

# My Selves: All Four of Them

- Goals:**
- + To introduce the Great Thinkers Collage project, which will provide students with the opportunity to learn about and practice the Positive Action philosophy and to define self-concept.
  - + To learn that self-concept is the way we think and feel about ourselves.
  - + To introduce the Positive Action philosophy: “You feel good about yourself when you think and do positive actions, and there is always a positive way to do everything.”

- Objectives:**
- + To offer a comprehensive definition of self-concept that all students can identify with.
  - + To highlight for students the attributes and usefulness of a positive self-image.

**Materials Needed** Pens

**Materials Provided** 30 Activity Sheets 1-1-HSKIII

## Procedure

**Say** Welcome to the *Positive Action* program! You have an important developmental task before you, figuring out who you are and what you can do with your hands, your heart, and your head—with your life. Every person has that task. Why is it so important?

**Teacher** *Wait for responses.*

**Say** *Positive Action* makes the task of discovering your identity and life purpose much easier. This curriculum will help you discover what makes you tick. It will help you answer Life’s Big Question: Who am I and who am I becoming? These are some of the questions we’ll ask ourselves along the way in order to get to the answer.

- How do our thoughts and actions create our self-concept?
- How do we maintain and improve our health?
- How do our brains operate and how do we study, create, and make decisions?
- Who are we socially and emotionally? How well do we manage our lives, connect with others, and know ourselves?
- How do our thoughts and actions determine whether our most desired dreams come true or just stay dreams?

We’ll answer all these questions by getting to the bottom of the biggest question of all: “Who am I?” Who are we—physically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally?

You’ll figure out how to answer this question as you move through the six units doing a variety of group projects. For Unit 1, you will be creating a Great Thinkers collage. As you’ll soon learn, Great Thinkers can be found everywhere throughout history and in the present day. They are those who used powerfully positive thoughts to change their world—and often the world around them as well.

You will be encouraged to be a Great Thinker also. You'll use your best critical, analytical, and creative thinking skills. You'll learn that what you do matters. And if everything you do matters, then you matter, often more than you think you do.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery wrote a children's book entitled *The Little Prince*, although he may have intended the book for adults as well, because it has some very wise advice for all ages in it. He wrote: "A single event can awaken within us a stranger totally unknown to us." Have you ever been surprised when something remarkable surfaced in your life?

**Teacher** *Wait for responses.*

**Say** The great baseball player Yogi Berra once said: "We should give 100% of what we have in the first half of a game, and the remainder of what we have in the second half." Do you think that is true about life, too?

**Teacher** *Wait for responses. Then, write "Life's Big Question" on the board.*

**Say** Can I get a few volunteers to help write responses on the board? What is life's big question for you?

**Teacher** *Wait for responses. Write any responses, no matter how silly or superficial they might initially seem, on the board. Point to "Who am I?" on the board if it surfaced during student responses. If not, write "Who am I?" on the board.*

**Say** This is the most important question we need to answer. The question is so enormous that the desire to keep asking the question is as ancient as the human race. The question has been the subject of thousands of books by philosophers and religious leaders, psychologists and educators, and poets and athletes. There is a universal desire to get to know who we are, also called our self-concept, self-image, or self-esteem. Psychologists call a healthy, strong self-concept "ego strength." Your self-concept is how you think and feel about yourself. Why is knowing who you are so important?

**Teacher** *Wait for responses. Guide toward: Because you have to base so many of your decisions in the next few years on that knowledge, such as where to go to college, or trade school, or the military; who to date; who to be friends with; how to get along with your family and coworkers; and where to live and work.*

**Say** Throughout this curriculum there will be many ways you can answer life's big question for yourself, ways to involve your imagination, your analytic problem-solving skills, your practical know-how, and your sense of fun and adventure.

We will provide an opportunity to do a series of tasks leading up to a big project in each unit. You'll be creating collages, planning a health and wellness fair, publishing newsletters, doing community service projects, creating art projects, and starting media campaigns. They'll all help you get to the bottom of who you are. What do you think that phrase implies?

**Teacher** *Wait for responses. Write the phrase, "Get to the bottom of who you are."*

**Say** Think of how archeologists, scientists who study the history of the earth, dig through layers of soil to get to the point where they can't dig down any further. They're looking for artifacts, bones, evidences of the past. The journey to discover who you are involves a kind of emotional and intellectual excavation to the core of yourself. The poet Denise Levertov once wrote that a voice came to her in a dream with an order she didn't dare disobey: "Grow straight up or deep down."

The truth is that we need to do both throughout our lives. By the end of your teenage years

your body will probably not grow any taller, but the “grow straight up” that the poet was heeding refers to growing in self-knowledge and connectedness to other people. The “grow deep down” refers to the hard work of digging through layers of yourself until you discover the deep essence that is unmistakably, uniquely you.

These are the four layers of yourself: physical, intellectual, social, and emotional. We’ll start to explore these layers of ourselves in a sort of “self-**ARCHEOLOGY**.”

**Teacher** *Distribute “Self-Archeology” Activity Sheet 1-1-HSKIII.*

**Say** Read the directions and complete the activity sheet. You’ll be writing two or three words that describe each layer of you. For example, suppose you think of yourself as an impulsive person. Which of the four kinds of self does that connect with? I think many of us would connect impulsiveness with our emotional self. If so, write the word “impulsive” under “Emotional Self.” Go ahead and fill in all the layers now.

**Teacher** *Allow time for students to complete the activity sheet.*

**Say** Keeping this page is vitally important because it is a kind of map for your journey of self-discovery as you grow straight up and deep down. Let’s partner up now. Discuss what you’ve learned about yourself so far through this activity.

**Teacher** *Allow time for students to share within pairs.*

**Say** While we’re coming to understand our complex identity as consisting of four layers, can you see how these layers overlap and interconnect? Our sports ability might seem to connect only to our physical self. However, can a great athlete succeed without being thoughtful, too? And doesn’t being a star on a basketball team, for example, also involve being a good team player, and knowing how to effectively get along with others? Athletes are often labeled as “jocks,” reducing their image to a simplistic cartoon that implies that their physical skills overwhelm any other personality facets. When someone is labeled a “nerd,” aren’t they also reduced to a big intellect without any other outstanding features?

**Teacher** *Allow time for responses.*

**Say** Perhaps these stereotypes are common in society because people who don’t do the hard work of discovering their own identity make a superficial or one-dimensional cartoon of themselves and are likely to do the same to others. The point of our self-archeology exercise is to make us

aware of the complex components of our own identity and self-concept, with the belief that this self-knowledge will make us more aware of, and sensitive to, the complex identity of others.

You'll notice as we move through this curriculum that the logic of the lessons proceeds in a circular manner. In a few lessons we'll learn about the Thoughts-Actions-Feelings Circle, a great model that illustrates how our thoughts, actions, and feelings are connected. So, for each concept, we will have a "Positive Thoughts" lesson, a "Positive Actions" lesson, and a "Positive Feelings" lesson. During "Positive Thoughts," I'll introduce the concept and we'll have some great discussions about it. During "Positive Actions," we'll tie the concept into our unit project, which you'll find out more about in the next lesson. Lastly, during "Positive Feelings," we'll spend some time reflecting about the concept through reading, journaling and small group discussion.

All of these lessons will be a great opportunity for us to dig to the depths of ourselves, to explore all of our layers through "self-archeology," and to start to answer that big question, "Who am I?"

## Teacher's Toolbox

### Vocabulary

**Teacher:** These words are used in the curriculum and may be new to your students. Please use them however you wish: as an exercise to expand vocabulary or improve spelling, or as discussion points.

**Archaeology:** The study of human life and culture by the recovery and examination of remaining material evidence.

### Teacher's Inspiration

*"The dream begins with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you to the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called truth."* —Dan Rather, newscaster

Positive Action provides you with such an opportunity to change your own teaching life for the better. Imagine working with a group of engaged learners who respect you and whom you respect. The Positive Action program will provide focus and direction for the essentials: teaching citizenship, becoming a person of character, and living out your truth and your dreams for the young people entrusted to you.