

Self-acceptance

Self-acceptance in children and young people means they recognise their strengths, understand their areas for growth and embrace their uniqueness.

What's self-acceptance?

Self-acceptance for children and young people means they acknowledge they're a unique person, capable of learning from challenges and achieving meaningful growth.

When faced with strong criticism, lack of 'success' or unhelpful perceptions, a child or young person who practises self-acceptance is more likely to choose to think, "I accept myself no matter what".

Self-acceptance can help children and young people deal with stressful situations, such as unhelpful peer comments, issues with body image, and other challenges and difficulties.

Self-acceptance doesn't mean someone accepts their inappropriate behaviour –it helps them look at their actions honestly and make positive changes, supporting their learning and growth.

Keys to strengthening self-acceptance

It's important for children and young people to recognise that they are not their behaviour and, similarly, to distinguish between things like being 'a failure' and finding a task challenging.

Children and young people should ideally be aware of and value their abilities, skills and character strengths in all areas of life including at school, work, family and community relationships. If children and young people value these strengths, then, when faced with difficulty or challenges, they're better able to remind themselves why they're proud of who they are.

Children and young people can practise using self-accepting self-talk when confronted with challenges.

Examples of self-accepting self-talk include:

- "I accept myself no matter what"
- "It's OK to have differences and I respect myself and others."
- "Mistakes and setbacks are inevitable. I will accept myself while learning from them."
- "I am proud of myself."
- "Even if something is challenging, I will get through it, learn from it and I won't give up."
- I will be kind to myself.
- "My performance doesn't determine my worth as a person."
- "I accept who I am."

Educators and self-acceptance

As an educator, you're in a good position to model and encourage self-acceptance among those in your care. Helping all children feel valued for their strengths and uniqueness.

Try to:

- take time to become aware of what self-acceptance is and how you can model this by embracing your own strengths and challenges
- identify opportunities to bring children and young people on board (for instance, asking students to present on self-acceptance, or create an affirmation board)
- reveal to children and young people that they have choices in how they think and behave

- when they're faced with difficulty and challenges
- explain the differences between self-acceptance and being hard on yourself.

While self-acceptance is often described as an internal process, it's important to remember that for some young people, their sense of self may also be closely connected to their family, community or cultural roles.

Promote self-acceptance in children and young people

For younger children (under 8 years), you can promote strong self-acceptance through:

- encouraging them to make positive, accepting and kind statements about themselves
- being proud of their achievements
- providing evidence and discussion about moments when they learnt something new
- highlighting and amplifying their efforts and willingness to try new approaches and how this can help build their confidence
- working together to create an affirmation wall that they can refer to when they are faced with a challenge and don't know what to say or do
- initiating games with younger children using picture cards – "I am" and "I can" messages.
- not judging them by their behaviour and what they have or have not accomplished
- encouraging them not to compare their achievements with others
- modelling self-acceptance self-talk, when faced with difficulty and challenges, by thinking out loud, "I'm me and that's OK – I'm still proud of who I am."

For older children and adolescents, the following approaches can be adopted to promote self-acceptance:

- Introduce children and young people to the concept of self-acceptance. Explain that it can help them think and feel positive,

confident and resilient when faced with tough situations. For example, if a student isn't achieving a result they'd hoped for, you might help them cope with the situation by rehearsing self-acceptance statements.

- use strengths-based language when giving feedback and do so constructively. Focus on the child or young person's contribution and amplify their strengths and how these can be used during challenges e.g., "I noticed you kept going even when it was tough – that determination is a real strength".
- help children and young people become aware of and appreciate their strengths. If a student seems upset you might say, "When you've had a bit of a setback it can be helpful to remind yourself of your strengths and be kind to yourself."

Be You Professional Learning

Find tips on providing support for children, young people and their families, by helping them access information and internal and external supports, in the [Provide](#) module.

Bibliography

Visit [Self-acceptance](#) for a list of references for this Fact Sheet.

