

## Theme 1: Being an individual

### Suggested content

### Teacher notes

#### *Personal identity*

Personal identity: a sense of self

- physical
- emotional
- spiritual
- social aspects of identity

Responsibility for oneself

- acknowledging thoughts
- identifying feelings
- appropriate expression of feelings
- personal beliefs

The Peer Support Foundation's support document, *Relating to me*, is a useful resource for this section.

How people view themselves can be thought of as "their relationship with themselves" or an aspect of personal identity.

It is valuable to understand this relationship as a basis for understanding more about relationships with other people.

Becoming an adult is associated with having a sense of identity which includes:

- body image
- gender
- sexual identity
- uniqueness
- strengths
- interests.

It includes accepting all aspects of one's identity.

Not all groups will be comfortable discussing these issues. Reflective journals are an acceptable alternative.

### *Links between personal identity and personal behaviour*

Thoughts influence actions

The way we think influences what we do. As patterns of thinking are learned (we are not born with them) they can be changed to be more helpful.

Values

- change over time
- links to self-respect

Acting in accordance with personal values promotes self-respect, whereas acting against values creates discomfort.

Beliefs

- changing limiting beliefs
- strategies for managing change

The belief that maturity means being perfect is a limiting belief. A test of maturity is the way we deal with mistakes.

Another limiting belief is the belief that we have to be totally independent. Human beings work best in groups.

### *Strategies to support a positive identity and good mental health*

Developing resilience

- challenge builds strength
- acknowledge achievements
- accepting support from others

Resilience is the ability to “bounce back” after bad experiences. Everyone has bad experiences in their lives and can learn from them.

Self and actions

- feedback
- outcomes of action

Encourage the students to give themselves credit for their resilience to date. Pay attention to the things that are taken for granted but are actually achievements.

Consider whether there can be benefits from adversity.

Good people sometimes do silly things. Help students distinguish between self and actions by, say:

- taking notice of feedback from people whose opinion they value
- taking notice of their own reactions
- looking at the intended result of their actions.

### *A positive sense of self as a basis for positive relationships*

#### Positive relationships

- honesty
- responsibility
- communication

Positive relationships are built on personal honesty. They involve taking responsibility for one's actions and feelings, and clarifying what one wants in the relationship.

Relationships are important for health and happiness. Family relationships are amongst the most important.

#### Independence and interdependence

- balance
- boundaries

People are always bound together by relationships. No one is truly independent. At the same time, being adult involves the establishment of appropriate boundaries. The boundaries protect the individual by defining which people and ideas are let in and which are kept at a distance.

#### Difficulties with relationships

- clarifying needs
- readiness to solve problems
- fairness

Relationships always involve negotiating different needs and conflict. The only way to sort out conflict in the long term is to listen to the other person's point of view and to negotiate a solution.

### *Creating a sense of personal future*

#### Future directions

- qualities
- experiences
- relationships
- skills

It is important to identify interests and wants in order to identify a direction, if not a goal, to aim for. One can ask:

- What are some things I would like to be able to have in my future life?
- Which qualities would I like to develop?
- What sort of relationships do I wish to have?
- Which skills do I want to develop?

#### Plans

- building in success
- support
- reality
- ongoing modification

Develop a plan. Consider what steps need to be taken to achieve these aims and what support can be obtained.

Emphasise that it is important to have a plan and that plans can always be changed or adapted.

Plans will need persistence.