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Introduction

This workbook is designed to strengthen self-awareness and nurture a positive sense of identity. It invites you to explore the lives of influential figures from history or contemporary society who have faced and overcome racism, discrimination, or other forms of injustice. You might choose to explore a role model who has overcome other challenging circumstances, such as growing up in care, taking on caring responsibilities at a young age, or navigating personal difficulties and hardship to achieve success and strengthen their sense of identity. By learning how others have navigated adversity, you can build a deeper sense of self-worth and develop greater resilience in the face of prejudice.

Throughout the course, you will explore self-esteem, emotional regulation and positive thinking, while also setting personal goals and developing effective study habits to help you succeed in school and beyond.

The Benefits of Reflective Practice

Engaging in reflective practice can improve your ability to respond differently in future situations. At the end of each session, you are encouraged to reflect on what you have learned. You may also want to keep your own reflective diary.

Regular self-reflection is a process of continuous learning: recounting experiences, noticing what went well, and identifying what you might do differently next time. Reflecting honestly on your experiences can help you avoid repeating unhelpful patterns and keep learning each day.

‘If you do what you have always done, you will get what you have always got.’

You can break this cycle through reflective practice by adapting your actions based on what you learn, rather than simply reacting. This helps you learn from experience, understand yourself better and improve future choices.

Some of the key benefits include:

Accelerated Learning: Thinking critically about experiences helps you spot what worked and what didn’t, turning every activity into a learning opportunity.

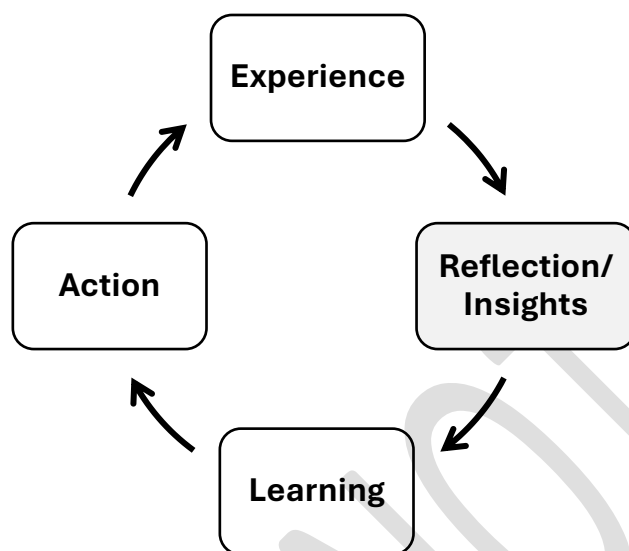
Improved Self-Awareness: Reflection helps you understand your strengths, challenges, values and emotions, which is crucial for personal growth and healthy relationships.

Better Decision Making: Taking time to reflect before acting allows you to consider different perspectives and possible outcomes.

Increased Resilience: Reflecting on challenges helps you identify coping strategies and learn how to manage setbacks.

Enhanced Problem-Solving Skills: Analysing situations regularly improves your ability to see the bigger picture and find creative solutions.

Greater Confidence: Noticing your progress and recognising your capabilities can boost self-esteem and give you the confidence to take on new challenges.



In essence, reflective practice is a powerful tool for navigating life. It helps you become more intentional, thoughtful and effective in everything you do.

Sometimes it can be helpful to leave a little time between an experience and your reflection. You might start by writing down what happened in as much detail as you can, without judging or analysing it straight away.

Later, perhaps after a short break or the next day, you can return to your notes and focus on your actions, feelings and thoughts. Try to go beyond broad statements about what happened and explore *how* and *why* it unfolded in the way it did.

Session One: Barriers and Benefits of Education

Understanding your experiences, strengthening your mindset and building motivation

Purpose of the Session

The purpose of this session is to help you explore the factors that influence your experience of school and learning. You will reflect on the barriers you may have faced, the expectations others have placed on you, and the ways these experiences can shape your confidence and motivation. This session also introduces the idea that your mindset, beliefs and emotional responses can influence how you approach challenges, and that these patterns can be changed.

By the end of this session, you will have a clearer understanding of what helps you learn, what gets in the way, and how you can begin to take small, positive steps toward achieving your potential.

Understanding Your Experiences of School

Managing time at school and achieving your potential is not always easy. Many young people experience events that affect their ability to focus, stay motivated or feel confident. Some of these factors are outside your control; others are influenced by the attitudes and beliefs you hold about yourself.

This course gives you space to reflect on how you currently manage situations and consider whether adopting a different approach could help you move closer to your goals. Doing well in school can open doors, create choices and give you more control over your future.

We also live in a society where unfair judgements, stereotypes and discrimination can affect how you are seen, and how you see yourself. If you have experienced unfairness, it is natural to react. But sometimes the way we react can make things harder. Learning how to manage emotions and navigate unfair treatment can help you develop resilience and prevent negative experiences from escalating.

Overcoming Low Expectations

Research shows that when others have low expectations of you, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. If people expect you to fail, you may start to believe them — even when they are wrong. You might stop trying, avoid challenges or assume you are ‘not good enough’.

But low expectations are not facts. They are opinions. And opinions can be challenged.

Even if you have failed a test or received a low grade, it does not mean *you* are a failure. Everyone experiences setbacks. What matters is how you respond. Each setback is an opportunity to learn, grow and try again.

Taking steps toward a more optimistic outlook

If you have begun to see yourself as someone who ‘can’t do it’, it is important to work toward a more balanced and realistic view of your abilities. You already have strengths, skills and talents, even if you don’t always notice them.

By taking small steps, you can begin to shift your mindset:

- noticing what you do well
- acknowledging your successes
- recognising your effort
- challenging negative predictions
- allowing yourself to believe in your potential

This session helps you begin that process.

Activity: Recognising Your Strengths

Use the table below to explore what you already do well and what you would like to improve. You may be surprised by how many skills you already have — and how these skills can help you achieve your goals.

Something I am already good at is:

The skills that I have to do this well are:

When I do well it makes me feel:

Something I would like to improve is:

What skills do I already have to do this?

What skills do I need to develop to do this well?

Barriers to Learning

Your experiences at school, at home and in your community can all influence how easy or difficult learning feels. Barriers might include:

- feeling disconnected from school

- struggling with certain subjects
- difficult relationships with teachers
- peer pressure
- challenges at home
- stress, tiredness or emotional difficulties

Identifying these barriers is the first step toward overcoming them.

Use the tables provided to reflect on the barriers you face and consider possible solutions or sources of support. You may want to begin individually and then discuss your ideas with a partner or group if you feel comfortable.

1. The school environment: *For example, do you feel a sense of belonging and connectedness with your school?*

Can you identify ways to overcome any issues you have identified?

2. Subjects: *For example, are there particular subjects that you are finding challenging? Can you identify what the specific issues might be?*

Can you think of ways you could access support to manage any challenges you face with specific subjects?

3. Teacher's attitude or expectations: *For example, do you have a positive relationship with your teachers. Are you able to ask them for help when necessary?*

Can you identify what you might be able to do to manage these challenges more effectively?

4. Peer Pressure: *For example, do your friends at school encourage you to work hard or do they distract you and try to encourage you to do other things that prevent you from keeping on top of your schoolwork?*

Can you think of ways you could manage these relationships that would still allow you to do well at school?

5. Family/Home life: *For example, are you facing some difficult times at home? Do you have anyone supporting you?*

Managing challenging things at home can be particularly difficult, it is important to access support. Who might you be able to get help and support from?

6. Any other issues? *For example, is there anything else that might be impacting on your ability to learn?*

Can you identify how you can get some help and support with these additional issues?

The Benefits of Education

While it is important to acknowledge the challenges you face, it is equally important to recognise the benefits of education. Doing well in school can:

- open doors to future opportunities
- increase your choices
- improve your confidence
- help you build a life you feel proud of

Take a moment to reflect on the benefits of education and jot them down in the space provided.

The Benefits of Education
