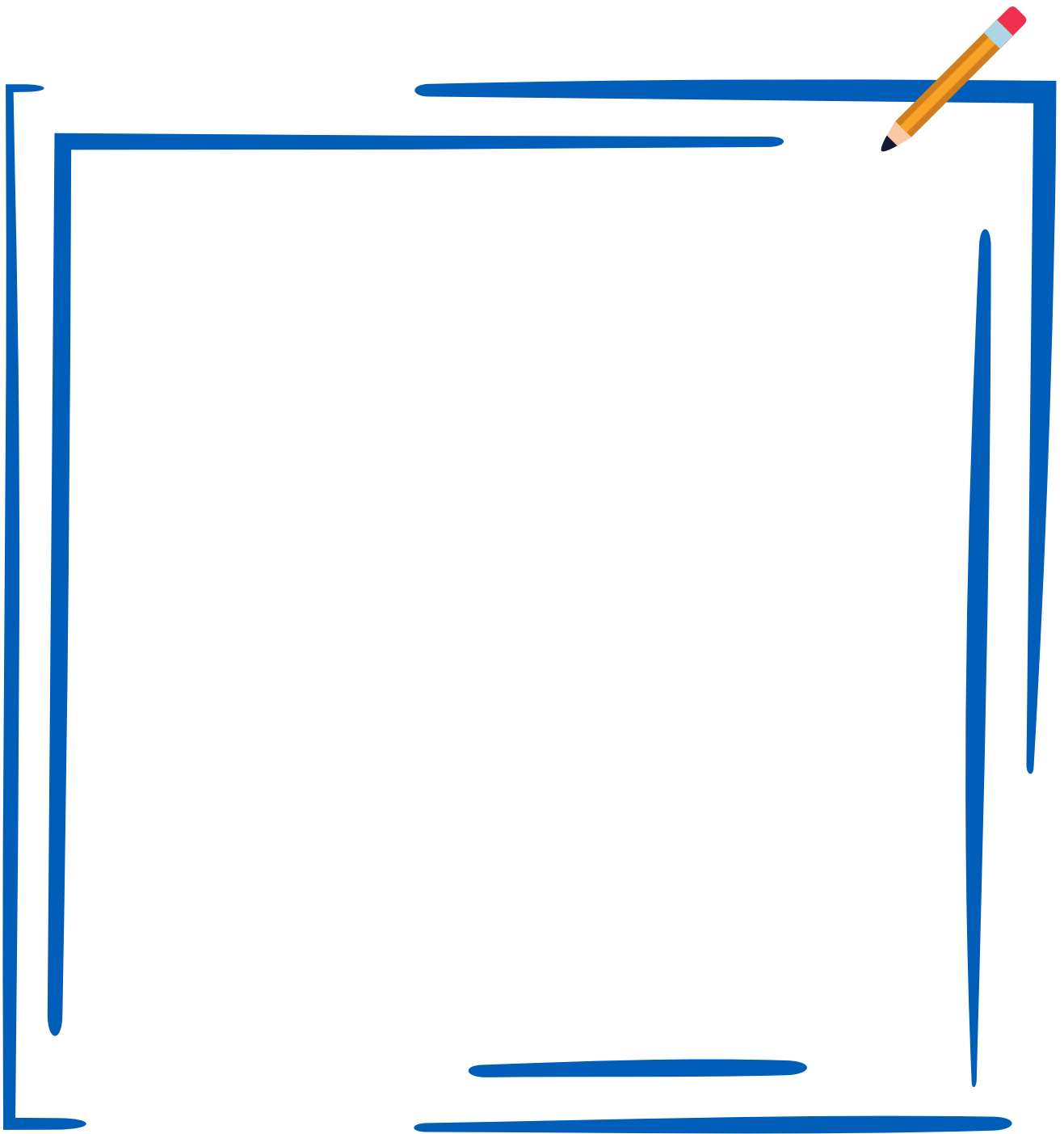
My family was happy when I...

In school/college, I'm good at...

Something that makes me unique is...

Activity: about me

Draw a picture of yourself



Session two

Review the previous homework. Did the CYP think of any more examples? What were they?

Work together to create a gratitude journal. Explain why we make them and look through the examples on the sheet. Can the CYP fill out one now?

Discuss their ideas and why they think this way.

Homework

Gratitude journal

Activity: gratitude journal

Keeping a journal of the things you're grateful for has been shown to have a powerful effect on mental wellbeing. Among other benefits, journaling about gratitude reduces stress, increases happiness, and improves self-esteem.

Instructions

Twice a week, write a detailed entry about one thing you are grateful for. This could be a person, a job, a great meal with friends, or anything else that comes to mind.

Journaling prompts

- The best part about today...
- A reason to be excited for the future is...
- Something beautiful I saw...
- Something I am proud of...
- An unexpected good thing that happened...

Activity: gratitude journal tips

- Don't rush to write down the first thing that comes to your mind. Take time to truly think what you are grateful for. Expect each entry to take around 10-20 minutes.
- Writing about the people who you are grateful for tends to be more powerful than writing about things and objects.
- Explain in detail why you're grateful. For example, if you're grateful for a friend who is nice, describe what they do that's nice and why it makes you grateful.
- Aim for two solid entries a week. Keep your journal somewhere you will see it, and plan when you can write in it.

Session three

Look back at the previous sessions homework.
What kind of things were they grateful for and why?

Today look at a hope jar/box. Explain that through the weeks, every time someone says or does something nice or if they do something they are proud of, then write it down and put it in the jar.

The whole idea is to lookback when we are feeling down or like our self-esteem is low.

Homework

Hope jar/box

Activity: hope jar

Decorate your own jar or box so that it makes you happy. When somebody says something nice about you or you do something you are proud of, put it in the jar or box to look back at.

Look back at all of the comments and memories when you feel you need a little support.



Session four

Best qualities.

Look back at the hope jar. Was there anything they were able to put in it this week? How did it feel?

Look at the CYP's best qualities. Try and focus this around personal qualities and not appearance. If they were a stranger, how would they see them acting with their friends?

Homework

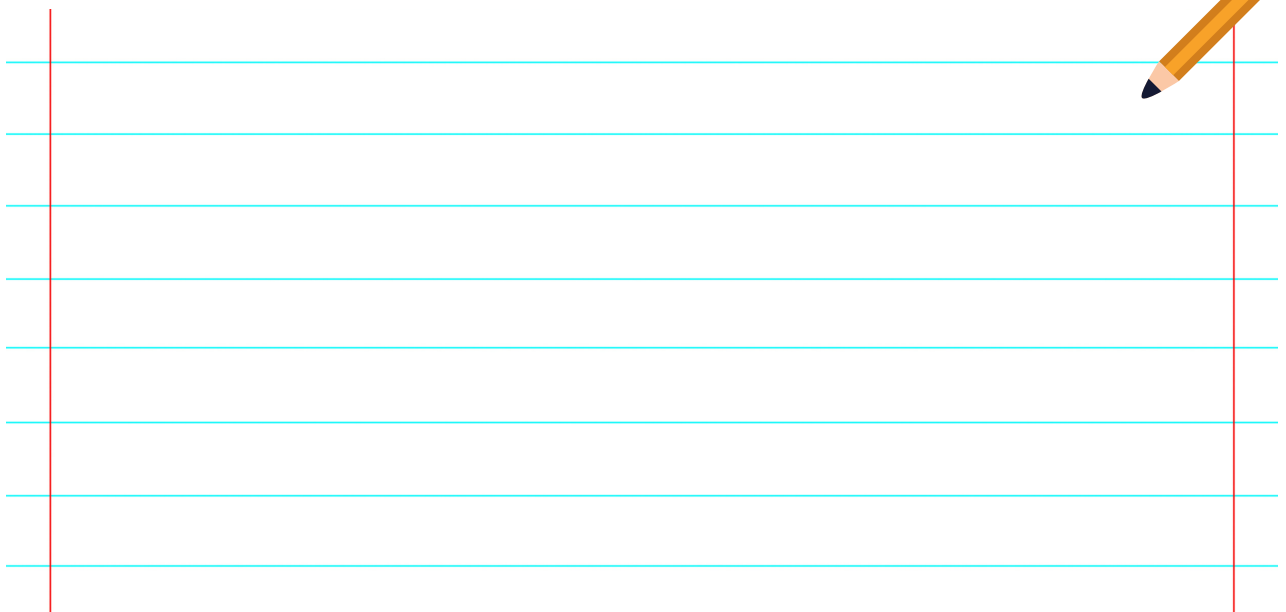
Reflect on the qualities highlighted. Can you notice them this week? When? Where? With who?

Activity: my best qualities

We are all different. You are a very special, unique person with many special, positive qualities.

Can you list as many as you can below? If you are struggling, ask the adult you are with. Try your best to do this on your own though.

Write all those wonderful qualities down and be proud of who you are!



A writing area consisting of ten horizontal blue lines and two vertical red lines forming a frame. A yellow pencil with a red eraser and a blue band is positioned at the top right corner of the frame.

Session five

How I see myself.

Discuss last weeks reflections. Did you notice any of the qualities? When? How did it feel?

Look at the statements on the 'how I see myself' sheet. Have the CYP circle all those they believe applies to them.

Ask why? Can they give an example?

Use this session to gain an insight into why the CYP thinks this way and how they see themselves.

Homework

Look at the circled examples, this week, can they try and find an example of them happening e.g. 'I am kind' - I helped my sibling with their work.

Activity: how I see myself

Please tick the statements that you think are true about yourself:

- I am kind
- I don't say how I feel
- I am good fun to be with
- I am angry
- I am hard working
- I have lots of friends
- I am good at sport
- I follow the rules
- I get others into trouble
- I copy what others do
- I don't care about my education
- I am helpful
- I am cool
- I know what I want to do
- I am clever
- I don't listen
- I can be trusted
- I cause trouble

Session Six

I am an amazing person.

Look back at the examples they collated during the week for the statements. Did they prove any right/wrong? How?

Look at the sentence starters and have the CYP finish them. Discuss when they have done these things and the importance of these as qualities for relationships with self and others.

Have CYP draw a picture of how they see themselves now to compare.

Homework

Use the previous work to continue with hope jar and pick up on the qualities in self and others as discussed.

Activity: I am an amazing person

Read and finish the sentences below:

I am a good friend because...

I have worked had to improve...

I am really good at...

I am proud of myself when...

Activity: I am an amazing person

Read and finish the sentences below:

My special talent is...

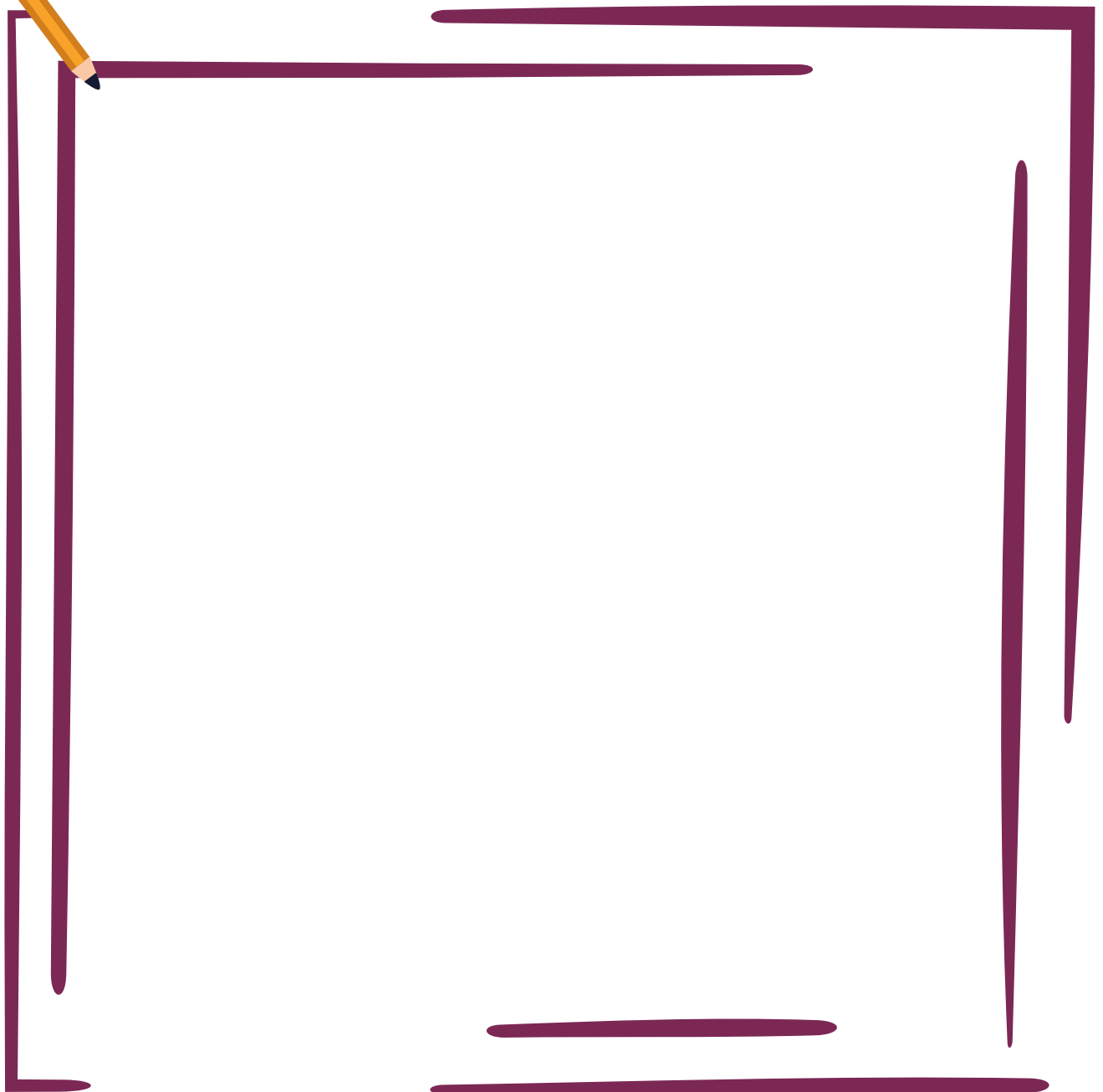
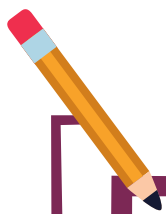
I am unique because...

I am a good team member because...

I am thoughtful because...

Activity: this is me

Draw a picture of yourself after the intervention





**Hull Mental Health
Support Teams**

howareyoufeeling.org.uk