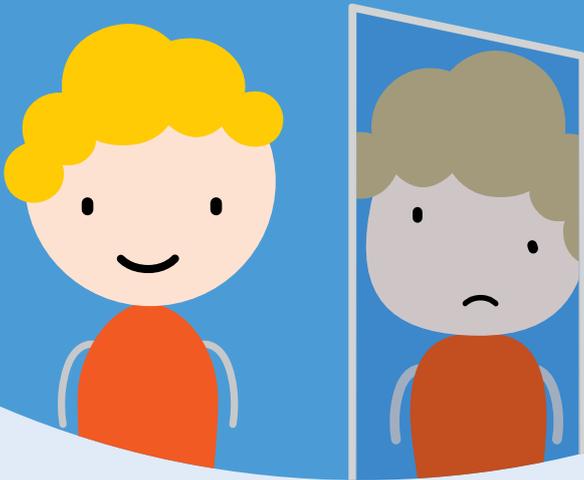


Self esteem and epilepsy



The impact of epilepsy is variable – some students are greatly affected while others are not.

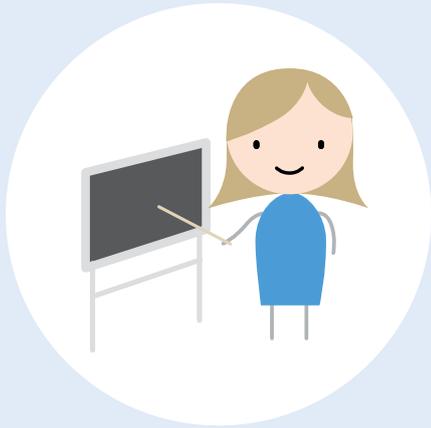
The fundamentals of self esteem are cultivated throughout childhood. This is also the time when many students develop epilepsy. For students with epilepsy developing good self esteem can be a struggle. They may have periods of increased feelings of anxiety and loss of control, due to the unpredictable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

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.



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

This fact sheet is part of a suite of resources that are targeted to both parents and teachers to assist students with epilepsy in the primary, secondary and special school settings.

Special thanks to Dr Silvana Micallef, Snr Clinical Neuropsychologist, Austin Health, for her help in compiling this fact sheet.

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The information contained in this publication provides general information about epilepsy. It does not provide specific advice. Specific health and medical advice should always be obtained from a qualified health professional.

Epilepsy Foundation
587 Canterbury Road,
Surrey Hills, VIC 3127, Australia
Telephone: (03) 8809 0600

Epilepsy Infoline 1300 761 487



The Epilepsy Smart Schools Practical Guide and supporting resources provides information on how a school can embed inclusive, safe and educationally sound practices for students with epilepsy and in so doing become 'epilepsy smart'. The guide and supporting resources which can be accessed via www.epilepsysmartschools.org.au