



Self-confidence and Self-esteem

Many children who have BESD also have issues of low self-esteem and self-confidence. Here are some ideas of how to support them, and keep yourself feeling positive too.

▲●■ Links to Area of Learning

Make sure that the expectations on the child are appropriate and that there are regular opportunities for meeting success and receiving positive praise.

We know that children thrive when their emotional needs are being met and also that they fail to thrive if consistent care and emotional support is absent. Earlier in the book we saw how certain patterns of early care, inconsistency and attachment difficulty can lead to emotional and behavioural difficulties. The main area of difficulty for these children is likely to be low self-esteem and low confidence. We learn confidence through trying things out and meeting with success – the more we succeed, the more we are motivated to have another go. For children who meet failure or rebuttal, the opposite can be true. Your role is to provide experiences and activities in which the children can feel successful and thereby feel positive about themselves and more willing to learn.

There are three main approaches to raising a child's self-esteem and self-confidence. The three approaches can be used in parallel. The first approach is to provide a level of security that helps a child to develop confidence and to explore. This can be done by making sure that there is a consistent and dependable key person with whom the child with BESD can form a positive and enduring relationship. This person provides an 'emotional anchor' for the child and may disapprove of certain behaviours, but always makes it clear that the child is valued and accepted for who they are. The second approach is to make sure that the expectations on the child are appropriate and that there are regular opportunities for meeting success and receiving positive praise. This might involve making sure that you do not expect too great a change at once when intervening to encourage appropriate behaviour. It also means making sure that the learning outcome is suitable for the child, given the various difficulties that the child has. Thirdly, there needs to be positive behaviour management. This means setting clear boundaries, finding a way of containing the child's strong feelings and reactions, and managing incidents firmly, assertively and calmly.

Of course, this is all easy to say. When it comes down to it, you also need to ensure that the needs of the other children are not compromised and that everyone stays safe and can make free choices in their play. This is quite a hard balancing act and you will need to lean on your colleagues and support staff in order to preserve your own self-esteem and confidence.

Your aim for all the children is to help them to respond to significant experiences, showing a range of feelings when appropriate. You also need to help them to develop awareness of their own needs, views and feelings, and be sensitive to the needs, views and feelings of others. Finally, you need to help the children develop respect for their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people.

▲●■ Assessment records

You will find an assessment record for working out which skills and competencies the child has already acquired on the next two pages. As a starting point, look out for and work on behaviours that are sometimes but not yet always demonstrated.



Assessment sheet: Self-confidence and Self-esteem Name: Key person:

Personal, Social and Emotional Development **Emotional Development: Self-confidence and Self-esteem**

Enter date observed

	What I do now	Never	Sometimes	Always
Development matters				
Finding comfort	Have a favourite toy or plaything for security* Show care and concern for others Show attachment to one favourite adult Can be comforted and calmed by certain adults Am comforted by a favourite activity/music			
Demonstrating feelings	My key person knows from my behaviour how I'm feeling* Indicate to you whether I am happy or sad Recognise happy, sad and angry expressions in others Use one or two feelings words independently			
Making choices	Choose between different playthings Choose between different playmates* Indicate what I want without upsetting others Assert myself appropriately Offer a toy when asked for it Pass a toy without throwing it Ask for a toy without snatching Opt in for activities at group time Use the phrases 'I want...' or 'I like...'			

	Say 'no' when others try to lead me on*		
Recognising danger	Stay within the confines of the setting		
	Follow simple safety rules		
	Hold a hand when walking during outings		
	Walk sensibly when indoors		
	Climb down from heights safely		
Self-confidence	Show pleasure in some of the playthings		
	Show pleasure in some of the activities		
	Confident to respond to an adult one-to-one		
	Confident to participate in free play		
	Confident to handle changes in routine		
	Confident around new adults*		
	Look content and settled 50% of the session		
Self-esteem	Manage not to upset others 50% of the session		
	Demonstrate some friendly behaviour*		
	Talk about myself positively		
	Will allow myself to be corrected		

Early Learning Goals:

Respond to significant experiences, showing a range of feelings when appropriate.
 Have a developing awareness of their own needs, views and feelings, and are sensitive to the needs, views and feelings of others.
 Have a developing respect for their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people.

▲●■ Look, listen and note

These are some particular things to observe and note for children who have BESD or, indeed, if you are worried about any child's low self-esteem and self-confidence.

- Observe how confident the baby or toddler is to play all by itself when adults are close by to watch. What happens when the adult moves away?
- How has confidence changed since the child has settled in? Does confidence still depend on the key person being close by? Will the child respond positively to other adults yet?
- Observe, note and then share information about how the child responds when happy, excited, angry, frustrated, anxious or upset.
- Provide opportunities for talking about home and life outside of the setting. Observe how ready the child is to talk, and the feelings he or she expresses.
- Observe if and how the child uses imaginative play to act out experiences and to discharge feelings.
- How does the child respond to success and praise? Note any incidences where the child damages his or her own creations or attempts to destroy other people's achievements or possessions.
- Observe and record any incidences of attempted bullying or being bullied.

▲●■ Effective practice

- The appointment of an emotionally strong key person is crucial. Take care to match the worker to the child's needs and personality – if there is a 'clash' of temperaments, this will not work.
- Try to establish a shared understanding between parents or carers and professionals within the setting as to how to interpret the child's behaviour and feelings and how to manage them.
- Try to find things to praise the child for each session, and commend any successes publicly so that other children see positives too.
- Always listen to both sides of a dispute and, where feasible, make suggestions that enable children to work out their own solutions.
- Adopt the same rules for everyone so that each child can see that boundaries are fair and consistently applied. Stay calm (in your outside appearance) so that the child with BESD sees you as standing firm on the behaviour but not rejecting them emotionally as a person.
- Make an achievement chart (there is a photocopiable example on page 93) so that the child with BESD can see positive improvement and change in learning or behaviour.
- Make a 'feelings box'. If something has really upset the child, write it down for them and post it into the box. Later, fetch it out to talk about together.

▲●■ How to use the play plans

On pages 59 to 64 you will find six photocopiable play plans for those skills marked with an asterisk on the assessment sheets on pages 56 and 57. Each play plan contains eight interventions that you could try. There are two blank spaces to add your own personalised interventions to each play plan.