

# Discussion Guide

## Discussion Guide for Module 24:

How Children's Sense of Self Affects Learning

**Module run time:** 25 minutes

**Estimated time to complete the module with discussion guide:** 45-60 minutes

Below are recommended stopping points and suggested questions to use in group discussion. Please feel free to follow your group's lead and discuss topics and questions that are of value and interest to them! If you're working with a larger group, you may find it useful to discuss these questions in smaller groups and then reconvene to summarize.

### Key points:

- Children with a healthy sense of self learn better.
- Children have both ideas and feelings about themselves, and both contribute to a healthy sense of self.
- Having high expectations for children and encouraging them to embrace challenges are two ways to foster a healthy sense of self.

### Module synopsis:

Page 1: *Title*

Page 2: *Acknowledgments*

Page 3: *How We Think and Feel About Ourselves Is Learned*

Page 4: *The Sense of Self*

Page 5: *Self-Esteem Is Part of Our Sense of Self*

Page 6: *Self-Esteem, Social Groups and Belonging*

### ✦ Recommended stopping point

- Everyone's sense of self grows and develops. Can you think of ways that your early experiences and relationships helped to shape how you think about yourself?
- Take a moment to imagine that you have a backpack full of the things you think and feel about yourself. What's in there? Are there thoughts and feelings that are more and less useful for you on your journey?
- Children with positive self-esteem tend to engage fully in learning new things. Children with lower self-esteem may avoid a learning experience, even when they are fully capable of doing it. Have you ever seen this in the children you work with?

Page 7: *Stereotypes Affect How We Think of Ourselves*

Page 8: *Conscious and Unconscious Thoughts and Feelings*

Page 9: *Stereotypes Influence Girls' Unconscious Feelings*

Page 10: *Gender Inequities in Science and Math World-Wide*

### ✦ Recommended stopping point

- Research shows that even when girls are doing just as well as boys at math, they often *feel* like they are doing worse. Have you seen this in your work with children?

Visit  
[outreach.ilabs.uw.edu](http://outreach.ilabs.uw.edu)  
for more free resources  
and information

INSTITUTE FOR  
LEARNING  
& BRAIN  
SCIENCES

# Discussion Guide

- Stereotypes can lead to a diminished sense of self, which can lead to behaviors that seem to reinforce the stereotype. This can be a vicious cycle. How can we interrupt this cycle? How can we help children avoid it?

Page 11: *A Balancing Act*

Page 12: *BIPOC Children and Their Academic Sense of Self*

Page 13: *BIPOC Children and Their Academic Sense of Self (2)*

Page 14: *Positive Messages and Role Models*

## ✦ Recommended stopping point

- Academic performance is affected by both what a child thinks and feels about themselves academically. What can you do to encourage children to *think* they can be successful? What can you do to make them *feel* they can be successful?
- Sometimes what we think about an aspect of our self is different from what we feel about that same aspect. Does this happen to you? Why do you think this happens?
- Think about the children in your life. Are there some who don't have role models with shared life experiences? Are there ways you could help to ensure that all children in your care are exposed to adults who have similar life experiences?

Page 15: *Encouraging Effort*

Page 16: *Transmission of Beliefs About Math Within the Family*

Page 17: *Healthy Relationships*

Page 18: *Fostering a Healthy Sense of Self*

## ✦ Final discussion points

- The last few pages have described several methods for fostering a healthy sense of self: encouraging effort, examining stereotypes, and supporting healthy relationships. See if you can identify one thing you are doing in each of these areas.
- See if you can come up with one additional thing in each area that you can do to foster a healthy sense of self.

---

To learn more about children's sense of self, take a look at these resources:

[Developing a Growth Mindset with Carol Dweck \(Video\)](#)

[Growth Mindset Praise & Feedback \(Parent Tool\)](#)

[Having Just One Black Teacher Can Keep Black Kids In School \(Article\)](#)

[Math Stereotypes \(I-LABS Module\)](#)

[National Center for Women & Information Technology – K-12 \(Organization\)](#)

[National Girls Collaborative Project \(Organization\)](#)

[Science in Action: I-LABS at Pacific Science Center \(Interactive Exhibit\)](#)

[STEM for All: How We Can Engage Everyone in STEM \(Infographic\)](#)

Visit  
**outreach.ilabs.uw.edu**  
for more free resources  
and information

INSTITUTE FOR  
LEARNING  
& BRAIN  
SCIENCES

# Discussion Guide

Research Labs with resources for parents and educators:

[Dario Cvencek: Child Identity and Learning Lab](#)

[Allison Master: Identity & Academic Motivation Lab](#)

[Eddie Brummelman Research Lab](#)

[Andrei Cimpian: Cognitive Development Lab](#)

Visit  
[\*\*outreach.ilabs.uw.edu\*\*](http://outreach.ilabs.uw.edu)  
for more free resources  
and information

INSTITUTE FOR  
LEARNING  
& BRAIN  
SCIENCES