

Who am I?

Explore your child's ideas about self

A person's sense of self develops throughout life, but big changes happen during childhood. At first, there is a gradual recognition that other people exist as separate from the child, then that the child is a person like other people. This growing sense also means the child comes to recognise their own special characteristics.

This activity is a good way of finding out about how children think about themselves.

You will need

Paper and pencil; child

Activity

- Sit down with your child and ask them to tell you about themselves. Ask them for ten answers to the question 'Who am I?'
- As your child gives an answer, write it down on a new line on your paper.
- You may need to encourage your child to come up with enough answers, and younger children, in particular, may need encouragement. But don't suggest answers; wait for them to come from your child in the way that they want to give them.

When you have got ten answers, decide what each one is about:

P = *physical features or activities*,
such as hair colour or favourite sports

C = *character*,
such as being quiet or noisy

R = *relationships*,
such as having lots of friends

I = *inner qualities of self*,
like feelings or wishes

Write P, C, R or I alongside each statement.

Add up how many answers of each type your child gave.
Then draw a chart showing your child's 'profile'.

Child of our Time



Who am I?

The explanation

Younger children usually think of themselves mainly in Physical terms. This is partly because at first they see themselves mainly as others see them and their physical aspects are the most obvious.

As children get older, they tend to think more about their own views of themselves, so they give more Character answers. They also begin to reflect on their social selves and Relationship answers become more significant.

This trend towards developing more self-reflection then leads them to think more about the Inner qualities, that only they experience, as defining their selves.

Middle childhood is also a time when self-esteem becomes more important, when children begin to think about themselves in positives and negatives. This gradually gets more 'differentiated' as they begin to see that they may be good at some things and not so good at others. Helping children to feel good about their positive aspects is important for their development.

Showing an interest in your child's sense of self is one way of letting them know that you care about them.

You might like to keep your child's 'Who am I?' answers and the PCRI chart to look at again when they are older. You could also repeat this activity from time to time and keep track of how your child's self-image is growing and changing.