Possible causes of self esteem issues
- Epilepsy differs from many other ‘chronic’ conditions in its unpredictability. A student has no control over their seizures. This lack of control can be perceived by them as a lack of control over other parts of their lives, including their academic achievement and social development.

Possible indicators of self esteem issues
- Lack of motivation.
- Dependency on assistance in the classroom.
- Educational achievement below natural ability.
- Risk taking behaviour.
- Attention seeking behaviour.
- Difficulty forming and maintaining friendships.

The fundamentals of self esteem are cultivated throughout childhood. This is also the time when many students develop epilepsy. For students with epilepsy developing good self esteem can be a struggle. They may have periods of increased feelings of anxiety and loss of control, due to the unpredictable nature of their epilepsy. These feelings may in turn negatively affect their self-image.
Self esteem and epilepsy

How teachers can help

- Treat the student no differently from other students in your class.
- Set realistic expectations that are neither too high nor too low.
- Reinforce a sense of belonging within the class and the school.
- Encourage the student to explore and experience new situations.
- Look for authentic opportunities to encourage and praise the student.
- Be aware that epilepsy can lead to changes in ability from day to day.
- Plan and include self esteem activities within the curriculum.

Strategies to try

- Focus on the student’s interests and strengths to engage them in their learning.
- Modify learning activities so the student can experience success.
- Structure tasks to allow negotiation and choices for students.
- Try a variety of groupings to determine the situation in which the student is most at ease.
- Allow flexibility in classroom procedures, e.g. allow extra time for completion of tasks.
- Assign the student responsibilities within the classroom and the broader school community.
- Reduce the emphasis on competition in classroom activities.
- Consider educating your class about epilepsy (with the student’s consent) by using the resources on www.epilepsysmartschools.org.au