Training Module*

Self-Concept

PURPOSE

To explore the meaning and importance of a positive self-concept as it relates to young children ages two to five.

DEFINITION

Before we begin, let's take a minute to define the term self-concept. Self-concept can be defined as "the view one has of him/herself and his/her abilities." This area of emotional development is extremely important to young children. The development of a positive self-concept at an early age can lead to a positive self-concept later in life. The benefits of a positive self-concept are numerous. An "I can" attitude empowers children to make choices, try new things, and strive for success. The development of a positive self-concept begins at birth and continues throughout our lives. As an educator, you have the power to help build each child's positive self-concept.

Developmentally appropriate activities that promote success, frequent positive reinforcement, and a loving, caring attitude can help build each child's self-concept. Let's take a look at a few specific examples of a positive self-concept at work.

EXAMPLE

Self-concept is demonstrated in a variety of different ways. As an educator it is up to you to observe each child on a continuing basis to note his/her degree of self-concept.

Let's take a look at several specific examples of selfconcept.

Andrew, a two year old, uses the potty by himself for the first time. When his teacher notices this fact, he beams with pride.

Allison, a three year old, is painting at the easel. As she works, she is very intent on her painting. After her painting is finished, Allison runs over to her teacher and pulls on her pant leg. She exclaims with a smile, "Look what I made!"

Eric, a four year old, is working with Legos. As Eric works with the Legos, you can see the concentration in his eyes. As he works, he tells the teacher about what he is doing. "Now, I'm going to add a window," he notes. "Next, I'm going to add a door." Eric has a little difficulty getting the plastic door to attach to the base of his creation. As the teacher attempts to help, Eric says, "No, I can do it myself."

In each case the child mentioned has demonstrated some degree of a positive self-concept. Let's take a look at each case individually.

Andrew, using the potty by himself for the first time – As Andrew's teacher notes his accomplishment, he/she is helping build Andrew's self-concept. In addition, Andrew now knows that he can use the potty "all by himself."

Allison, painting at the easel – In this example Allison is anxious to show the teacher what she has done. She is proud of her picture and wants to show it to someone. Allison's teacher might respond by saying, "You seem very excited about your picture. Tell me about it." This shows Allison that her teacher recognizes her accomplishment.

^{*}ATTENTION TEXAS CUSTOMERS: This training module is considered self-instructional material.

It is important to note, however, that not all children who point out their accomplishments have a positive self-concept. Instead, they may possess just the opposite ... a negative self-concept. These are the children who are constantly exclaiming, "Look what I did!" In many cases, these children feel a constant need for your approval and reinforcement. The difference between this type of child and Allison is sometimes difficult to distinguish. As an educator it is important for you to stay in tune with your children. If one of your children is constantly seeking your attention, you may need to work to build his/her self-concept.

Eric, working with Legos – Eric demonstrated his "I can" attitude by responding to the teacher's attempt to help with "No, I can do it myself." The teacher should respect Eric's wishes and let him attempt the task on his own. This shows Eric that the teacher believes in his abilities.

Keep in mind that a negative self-concept can also be observed in young children. As an educator it is very important for you to note this behavior at an early age. This way you can attempt to help turn these negative self-concepts into positive ones. Let's take a look at an example.

Mindy, a three year old, is working with a puzzle in the MANIPULATIVE area. She is trying to put the pieces into the puzzle but they do not fit properly. After several minutes, Mindy throws the puzzle on the floor and exclaims, "I can't do it!"

In this case Mindy is definitely demonstrating an "I can't" attitude. This type of attitude can be very dangerous because it can lead to a negative self-concept. After repeated frustrations such as this, Mindy might start to believe that she cannot do anything right. If Mindy's teacher is not sensitive to Mindy's frustrations, this could be the beginning of a very serious situation. This "I can't" attitude may carry over as Mindy enters school. It could affect her socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically, as

well as academically. In fact, her negative self-concept could affect her for the rest of her life.

To prevent this disaster, Mindy's teacher needs to be sensitive to Mindy's frustrations. Let's take another look at Mindy.

Mindy obviously had difficulty with the puzzle on which she was working. The signs of frustration vary from one child to the next, so Mindy's teacher would need to be very observant. In order to help reduce or eliminate some of Mindy's frustration, the teacher could have helped Mindy with the puzzle. This would have helped her to achieve success. In addition, the teacher could encourage Mindy to try the puzzle again tomorrow. Perhaps Mindy was just having a bad day. Mindy's teacher could also provide puzzles which are more appropriate for Mindy's developmental level. This way she would be more likely to achieve success. As Mindy masters easier puzzles, her teacher can provide her with puzzles of increasing difficulty. Mindy's teacher will need to take time to observe her behavior closely over the next few weeks, making notes of the behavior and situations when Mindy exhibits a negative self-concept. In addition, Mindy's teacher should note Mindy's strong areas. This way he/she can structure activities associated with Mindy's strengths that build up her self-concept.

SUMMARY

A positive self-concept is one of the most valuable gifts a teacher can give a child. An "I can" attitude can lead a child down a path of success and accomplishment. As educators we need to be sensitive to each child's personal strengths and weaknesses. We need to watch for signs of frustration and then try to determine the cause. Although this takes time, the results of a positive self-concept are well worth the effort.

ATTENTION CDA TRAINERS: Have each CDA candidate complete this Follow-up Evaluation individually after your group presentation. Evaluate his/her performance and then discuss the results together. This evaluation does <u>not</u> need to be reviewed by HighReach Learning.

Follow-up Evaluation

Self-Concept

Name	HRL Customer Number
Address	Phone
School Name	Phone
School Address	
Who is responsible for payment? ☐ Self ☐ Other	
Complete the following to the best of your ability.	
I. Define self-concept.	
2. Why is a positive self-concept important to the young child?	
3. Describe how young children demonstrate a positive self-cond	cept. Give specific examples.
4. What effect can a negative self-concept have on the young chil	ld?

5. List several ways you can build each child's positive self-concept.	
6. Look through the curriculum you use in your classroom and identify two activities the children completed during this month that helped build each child's self-concept. If you cannot find two, design two yourself.	
7. Observe each child in your care for one week. Note times when he/she demonstrates an "I can" and an "I can't" attitude. Detail your observations below.	

This Training Module is designed to be used in conjunction with the curriculum you are currently using in the classroom. Prior to completing the module, explore your curriculum plans and think about how the topic of the module fits into those plans. Throughout the coming months, consider ways in which you can apply the training topic to a variety of classroom activities. As with children, practicing new skills on a daily basis makes a big difference.

In order to receive credit:

- 1. Read the Training Module and complete the Follow-up Evaluation.
- 2. Enclose check or money order in the amount of \$18.00 (payable to HighReach Training Program) and your completed Follow-up Evaluation.
- 3. Mail to:

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