

Who Am I?

Goal: + To learn the *Positive Action* philosophy and define self-concept.

Objectives: + To learn that how we think and feel about ourselves is our self-concept.

+ To introduce the *Positive Action* philosophy: “You feel good about yourself when you think positively and do positive actions, and there is always a positive way to do everything.”

Materials Needed Pens

Materials Provided 30 *Positive Action* Journals

Procedure

Teacher Write the name “e.e. cummings” and his quotation, “who are you little i?” on the board in lowercase letters as you say the following.

Say There’s a poem by e.e. cummings that starts: “who are you little i?” Notice I’m writing his name on the board entirely in lowercase letters; also note how he writes the pronoun “i” in lowercase. What do you think he meant by that?

Teacher Wait for responses.

Say You could say cummings was asking life’s big question, “Who am I?” In this poem, he uses the lower case “i” to refer to himself as a young boy, the way a child might feel small. What can help a person evolve from a lower case “i” of a child to an upper case “I” of becoming an adult?

Teacher Wait for responses. Guide toward: Growing and learning as you move from being a child into your teen years. Becoming more aware of who you are as a person. Being aware of your thoughts and actions.

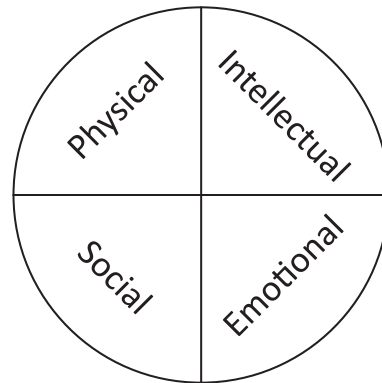
Say People want and need to feel good about themselves; it’s a deep emotional and social need. A lot of what we think, do, and feel is aimed at meeting that need—whether we are aware of it or not. How many of you are aware of your feelings about yourself? Raise your hands.

Teacher Wait for responses.

Say Everything we think and do creates our feeling about ourselves—this is called our self-concept. Our self-concept impacts our goals, attitudes, and decisions—and how our lives turn out. To better understand and strengthen our self-concept, it’s helpful to focus on the four major areas of our lives: physical, intellectual, social, and emotional.

Teacher Distribute *Positive Action Journals* to all students and ask them to record their names. Explain that they are responsible for bringing these to class each day, and that they will use them throughout the year to take notes and record their reflections as they begin to discover more about themselves. Assure them that the contents of their journals will remain confidential.

Then, ask students to record this diagram in their journals as you draw it on the board. Draw a circle and divide it into fourths. Write these words in each quarter: Physical, Intellectual, Social, and Emotional.



Say Now, let's take a moment to rate how we feel about ourselves in each of these areas. Perhaps you are an athlete and you feel competent and confident in the physical area of your life most of the time. Under Physical, you'd write 95% and a plus sign to indicate positive feelings. But perhaps you are shy and sometimes have a hard time talking to people, so in the Social area, maybe you'd write 40% and a plus sign to indicate you feel positive about 40% of the time, and 60% and a negative sign to indicate you feel negative about 60% of the time. Don't worry; we won't be sharing this information. This is just to help you get a picture of your feelings about yourself.

Teacher *Do the activity. Reassure the students that if their responses seem to be all over the map, it's okay; it's normal for teens. They are in a growth phase and things are in flux.*

Say Our self-concept is the result of our thoughts and actions in these four areas of our lives. *Positive Action's PHILOSOPHY* is that *we feel good about ourselves when we do positive actions, and there is always a positive way to do everything.*

Teacher *Write the philosophy on the board, and then ask students to repeat it with you.*

Say Having a positive self-concept is a consequence of thinking positive thoughts and doing positive actions. Feeling good about ourselves means that we feel competent and confident in the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional areas of our lives. It means we can trust ourselves to make good decisions and do the best we can. It means that we feel good about ourselves most of the time, and that we care about what happens to other people. Does this sound simple to achieve, or complex to achieve? Why?

Teacher *Wait for responses.*

Say There are additional factors that can influence our self-concepts.

First, we don't always know what thoughts and actions are positive. If we grew up in an unhappy home or in a violent neighborhood, we might have received confusing messages about how to act in a positive way. Therefore, our sense of ourselves is skewed, too.

There's also the impact of popular culture: movies, TV, Internet, and computer games that often depict disrespectful, obscene, and physically destructive behavior. We get mixed messages all the time. Some teens think you have to choose between being "cool" or "good." We think you can be both.

Second, if we haven't been taught about positive actions in a clear and practical way, we might

not understand how positive actions form a solid positive self-concept. Nor do we understand how positive thoughts and actions can help create a great life, one that we really want.

Third, positive actions require more conscious attention than negative actions. Even so, positive actions have bigger payoffs overall in terms of happiness and success.

Why do you think building a positive self-concept demands more from us than a negative self-concept?

Teacher *Wait for responses. Guide toward: Because building a positive self-concept requires we take responsibility for our thoughts and actions, and our lives. We may need to change old habits.*

Say When it comes to our self-concept, we can choose to either build a positive self-concept or let a negative self-concept take over our minds and hearts.

Think about your life, as it is this morning: All of the surprising, difficult, puzzling things that are part of everyday life for teens. Think of one positive thought that could make a difference in your life. Write that down in your journal.

Teacher *Do the activity.*

Say Our old buddy, Dr. Seuss, has a great little poem:

*“You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself any direction you choose.
You’re on your own.
And you know what you know.
And YOU are the one who’ll decide where to go!”*

During this curriculum, as we learn more about positive thoughts, actions, and feelings, we’ll be sharing with you all the tools, attitudes, and decisions you’ll need to make sure you get where you want to go.

Teacher’s Toolbox

Vocabulary

Teacher: These words are used in the curriculum and may be new to your students. Please use them however you wish: as an exercise to expand vocabulary or improve spelling.

Philosophy: A system of thoughts or beliefs.

Teacher’s Inspiration

When I do good, I feel good. —Abraham Lincoln

There is a direct link between positive behaviors and positive feelings that has been documented and recognized throughout time.