



Respectful Futures

Shaping Healthy Relationships

Module 6

How to Develop and Sustain Healthy Relationships

Abstract

The goal for Module 6 is to empower students to understand and engage in healthy relationships in which those involved are:

- Responsible for their own happiness
- Able to set and maintain healthy, flexible boundaries
- Able to recognize that each individual has a right and responsibility to represent their authentic self

When one has healthy self-esteem and compassion for oneself and others, one is more likely to form healthy, affirming, and nourishing relationships. A healthy relationship is one that is grounded in respect, safety, and equality. As we are responsible for our own happiness and wellness, we must understand the role that self-esteem, self-compassion, and self-care play in our own personal health and the health of our relationships.

In order to understand the differences between self-esteem and “other esteem,” students will brainstorm a list of sources for a person’s views of “self” (e.g., parents, teachers, culture, “likes” on Facebook, etc.). Self-esteem – the ways in which we esteem our self – involves care and concern for self and taking responsibility for our own contentment. It does not allow others to be in charge of how we feel about ourselves.

We are not perfect human beings. We are not supposed to be. While we should all strive to do our best, each one of us feels inadequate from time to time. It is part of the human condition. When we compassionately connect with our own humanity, we will connect more with the humanity of others. Compassion means we notice and are moved by the suffering of others. It means that we offer understanding and kindness to others when they make mistakes. When we practice self-compassion, we extend the same feelings of understanding and kindness towards ourselves when we fall short of our own expectations. Having compassion for ourselves is as important as having compassion for others.

This module creates an opportunity for students to develop a list of ways in which they can practise self-care and balance in their lives. It is a celebration of each individual and their personal power.

Big Ideas

Developing a positive sense of self-worth through acceptable avenues (e.g., academics, athletics, artistic talents, and social competence) can be a powerful force for eliminating the need to engage in unhealthy, disrespectful relationships.

Learning to extend more compassion to ourselves and others aids in the development of a mature and healthy self-esteem.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Learn to believe in themselves more, trust themselves more, and feel more confident and compassionate about who they are, based on the characteristics of healthy relationships (from Module 1)
- Define and understand the concepts of self-esteem and misplaced pride
- Describe the effects of having a healthy self-esteem and self-compassion
- Describe the effects of having low self-esteem or unwarranted high self-esteem
- Understand how personal values influence self-esteem, self-respect, and self-compassion
- Understand the connection between healthy self-esteem and the ability to form and sustain healthy relationships

Learning Activities and Resources

1. Two Aspects of Self-Esteem
2. Getting to Know Me: Self-Esteem and Self-Compassion and How Do I Like Myself
3. Be Kind to Yourself: Actions That Advance Self-Esteem and Self-Compassion
4. Getting to Know Me: Values
5. Five Rings of Self-Esteem
6. Boundaries Revisited
7. Basic Rights in Relationships Revisited

For Facilitators

Self-esteem is a state of mind and being. It includes how we think and feel about ourselves, and influences how we think and feel about other people. Self-esteem is a critical element in virtually everything we do. It determines our level of

contentment and fulfilment, and the degree of satisfaction and happiness we experience at school, in relationships, at home, at play, and in our jobs or careers. Self-esteem is part of our internal belief system and becomes a filter for how we experience life. Positive self-esteem is an essential ingredient in a fulfilling life.

Self-compassion is also a state of mind and being. It is our ability to turn our attention inward and notice that we are hurting because we made a mistake. We need to find ways to be kind to ourselves in spite of our shortcomings. This does not mean that we are cavalier about our mistakes; it does mean that I can be gentle in correcting my behaviour.

Personal power is our ability to have an effect or influence in the world. It is the birthright of every individual and is accompanied by the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness, as well as the responsibility to use our personal power morally and ethically.

Let's get started

The following facilitation notes provide context and strategies that instructors can rely on during their delivery of the resources. PowerPoints have been developed and a small number of short videos have been selected to correspond with the module's materials. Those are located on the Respectful Futures site.

Facilitation Notes

Two Aspects of Self-Esteem

This handout explains what self-esteem is, describes healthy self-esteem, and points out that too little or too much self-esteem can be problematic.

1. Have students read the material.
2. Facilitate a debrief using the following questions as discussion starters:
 - a. Where do you see yourself doing well?
 - b. Where do you see opportunities for change?
 - c. What will you do to make those improvements?
 - d. How might your relationships change with these improvements?

Getting to Know Me: Self-Esteem and Self-Compassion and How Do I Like Myself

This exercise is intended to help students take stock of themselves. The scoring should be private and should not/need not be shared with the class. It would be wise to assure students before the exercise that the worksheet will not be collected and the results are theirs alone. Once completed, the worksheets could be shredded to ensure privacy.

1. Introduce the exercise and have students complete the worksheet.
2. Distribute the scoring interpretation page (How Do I Like Myself?). As stated above, scoring should be private and should not/need not be shared with the class. If you decide to debrief the exercise, be aware that some students may not feel comfortable speaking personally about their results. Allow them to keep silent and simply listen. Watch for reactions that might suggest that a student needs counselling help.
3. The following questions can help strengthen student response to the exercise based on new information from the handouts.
 - a. Almost all people can build their self-esteem in positive ways. Given the information you now have, where do you see opportunities for change?
 - b. What will you do to make those improvements?
 - c. How might your relationships change if you make these improvements?
 - d. What types of problems might a person experience if their self-esteem is too low or too high?

Be Kind to Yourself: Actions That Advance Self-Esteem and Self-Compassion

This handout provides more information on how to keep self-esteem within a healthy range and improve it if necessary. While most of the items on the list appear to be “common sense,” most people have trouble at times making the advice work. Have students focus seriously on the way these actions can improve lives. You may ask them to think of times when the actions could be useful, and facilitate a discussion on how that might play out.

Getting to Know Me: Values and Five Rings of Self-Esteem

The Values exercise provides students with a vehicle for understanding themselves better and connecting accurate self-knowledge to self-esteem. Being honest about who we are, what we value, and how we esteem ourselves can be a very illuminating experience. The answers to the Values questions provide examples of things one can

be proud of (leading to positive self-esteem) and those that may not be so wonderful (leading to negative self-esteem). These ideas can be uncovered in a debrief.

The Five Rings of Self-Esteem handout can be distributed after a debrief of the Values exercise. The handout provides students with a visual that organizes the concepts they have been learning in this module.

Boundaries and Basic Rights in Healthy Relationships Revisited

Consider reintroducing these two concepts while concluding Module 6. These ideas were introduced in Module 1 as building blocks of healthy relationships. In Module 6, the concepts may be revisited through the lens of enhancing our relationship with ourselves.

Debrief by asking students to discuss the importance of knowing oneself. The following questions can serve as discussion starters:

1. How does a clear set of personal values inform your personal boundaries?
2. How can these values strengthen your ability to exercise your basic rights and responsibilities with respect?

Replay/Assessment

Here are a few ideas for wrapping up this session. Feel free to choose from among them, depending upon the flow of the class and/or students' preferences.

- Have students work individually or in small groups to design and make a poster that pulls all of the concepts in this module together.
- Ask students to write on the following:
 - What are two or three things you learned today? Why is this learning important to you?
 - What are you prepared to use to improve the accuracy and quality of your self-esteem and why?
 - What do you need more information about? Do some research to provide further information that answers your questions.
 - How does the notion of self-esteem connect to self-compassion? How does it “fit” with self-awareness?
 - How does positive and healthy self-esteem help build healthy relationships with others?
 - How did the Values exercise inform you about your self-esteem?

- How does understanding the way in which self-esteem is established allow us to better follow the Me+You+Us Model?
- How does our self-esteem help us make good use of the ABCDE Model and the concept of positive self-talk?

In Conclusion

This module has focused on self-esteem, self-compassion, and self-awareness. It explored the way in which these aspects of ourselves are established and nurtured, and the manner in which this knowledge can be used to keep our self-esteem within a healthy range. This module is the last in the *Respectful Futures Program*.

We now live in a world that includes false news, “reality” TV that brings out the worst in relationships, celebrities who model harmful communication, and unmonitored Internet sites. There is a great need to help children and youth build healthier and more respectful relationships with others. *Respectful Futures* is both the name of a resource and our shared vision. While this is the end of the modules, it is not the end of the learning. Understanding and using these skills will build healthier relationships, families, and communities.

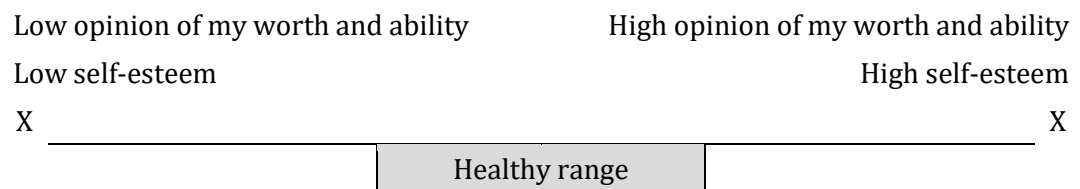
The following pages are the handouts and resources to be provided to learners.

Two Aspects of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem has two aspects:

- **Self-respect:** Having a positive yet realistic sense of our essential worth as a person. It begins in childhood and is influenced by what we learned about our self in our family and culture. It is a belief in our inherent right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- **Competence:** This refers to our ability to cope with life, learn from our mistakes, grow, change, and do better when we know better.

Self-esteem is not a static state of being. It falls on a continuum and changes from day to day and situation to situation. Where we put ourselves on that continuum depends on many factors. There is a healthy range that we can strive to live within. However, problems can exist at either end of this continuum.



No one is entirely lacking in self-esteem nor are we incapable of growing in our sense of personal worth and competence. Here are some ways in which we can build our self-esteem and support it in others.

- Accept yourself and others as inherently valuable human beings who are changing, growing, and learning all the time
- Pay attention to your self-talk, knowing that you can change it from negative (creating chaos) to positive (creating calm)
- Be willing to take responsibility for your behaviour in all ways, and be supportive of the development of that skill in others
- Honour your needs, wants, and values in life while respecting the same in others. Before you can honour your needs, wants, and values, you must know what they are.
- Set goals, create realistic action plans, and follow through. Ask for help when you need it, and offer it when you can.
- Build integrity by keeping your word and acting within your values and beliefs. Your words and actions should be consistent with each other. Walk your talk. Do what you know to be right. Don't trust others if they make you not trust yourself.

Getting to Know Me: Self-Esteem and Self-Compassion

Next to each statement, write a number that honestly reflects your feelings about yourself.

- 4 – If it's totally true*
- 3 – If it's mostly true*
- 2 – If it's partly true*
- 1 – If it's not true at all*

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 1 | _____ | I can work through set-backs and challenges. |
| 2 | _____ | I am at ease meeting new people. |
| 3 | _____ | I think most people like me. |
| 4 | _____ | When I look in the mirror, I like what I see. |
| 5 | _____ | I am comfortable with my skills. |
| 6 | _____ | I am willing to take reasonable risks. |
| 7 | _____ | I find work rewarding. |
| 8 | _____ | I like a lot of things about myself. |
| 9 | _____ | I am satisfied with the quality of my friendships. |
| 10 | _____ | I have plenty of energy. |
| 11 | _____ | I'm basically a person with a positive outlook. |
| 12 | _____ | I can laugh at my mistakes. |
| 13 | _____ | I am not easily hurt by criticism. |
| 14 | _____ | I think others find me interesting. |
| 15 | _____ | I believe I am still growing and changing. |
| 16 | _____ | I am able to forgive others for their mistakes. |
| 17 | _____ | I feel valued by people who are important to me. |
| 18 | _____ | I am unique. |
| 19 | _____ | There is little I would change about my appearance. |
| 20 | _____ | I show understanding and concern for others. |
| 21 | _____ | The people I care about value my opinions. |
| 22 | _____ | I express my thoughts and feelings without fear. |
| 23 | _____ | I accept and learn from my own mistakes. |
| 24 | _____ | I can make my life whatever I want. |
| 25 | _____ | I wouldn't trade places with very many people. |
| 26 | _____ | I am happy for others when they succeed. |

- 27 _____ I can compliment myself for a job well done.
- 28 _____ I look after my body (physical facet).
- 29 _____ I look after my mind.
- 30 _____ I look after my spirit (spiritual facet).

I feel balanced in my mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical facets of my life.

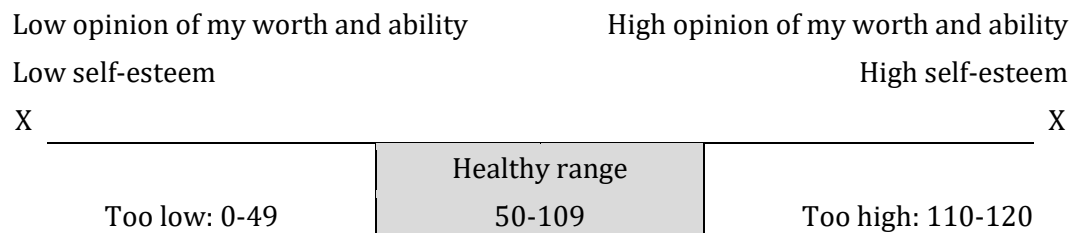
How Do I Like Myself?

How did you score?

- 100-109 Congratulations! If you answered the questions truthfully, you have an especially healthy self-concept.
- 75-99 If your score falls within this range, you're probably one of those lucky people who really like themselves. Although you know you're not perfect, you believe in yourself enough to make it through almost any personal problem and keep on growing.
- 50-74 You may have mixed feelings about yourself. You are aware of some of your strengths, but may be paying more attention to what you see as your weaknesses. By focusing on your strengths and being aware of areas where you would like to make changes, you can make positive changes.

Is your self-rating perhaps too low or too high?

- 49 or below You're not so happy with yourself. Maybe you are going through a low period like we all do occasionally. If you are always this down on yourself, your self-image is probably no more accurate than that of a very conceited person. You may want to talk over your feelings and thoughts with a close friend or counsellor.
- 110-120 If your score is above 110, you may be kidding yourself. It's uncommon for people to feel totally good about their personality, and you may be overlooking some personality shortcomings. If you're over-estimating yourself, you may find others being put off by your inflated ego.



Be Kind to Yourself: Actions That Advance Self-Esteem and Self-Compassion

- *Stop being so hard on yourself*
Criticism does not change anything except how you feel about yourself. Criticizing yourself has the same effect as criticizing someone else. It can only erode self-esteem. Accept yourself as you are right now. Everybody has the personal power to change. When you know better, do better! Meanwhile, let yourself “out of jail” for past mistakes. Learn from them and move towards being a better human being.
- *Pay attention to what you are telling yourself*
Are you using negative self-talk and creating chaos in your mind? It is not the events in our lives that matter most; it is what we tell ourselves about those events that will determine the quality of our lives. Instead of saying “Why me?” and feeling like a victim (as though life were out to get you), try saying, “Why not me? I know I can handle this situation. Life isn’t out to get me; I am out to get life!”
- *Be gentle, kind, and patient with yourself*
We are all learning and growing every day. Life is not about not making mistakes; life is about learning from the mistakes we make and moving forward.
- *Catch yourself doing well*
So often we pay much more attention to the negative than the positive. Start paying more attention to what you are doing well. Notice the ways in which you are improving. Give yourself a pat on the back for every job well done.
- *Support yourself and let others support you*
We all need support, and not just once in a while. Explore the things that feel supportive to you. Get curious. Try things on for size, like a yoga class, going to the gym, joining a book club, reaching out to friends. We need to be supportive to ourselves, and we need to let others support us. Let your friends know what you are going through and let them help.
- *Acknowledge your negative patterns, and then gently let them go*
We are living, breathing, learning, and growing beings. Sometimes we slide into negative habits. When we do, our job is to notice and decide whether or not this pattern gives me confidence and pride in how I’m living my life. If it doesn’t, let it go and replace it with a habit more aligned with your values. Do not beat yourself up if you cannot change instantly. Old habits can be hard to break. Keep focused, and old hurtful habits will change.

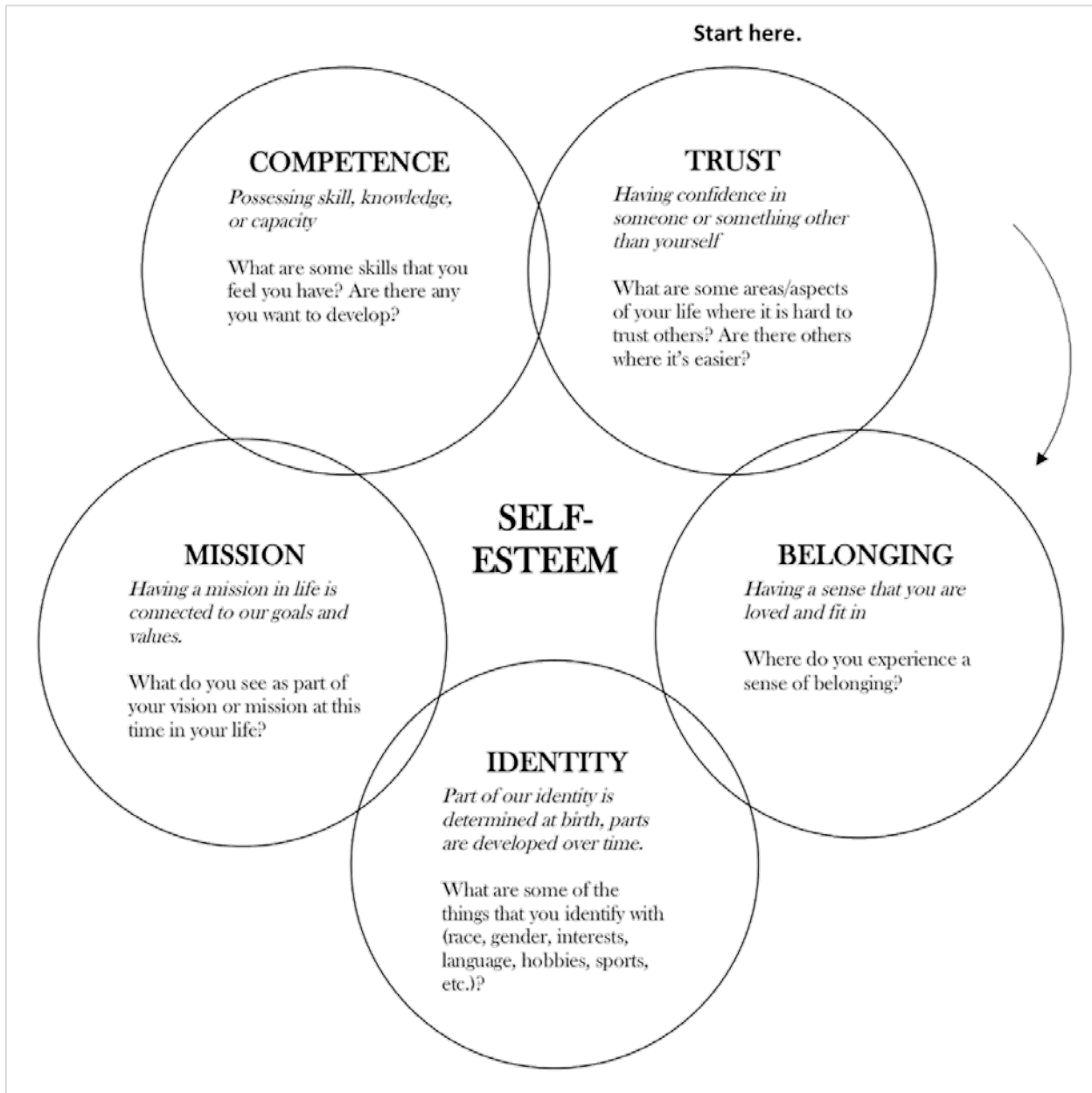
Getting to Know Me: Values

Answer 8-10 of the following questions. Then, in groups of two or three, share your answers. This is a creative way of learning what our own values are and how people have different values, many of which are positive and admirable. It's also a good way to learn to listen and to communicate. We can again discover that we can have wonderful relationships even when our values differ.

If you were the principal of your school, what would you change?
What is your favourite holiday?
What is your favourite season?
What is your favourite movie?
Are you a fashion follower or a fashion leader?
If you had \$100, what would you buy?
What is your favourite sport to watch or to play?
What was the most important event that happened this year?
What are the most important qualities you look for in a friend?
What talent do you wish you had?
Do you like your name? If not, what name would you choose for yourself?

What is the first thing you notice about a person?
What is the best part about being you?
What is your dream job?
What makes you angry?
If you won the lottery, what would you do?

Five Rings of Self-Esteem



- The development of self-esteem begins with trust.
- Each ring begins forming in childhood.
- All five rings continue to change and grow during your lifetime.
- Grow your self-esteem by focusing your time and energy on a ring that you feel needs some attention.

Boundaries Revisited

Boundaries are the limits you set around yourself to protect and contain your “self” and others. Your boundaries are rooted in your ability to know and value yourself and others. You will build better boundaries when you are clear about where you end and others begin. We all have the right and the responsibility to set healthy, clear, and flexible boundaries.

Boundaries are influenced by the culture we grew up in. Hugging is one example. Some cultures are very free with hugs, while others are more reserved. Some people are OK with hugging the first time you meet; for others it is reserved for closer, more established relationships. A person who is inclined to hug at first meeting will want to make sure that the person being hugged is comfortable before simply moving in. Conversely, the hugger should not feel rejected if the person being hugged does not welcome the hug.

Boundaries can be physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual:

- *Physical:* Our bodies and our personal space
- *Emotional:* Comfort zone (This separates the self from another. It allows us to see ourselves as unique, with our own feelings, needs, and perceptions. It enables us to decide what behaviours we will accept from others and with whom we will be close.)
- *Social:* Social network, friends, and family (This enables us to decide with whom we will be close and whom we will keep at a distance.)
- *Mental:* Beliefs, ideas, information, decision-making process (This determines what information we will take in and consider.)
- *Spiritual/cultural:* Beliefs about the world and our place in it

Healthy, flexible boundaries help us in many ways:

- Healthy boundaries build confidence. As you become more aware of your values, likes and dislikes, and strengths and weaknesses, you will become better able to know yourself. People will sense your clarity and know what to expect from you.
- Boundaries are a form of protection. They make you less vulnerable and enable you to stop being manipulated. Healthy boundaries are like a fence with a gate: they allow you to let in that which is good and keep out that which is harmful. They make you less vulnerable.
- Boundaries are about protection and containment. They help to control the impact you have on the world and they help control the impact the world has on you.
- Boundaries are an important aspect of a healthy relationship; they help build respect for yourself and for others.

- Boundaries make you an asset to your family, friends, team, and community. Others can trust you to be clear about what you can and cannot do. People will know what they can expect from you.
- Boundaries help you control your own life; they allow you to be responsible for your own happiness.
- Boundaries enable you to determine the kinds of experiences you want to have. They help you to be your authentic self. As you become clearer about what's OK and not OK for you, others become more aware of who you truly are.
- Boundaries are about taking care of yourself, not controlling others.
- Boundaries are flexible. They may change depending on:
 - Our role or job at the time
 - How we are feeling
 - The situation we are in

For example, how we behave at a family gathering may be very different from how we behave at work or at school. A friend can stand closer to us than a stranger can. If we are angry with someone or they are angry with us, we may need more space between us. Healthy boundaries are flexible. They are like a fence around a beautiful garden. The fence has a gate: we decide what we let in and what we keep out.

Basic Rights in Healthy Relationships Revisited

- The right to safety
- The right to be treated with respect and dignity
- The right to be free from any form of abuse, whether emotional or physical
- The right to have and express my own opinion
- The right to my feelings
- The right to privacy (which is different from secrecy)
- The right to be involved in decisions that affect me
- The right to be called by no names that devalue me
- The right to be asked respectfully rather than ordered
- The right to choose my own friends
- The right to set and maintain my own boundaries
- The right to have and pursue my own interests
- The right to my own identity
- The right to change my mind

