

SO WHO YOU LOOKIN' AT?

1. Compared to others your age, when it comes to the categories below how would you rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 (5 being average)?

Your looks—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your intellect—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your personality—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your popularity—	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. What are some things about **yourself** that you are proud of?

3. Is this you or not? Answer **me** or **not me**.

- _____ a. I like the way I look.
- _____ b. I live my life the way I think others want me to live it.
- _____ c. Sometimes I wish I were someone else.
- _____ d. I don't think I am normal.
- _____ e. I sometimes do things I know I shouldn't, in order to be accepted.
- _____ f. I believe God loves me just the way I am.
- _____ g. When I meet new people, I worry they may not like me the way I am.



4. The following is a paraphrase of **Psalm 139:13-18**. Write your name in the blanks and then read it to yourself.

God, you created all the complex parts of my body, while I was still inside my mother. Thank you, Lord, for creating me, _____ [your name]. I know you cared when you made me. While my bones were still forming, before anyone else knew who I was, you knew I, _____ [your name], was alive. You could see who I was even before I was born, and you had already planned my days on earth before I lived any one of them. You think about me all the time. You love me so much. Every minute, even when I get up in the morning, you are thinking about me.

What does God think of you?

SO WHO YOU LOOKIN' AT? [self-image and self-esteem]

THIS WEEK

Self-esteem is a huge concern among teenage boys and girls. They feel so much pressure to fit in and they worry about their looks, how they act, and if they'll be accepted and liked by their peers. This TalkSheet gives your group the opportunity to discuss self-image and self-esteem and will give you a chance to affirm your kids.

OPENER

Everyone needs to hear affirmations, so have your group give each other a pat on the back—but not literally. Ask each person to trace his or her hand with a marker on a piece of 8 1/2 x 11 paper. Then have them tape the papers on each other's backs. Make sure each group member has a pen, pencil, or marker to write with. Then, encourage them to walk around and write something they like about the person in the hand. Ask your kids to think of a less superficial comment—maybe something about personality or talents. Give the group enough time to write on each person's back. Then let the kids read their own papers and share how this activity made them feel.

THE DISCUSSION, BY THE NUMBERS

1. Don't ask the kids to share their personal answers. Instead, have them think about their answers and what they've learned about themselves. A person's self-image is usually based on how they think others feel about them.
Communicate that a good self-image comes from accepting and respecting yourself—not from what others think about you.
2. Ask the kids to share the traits they are proud of. Or have them share what they would be proud of if they were the person on their right. Keep the focus on personal qualities and accomplishments.
3. You may want to make this a general discussion—focus on a how a teenage girl or guy may feel. Your kids may open up more freely if you share how you felt about yourself when you were a teenager.
4. This passage has been paraphrased to emphasize the fact that God loves each person for who they are. Have the group read the verses aloud and then lead a discussion about how these verses apply to feelings of self-esteem. How does God feel when they don't like ourselves?

THE CLOSE

Communicate clearly that everyone—even those who look like they have it all together—struggle with self-image. Even adults still feel badly about themselves from time to time. Challenge your kids to begin seeing themselves as God sees them—as children he loves. In fact, God commands us to love ourselves as we love others (Leviticus 19:18).

Emphasize to your kids that God has created each of them with potential—and he will use them if they give their lives to him. There are several biblical characters who struggled with self-worth, including Moses (who had a speech impediment) and Paul (who apparently wasn't very handsome and had a "thorn in the flesh"). If they keep putting themselves down, God can't use them to their fullest and best.

Point out that it's hard to keep a positive self-image when the media tells us otherwise. TV, radio, movies, advertisements tell us how to act, look, dress, what products to use, how to be popular, and who to hang out with. They are constantly bombarded with messages that tell us they aren't good enough. But they have control over it—they can keep things in perspective with God's help.

MORE

- You may want to go a bit further to encourage your kids by sending each one an encouraging postcard, note, or e-mail during the week. Point out specific reasons why you appreciate about them and what makes them special.
- What do your kids think about themselves? Ask your kids write a letter to themselves in a self-addressed stamped envelope. Encourage them to write down how they feel about themselves, what they struggle with, and what they'd like to change. Challenge them to set goals for themselves of what they'd like to work on to improve their self-images. Send these letters to your kids after a couple of months. How are they doing? What changes have they made?
- Or check out what the media says about self-image. On a poster board or whiteboard, ask the group to list specific attitudes and messages that the media sends about self-respect and self-esteem. What pressures to your kids feel from the media and others? How do these pressures affect their self-image and that of other teens? How can they resist what TV, radio, the Internet, and movies are telling them?