

Self-identity

Support children to develop their own sense of self-identity.

Developing a sense of self-identity is crucial in the early years and beyond. A strong sense of self supports children's self-esteem, well-being and emotional development. As early years practitioners, there are many things that we do to support children's understanding of themselves, building a strong foundation for their future mental health.

See below for some of our top tips on supporting self-identity in the early years:



Mirror play

Children identify with themselves as a physical being from a very young age. Provide opportunities for them to look at themselves in mirrors, pointing out their features to them as they look in the mirror.

Photos and videos

Ask parents and carers to provide photos, and where appropriate videos, of their homes, the important people in their child's lives and of them engaging in their favourite activities. By having these photos available in your setting, children will feel a stronger sense of belonging and talk more freely about their lives outside the setting.

Allow opportunities for mastery and celebrate their achievements

From a baby rolling over for the first time to a pre-schooler climbing on a new piece of equipment, this feeling of mastery gives children a stronger sense of self. When we recognise these achievements and celebrate them with children, we help to boost their self-esteem and build on connections.

Focus on the positive and remember the behaviour is not the child!

The words we use about children are central to how they feel about themselves. By focusing on the positive attributes we see in children and celebrating these, they begin to recognise themselves as having those characteristics. For example, 'Sami, you've tidied the home corner; that is very helpful!'

Recalling shared experiences

Looking back at photographs of trips, visits and activities with children can remind them of their experiences in the setting, all building on that sense of well-being and belonging as part of a group.