



4. DON'T PUT YOUR SELF-WORTH IN OTHER PEOPLE'S HANDS!

Dealing with social comparison through self-observation



Targeted competencies (based on ÉKIP and the WHO)	Self-knowledge, self-understanding, and self-worth Adopting prosocial behaviours
Content for the development of personal and social competencies (MEQ)	Sheet 13 : Making friends and social network Sheet 14 : Inclusion and getting along Sheet 16 : Being a role model for others
Cross-cutting competencies (QEP)	Achieving their potential Exercising critical judgment
General objectives of the workshop	By the end of the workshop, students will be able to: • Identify some of their own values and characteristics; • Understand the impact of social comparison on self-esteem and self-confidence; • Use new strategies to get to know themselves better, strengthen their self-worth, and deal with social comparison.

Total duration

60-MINUTE version: follow ALL steps, including the ones marked with the icon



40-MINUTE version: DO NOT do activities marked with the icon



Materials and preparation

- Print the 2 worksheets (1 per student): *Three wishes* and *Between me and myself!*
- Print the *Comparison and choices* poster, available on the [website](#) in the section: First cycle / Workshops and tools for students / Classroom posters to support your explanations and reinvest learning in class.
- Bring 3 to 6 inflatable balloons, not yet inflated.
- Have a chalkboard with chalk or interactive whiteboard (IWB) available.

Financial contribution:



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada



Centre RBC
d'expertise universitaire
en santé mentale

Summer 2025

A. Three wishes... (15 minutes)

1. Hand out a copy of the *Three wishes* printable worksheet to each student.
2. Suggest the following scenario to the students: “You have the power to make three of your biggest wishes come true. What do you wish for?” You ask them to write down these three wishes on their worksheet.
3. You ask for two or three volunteer students to name one of their wishes and come write it on the board.
4. You then present the following list of values to the class (the list is included in the slideshow):
Friendship, love, beauty, courage, discipline, listening, education, fairness, solidarity, environment, family, faithfulness, honesty, honour, justice, freedom, loyalty, sharing, patience, perseverance, fun, power, respect, success, health, safety, tolerance, work.
5. You then ask the students to raise their hands to match values with the wishes written on the board.
*It is possible and normal for students not to fully grasp the concept of values at the beginning of the workshop. The important thing is not to have the right answers, but to learn about the concept of values.
6. Now, lead a group discussion based on the following questions, to help them understand the concept of values and make links with the wish exercise:

- **What is a value?**



Values are the things we hold most dear, what we want to defend, and how we want to interact with the world around us. They are our compass, the guiding principles that shape our thoughts, choices and actions throughout our lives (Harris, 2009; Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2012).

- **Why is it important to know our values?**



Our values are important because they define us as individuals. They show us the “ideal” way for us to behave. They allow us to act in alignment with who we are. They should guide our daily choices and actions, much more than what other people think, say or do around us. They can help us deal with social comparison (Benish-Weisman et al., 2022; Lewis-Smith et al., 2021; Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2012; Verplanken & Holland, 2002).

- **Should our personal values be the same as other people’s? Why?**



Yes... and no! The values we cherish are often rooted in our experiences, relationships and environments. So, it’s only natural for some of our values to be similar to those of our friends or family, but also different from those of our school or society. Our values are also bound to evolve over time, depending on our environment, our life stage, and the times in which we live (Leijen et al., 2022; Mehta et al., 2025). So, it’s best to try to connect with our own values, what matters to us, and to associate with people or groups who share those same values, at least in part, rather than defining our values based on other people’s (Assor et al., 2020; Benish-Weisman et al., 2022; Lewis-Smith et al., 2021).



3



4



5



6



6

7. Now have the students choose one of their three wishes and write down the value(s) they associate with it, on their worksheet.
8. If time permits, you can ask them to do the same with the other two wishes, or you can lead a short discussion with the entire class about the values that the students associated with their wishes.



6

B. Educational clip - Part 1 (5 minutes)

1. Play the video clip *Don't put your self-worth in other people's hands – Part 1* for your students.
[Video clip – Part 1](#)



7

C. The same, not the same! (10 to 20 minutes)

1. You suggest to students that comparing themselves to others can affect their self-confidence. Ask the students:
 - “In what ways do you think social comparison can undermine self-confidence?”
2. Listen to a few answers, then complete with the following based on the slideshow:



The more we compare ourselves to others, the more we risk viewing ourselves and others in a **negative**, even **distorted**, **light**. This can affect our **self-confidence**, as well as our confidence in others (Ruan et al., 2023; Van Der Aar et al., 2018).

Self-confidence means **believing in your potential and abilities** (skills and talents), i.e., feeling that you have what it takes to overcome a situation (American Psychological Association, 2015). It means believing that **YOU CAN DO IT!**

3. Now show the students an inflatable balloon, and inflate it. You ask the class the following questions, and inflate and deflate the balloon depending on the students' answers.
 - “Imagine that the balloon represents self-confidence. If it's inflated, what does that mean? If it's deflated, what does that mean?”



Self-confidence varies depending on the context and the people you're with (Pekrun, 2022; Silitonga et al., 2025). For example, when I'm with people I love and feel comfortable with, I feel more self-confident, I share my opinion, and I'm more relaxed. On the other hand, when I'm with a group of people I don't know (or barely know), it stresses me out and I can start to doubt myself and lose my self-confidence.

- “What should the balloon's 'normal' size be?”



The “normal” size of the balloon should depend on how you feel inwardly about your self-confidence. So, it can vary significantly from person to person (Pekrun, 2022; Silitonga et al., 2025).



8



9



10



11

4. Ask a few volunteer students to come join you at the front of the class. Give each of them a balloon and ask them to wait for your instructions before handling or inflating it (give clear instructions to avoid any issues).

5. Now give the following instructions to the entire class:

- Silently, with your eyes open or closed (whichever you prefer), blow up your balloon so it represents your level of self-confidence. Try to maintain the balloon's size for the rest of the exercise. *Volunteers at the front of the class actually inflate their balloons. The other students in the class are invited to mimic the size of their imaginary balloon by gesturing in the air with their hands.
- Now, still silently, take a look around you. What do you notice? How do you feel compared to other people? Take the time to observe what is happening within you (physical sensations, emotions and thoughts).
- When you were inflating your balloon, did you feel like looking at the balloons of the others around you? Or, conversely, did you quickly inflate yours before everyone else?

6.  Give the students the following instructions, then read the scenarios below (depending on how much time you have, you can choose to read only the first two scenarios or all four):

- We're now going to observe how comparison impacts our self-confidence. I'm going to read some scenarios. You will need to adjust the size of your balloon according to how you feel and your level of confidence in each situation. For example, your balloon might deflate, inflate a little more, or stay the same, depending on how you feel.

Scenario 1	KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN You spent a quiet weekend at home relaxing. When you check your social media on Sunday, you see that your friends went out last night and are posting photos where they look like they're having a great time. You weren't invited. How do you feel? How is your self-confidence? Adjust your balloon.
Scenario 2	CLOSE YOUR EYES AND FOCUS ON WHAT YOU FEEL Your teacher announces that you need to work in teams of four students. Your four friends get together, and you find yourself alone. By the time you start looking for teammates, the other students have already all gotten into teams. How do you feel? How is your self-confidence? Adjust your balloon.
Scenario 3	CLOSE YOUR EYES AND FOCUS ON WHAT YOU FEEL You're playing in a sports tournament, representing your school. The game is tied, and the next point will determine the winning team. You're feeling the pressure. You are in a good position and a player on your team passes you the ball. Unfortunately, you miss the pass and the opponent scores a goal. How do you feel? How is your self-confidence? Adjust your balloon.
Scenario 4	KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN Today in class, you're going to receive your grade for your math exam. You studied hard for this exam and got a 71%. The class average is 85%. How do you feel? How is your self-confidence? Adjust your balloon.



12



13



14



15



16

7. Lead a group discussion by asking the following questions:

- Did having your eyes open or closed influence the way you adjusted your balloon? Why?
- How do you feel when you notice that your balloon isn't as inflated as the other students'?
- How important is other people's opinion to you?
- What is the purpose of comparing yourself to others?



17

8. Round out their answers with the following explanations:



Social comparison is a way of socially situating and defining ourselves: we evaluate ourselves in relation to others by validating our tastes, choices, opinions and performances. In some situations, comparing ourselves to others can have a positive impact in terms of our motivation and desire to excel. But generally, as we saw previously, **comparison has negative effects on self-esteem and self-confidence.** This is why it's important to pay attention to how social comparison is affecting you. It's better to compare yourself with your past self over time in order to appreciate your progress, take the time to recognize your strengths and abilities, and try new experiences to develop your self-confidence. **Self-confidence helps lessen the negative effects of social comparison** (Lewis, 2021; Liu et al., 2025; Van Der Aar et al., 2018).



18

D. Between me and myself! (10 minutes)

1. You explain that good self-awareness helps build stronger self-confidence. You then briefly define what self-awareness is:

Self-awareness means **understanding our own nature, knowing our values, strengths and aspirations, and being aware of our limitations and weaknesses** (Vazire & Wilson, 2012). It includes **intuition** (Halász & Michel, 2011), **discovering and developing our talents** (Levine, 2007; Pruneau et al., 2013), and **building awareness of our values** (Harris, 2009).

Self-knowledge has **many purposes**. For example, it helps us **make informed decisions** that factor in our strengths, weaknesses and aspirations (for instance, when choosing what extracurricular activity to sign up for). Self-awareness also allows us to **better understand our emotions and reactions** to certain situations or events (Lewis & Minar, 2022; Nonweiler et al., 2024; Yildirim et al., 2023). For example, when experiencing conflict or social comparison!



19

2. You tell the students everyone is going to take a small step toward greater self-awareness.

3. Hand out the *Between me and myself!* printable worksheet to each student. Ask them to answer the questions on their worksheet. You encourage the students to be curious and to be kind to themselves during this exercise.

- What are your strengths, qualities and talents? Identify four.
- What are your imperfections? Identify four.
- What makes you feel good or brings you satisfaction?
- What is challenging for you?



20

4. Ask the students the following question:

- What is the purpose of getting to know yourself better? Can you think of examples of situations where this was important or beneficial to you?

5. You conclude with the following explanations based on the image in the slideshow:

*The more you develop your self-knowledge and self-confidence,
the less social comparison affects and influences you.*



21

E. Your turn! (5 minutes)

1. You ask the students how they get to know themselves better. What are their strategies?

2. Continue with this list of **strategies to get to know and appreciate yourself better**, in order to address social comparison (inspired by Firestone et al., 2002; Meeus et al., 2023; Van Der Aar et al., 2018):

- Dare to jump in and try new experiences!
- Give yourself the right to make mistakes, without judging yourself... Accept that it won't be perfect.
- Try to look within and notice what you are experiencing and feeling, to discover what makes you happy or unhappy, what you find enjoyable or difficult.
- Try to be tolerant toward yourself. There are no right or wrong answers. They all have their place. What is true today may be different tomorrow. And this is normal.
- Keep in mind that others around you are also developing their self-awareness. So, try to be tolerant and non-judgmental toward them as well. All of this will help you better deal with social comparison!



22

F. Educational clip – Part 2 (5 minutes)

1. Play the video clip *Don't put your self-worth in other people's hands – Part 2* for your students.
[Video clip – Part 2](#)



23

G. OFF-TRAIL challenge

This week, ask the students to pay attention to their tendency to compare themselves to others: "Does this happen to me often? Rarely?" You ask them 1) to identify at least one situation in the coming days where they caught themselves comparing themselves to others, and to ask themselves, "Why did I feel the need to compare myself?" "What did that create within me?" "Did it have a helpful or harmful impact on me?" Then, 2) suggest that they apply at least one strategy to get to know themselves better and deal with social comparison.



24



Text is under a [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) licence. © [OFF-TRAIL program](#) by Centre RBC d'expertise universitaire en santé mentale (2025), Université de Sherbrooke.



PRINTABLE WORKSHEET
Three wishes

List of values:

Friendship, love, beauty, courage, discipline, listening, education, fairness, solidarity, environment, family, faithfulness, honesty, honour, justice, freedom, loyalty, sharing, patience, perseverance, fun, power, respect, success, health, safety, tolerance, work.

1

My value:

2

My value:

3

My value:



PRINTABLE WORKSHEET
Between me and myself!

My four strengths or qualities

1	3
2	4

My two imperfections

1	2
----------	----------

What makes me feel good or brings me satisfaction:

What I find challenging:

