Assessing Self-esteem

It is possible to observe the child whose self-esteem is low. Quite often you will notice certain characteristics and patterns of behaviour. Of course, we all feel 'up' and 'down' on particular days depending on recent events, our general sense of well-being, our health and our moods. Children, too, have their 'good days' and their 'bad days'. Children who have low self-esteem often have a strong need for reassurance and appear to feel insecure. Sometimes they seem to feel safer if they 'take control'. They seem to have no faith in their own capabilities, sometimes have problems learning and are reluctant to express their opinions. Children with low self-esteem find it hard to accept correction or to make decisions, and tend to overreact to failure. They have a low opinion of themselves and sometimes tend to hurt or bully others.

Children who have high self-esteem also have their characteristics though these do not follow a fixed rule. Children who have high self-esteem often behave more appropriately and learn faster. They are more willing to take risks when learning new things, are more confident and are better motivated to try. They make friends more easily, view other people positively, can accept correction or suggestion without giving up and develop a good sense of their strengths and weakness.

If you consider that low self-esteem might be a problem for a child with whom you are working, then you must make sure that you are using positive approaches in which you provide plenty of praise and encouragement. If you need to talk to the child about behaviour, then you need to make sure that they understand that it is their behaviour you wish to see changed and not themselves people. You need also to make time available to spend a few minutes each session with the child independently, so that you build a secure relationship. Once you have a positive and secure relationship, you will be able to take the 'risk' of challenging a child’s behaviour when you need to.
Assessing personal, social and emotional development

As soon as a new child joins your group, you will be making assessments about their personal and social development. You will be watching to see how confident they are, how much help you will need to give them, and how familiar they seem to be with your activities and with other children. Your early observations will tell you a great deal about your child's personal, social skills, particularly their obvious strengths and any additional encouragement or guidance they seem to need.

You will also need to carry out a more systematic assessment of each child. This will tell you:

- What stage they have reached in their personal, social and emotional development;
- Which activities to plan to extend their learning;
- How much progress has been made over time, so that you can share this with parents and the next setting/school;
- Whether a child might have special educational needs which require early intervention or support.

If your setting is registered then it will be subject to regular inspection. When OFSTED inspectors visit you, they will look at your assessment of children's attainments and progress, at how manageable your record-keeping system is, and how you use assessments to plan activities.

When carrying out your assessment you might like to consider these points.

CONFIDENCE:
- Does the child enter your setting with confidence?
- Does the child join in with activities?
- Does the child join in conversations?
SELF-RESPECT:
- Does the child look pleased when you offer praise?
- Is the child proud of his or her achievements?
- Does the child co-operate in a small group?

RELATIONSHIPS:
- Does the child relate well to other children?
- Does the child relate well to familiar adults?
- Does the child co-operate within a small group?

CONCENTRATION:
- Does the child play independently for 15 minutes on an activity of their choosing?
- Can the child persist in a difficult task?
- Can the child work independently for 5 minutes on a set task?

NEW SITUATIONS:
- Can the child cope with change of routine?
- Can the child adapt flexibly to new activities?
- Is the child eager to explore new learning?

PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE:
- Can the child manage his or her own coat?
- Can the child pour juice and drink from a cup?
- Can the child use the toilet independently?
- Can the child wash and dry hands?

INDEPENDENCE IN PLAY:
- Can the child choose an activity?
- Can the child ask for help when needed?
- Can the child think up ideas on his or her own?
- Can the child select the resources needed for a simple activity?

THINKING OF OTHERS:
• Can the child recognise feelings in others?
• Does the child share toys in an activity when helped to?
• Can the child wait for a turn?
• Can the child share in a group?

BEHAVIOUR:
• Does the child respond to 'No'?
• Does the child follow direction when asked?
• Does the child play socially and equally with others?
• Does the child follow simple rules of behaviour when reminded?

RIGHT AND WRONG:
• Does the child understand how to behave appropriately?
• Can the child tell you what is right and wrong?
• Can the child attempt to say why?

LIVING THINGS:
• Does the child treat animals gently?
• Can the child help to look after younger children?
• Does the child show respect for plants and living things?

SURROUNDINGS:
• Does the child look after his or her own property?
• Does the child show respect for nursery property?

*Taken from: Personal, Social and Emotional Development of Children in the Early years foundation Stage by Dr Hannah Mortimer*