

THE BOOK OF ME A CHILDREN'S JOURNAL OF SELF-DISCOVERY

Supporting activities and ideas for teachers, parents & librarians

OVERALL AIMS / CURRICULUM LINKS:

1. Begin to explore the human brain and understand what makes up 'the mind' and 'the self'
2. Explore 'the self' and self-knowledge
3. Name, define and identify a range of emotions
4. Explore empathy – walking in another's shoes
5. Explore empathy – your conscience speaking
6. Foster consideration and respect for others
7. Develop self-awareness and self-management
8. Promote positive behaviour and relationships

**THE
SCHOOL
OF LIFE**

Supporting activities and ideas for
teachers, parents & librarians

For use in the classroom or at home.

Suitable for ages 9+

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The Book of Me: A Children's Journal of Self-Discovery

This book uses a child's love of discovery and exploration as a springboard to take them on an adventure - not of mountains or wild wildernesses but of their mind. In this journal of self-discovery, through a series of creative prompts, children are encouraged to explore their mind, moods, emotions, imagination, conscience and much more.

Drawing on psychology and philosophy and using the creative arts, writing and reflection, this book aims to support young people to develop an understanding of their inner selves, to communicate their thoughts, feelings and ideas, and develop inner wisdom, empathy and emotional literacy.

Suggested for curious minds aged 9+.

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Begin to share personal reflections and consider how our emotions, actions and reactions have an an impact.

2. EXPLORING THE MIND4

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OBJECTIVES:

Understand what is meant by ‘the self’ and ‘the mind’.Develop a basic understanding of the brain and how it links to our thoughts, feelings and memories.

3. EXPLORING EMOTIONS.....7

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OBJECTIVES:

Understand that emotions can be extreme or subtle. Identify the different layers of an emotional reaction.

4. EXPLORING EMPATHY AND CONSCIENCE.....13

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OBJECTIVES:

Develop empathy skills. Debate right and wrong and make moral choices.

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OBJECTIVES:

Reflect on the self and what makes you uniquely you!

This Mini-Scheme of work can be used with children either at home or in the classroom. It includes material for between 4 – 6 lessons. The lessons can be completed in sequence or children can dip in and out of activities as they wish.

NOTE:

It is advised that teachers, parents or carers read through this Mini-Scheme and complete any tasks before students, to ensure that everyone is comfortable with its themes and activities.

1. INTRODUCTORY TASK

Create a Reflection Journal

START:

Throughout this pack students will be reflecting on their learning and self-development.

Ask students: how can keeping a 'Reflection Journal' help with this process?

(NB: If students want to create a notebook or journal rather than use the template that would work equally well.)

Complete the initial journal that follows.



REFLECTION JOURNAL

Initial thoughts about myself:

.....
.....

Five words to describe me are:

.....

Right now I am feeling:

.....

I am curious to learn about:

.....

.....

[illegible]

FINAL REFLECTIONS

I have learnt:

.....

.....

The most important thing I discovered about myself was:

.....

Right now I feel:

.....

An area of my 'self' I am going to continue to explore is:

.....

Ways this learning will improve my relationships with others are:

.....

.....

2. EXPLORING THE MIND

Chapter 1: Pages 20–39

START:

Socrates is believed to have said that ‘*the purpose of life is to know yourself.*’ (page 17)

‘The self’ is the part of the brain that thinks, feels and experiences the world around us.

- Ask children to jot down or share the things they think might make up ‘the self’. What makes them uniquely them?
- For a more active start, give children the cards on this page to sort into things they think make up ‘the self’ and things that do not.



THOUGHTS	TALENTS
BREATHING	EMOTIONS
IMAGINATION	HOPES AND DREAMS
HEARING	BELIEFS
DIGESTION	WEAKNESSES
MEMORIES	MOVING
GOING TO THE TOILET	CONSCIENCE
FEARS AND WORRIES	BLINKING

DEVELOP:

Learning about the brain (page 33)

The brain is made up of many parts.

Some important parts are the cerebellum – the part of the brain at the back of the skull which co-ordinates and regulates muscle activity and the frontal lobe which controls important cognitive skills such as problem solving, emotional control, language and memory.

As Humans evolved, so did our brains (refer to page 33).

The Lizard Brain refers to the part of our brain sometimes called the hindbrain. It controls things like: our survival instincts, breathing, territorial responses, our fight, flight and freeze response, fear and anger.

Our limbic system is linked to social responses and emotions and is often referred to as the Monkey or Mammalian Brain and our Neo-cortex or Human Brain is linked to rational thought and problem solving.

DISCUSS:

How might each of these parts contribute to your 'self'?

- When have you experienced your Lizard Brain in action? Have you ever felt very angry or very scared? Why do you think this was? Were you able to use your Human Brain to rationalise your fears/anger?



CREATE:

Make an Explorer's 'Mind Map'

Encourage children to create their own Mind Maps to show all the things that they have learnt about what makes up their 'self.'

They may wish to draw an outline of the brain and fill it with words and images, or they may wish to create more of a traditional-style map, a 'word web' or even create a model of the brain using plasticine and add labels on cocktail sticks.

(NB: Giving the students choice is part of thinking about self-expression and preferences and learning about themselves – it may be interesting to have a discussion around their choices.)

Encourage students to use the language around 'the self' from the starter activity cards and include these with examples in their maps e.g. Beliefs – one of my core beliefs is that we should look after the environment.

REFLECT:

Journal

Give children time to complete their self-reflection journal on page 2. Encourage a personal response. They may wish to use colours to express their feelings.

Questions to consider:

- How did you feel about today's learning? Why do you think this is?
- What 3 things particularly resonate with you about 'the self'?
- Which aspects of your 'self' would you like to explore further?
- Who would you talk about your 'self' (thoughts, feelings, hopes, dreams, disappointments, fears) with?

3. EXPLORING EMOTIONS

Chapter 2: Pages 42–67

START:

Emotions Sort

- Share the emotion burst on page 42 with students.
- Can they sort the emotions into positive and negative emotions?
- Discuss when students have felt these emotions and which one represents how they are feeling right now.
- What other emotions can they add to this list? (After reading pages 44 and 45, children should be able to add a variety of more complex and nuanced emotions such as humiliation and vulnerability.)

Q. Is it helpful to label emotions as ‘positive’ or ‘negative’?

DISCUSS:

We need to be kind to ourselves, and part of self-reflection is about seeking the reason behind the emotion both in ourselves and others and thinking about our reactions to different scenarios.

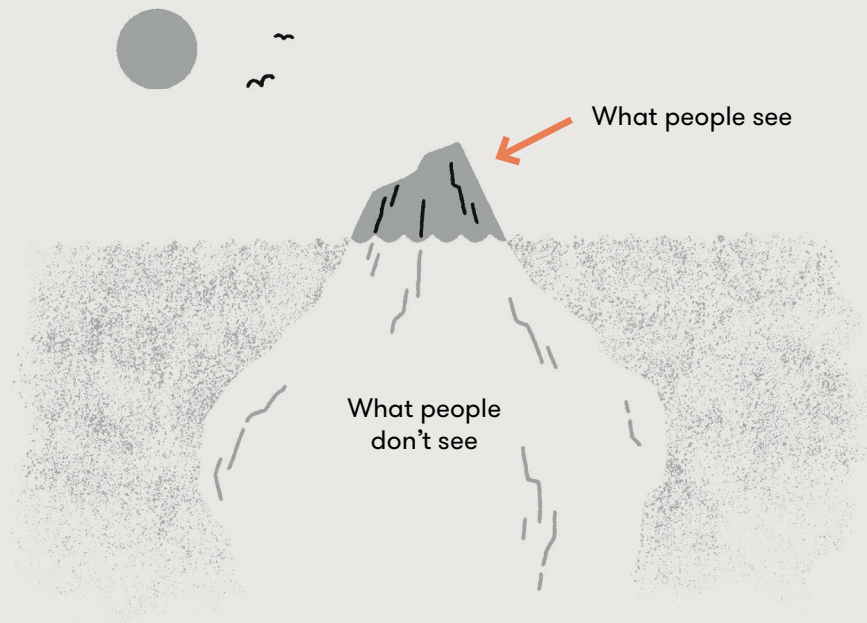


DEVELOP:

What causes a strong emotion? Exploring 'under the surface'.

SHARE A SCENARIO: At lunchtime Joe knocks his water all over his plate in his rush. He picks up his cup, screams and throws it at the wall.

Share an image of an iceberg with the labels 'What people see'/'What people don't see'.



Label the top of the iceberg with Joe's extreme emotion: anger – what we see.

Now share the full story: Joe wakes up late and his Mum yells at him. He misses breakfast to get to school. When he gets there he realises he has forgotten his maths homework so gets a detention first lesson. At break, he trips playing football and his friends laugh at him. By lunch, he is so hungry he rushes and spills his water.

- How does what we didn't see help us understand the emotion?
- How might you have reacted if you were Joe?
- What about if you were a teacher or one of his friends?
- Why is it important to look 'below the surface'?

CREATE:

Create two Mini-Emotion Cartoon Scenarios.

Give children a cartoon strip with the extreme emotion in box 4.

Can they then create three events that lead up to this emotion occurring?

Children can either draw or summarise the events in bullet points.

(NB: A template is on the following page.)

ANGER

SADNESS



CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE



			HAPPINESS
--	--	--	------------------

			FEAR
--	--	--	-------------

DISCUSS:

- What other emotions may be bubbling under the surface to lead to the extreme emotion?
- What events may have contributed to this emotion?
- What parts of the unconscious mind may have contributed to this feeling? e.g. unconscious fear of failure/unconscious memory from the past.

Help children to understand that, though we might think we feel one way about an event or situation, what we actually feel is very complex. There are many layers to our emotions. A big emotional reaction comes from lots of other emotions bubbling below the surface.

CREATE:

Make a mood playlist

As well as delving a little deeper to understand what is behind our emotions, we need to explore ways in which we can regulate ourselves. Many people find listening to music helpful. Music can reflect a mood or can help alter our mood.

- Reflecting a mood: Listen to some pieces of music that reflect a mood. Examples given on page 58 are Mr Blue Sky by ELO, Masters of War by Bob Dylan and Lilac Wine by Nina Simone. Classical pieces such as Holst's The Planets could also be used e.g. Mars the Bringer of War.
- What emotions are these pieces of music trying to express?
- Using the cartoon scenarios above or thinking about their own changing emotions through the day, children can create playlists that reflect particular moods or a variety of changing emotions.
- If they feel comfortable to do so, students can share their playlists with each other and explore the moods reflected and the scenarios/feelings that prompted them.

REFLECT:

Journal

- Personal response – Create an emoji for five emotions you frequently feel or link them to a colour.
- Reflect on what emotions might be ‘under the water’ in your own personal iceberg. What do you keep hidden? Why is this?
- Summarise an event or scenario where you felt angry. What led to this feeling? What other emotions were ‘beneath the surface’?



4a. EXPLORING EMPATHY AND CONSCIENCE

Part 1: Empathy

START:

Recap on naming feelings and understanding what may be causing the reaction.

Ask children to act out a 10-second scene then freeze frame the emotion (this could be individually or in a group.) Can others guess what emotion is represented and infer what 'under the surface' feelings may have led to this? Why are they feeling this way?

(NB: There may be a variety of emotions given for a particular scenario. Even though they may not be what the actor/actors were trying to portray, it is valid to have this discussion around why they chose this emotion.)

DEVELOP:

Someone else's shoes

The definition of **empathy** is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

DISCUSS:

You can only understand someone when you've walked a mile in their shoes.

Q. What do you think this means? What is it asking you to consider?
How does the phrase link to empathy?

DO:

Go on an Empathy Walk

- Take a walk around your local area with the aim of better understanding the people and places in your community. Be mindful as you walk as to what you see, e.g. an old man sitting on a bench, a homeless person huddled in a doorway, a young child having a tantrum, a couple holding hands, litter, graffiti, flowers planted.
- How might these people be feeling? How can we show empathy and understanding within our community?
- Together, discuss thoughts, actions and kind deeds that could support people in the community.

Encourage children not to make judgments but to show empathy and try to understand the differences/challenges and positives each person 'in these shoes' may experience. What might their perspective be? How might their views differ from ours?

REFLECT:

Journal

- Reflect on their empathy walk.
- Note or draw three things they noticed on the walk or that stood out to them.
- What was your emotional response?
- Why do you think you felt this way?
- What have you learnt about yourself and others from the activities?
- How might your learning today impact your future actions?



4b. EXPLORING EMPATHY AND CONSCIENCE

Part 2: Conscience

START:

Use page 96 – What is my conscience?

Key vocabulary: 'moral' and 'immoral'

Can children use the scenarios presented to discuss initial ideas around conscience?

(Children may wish to contribute other examples from their lives too where they have used their conscience or not when facing a choice. Allow them to share if they wish.)

DEVELOP:

Conscience Alley

Give one student a scenario to read out. The rest of the group should then create two lines facing each other. As the student with the scenario walks down the line, the others shout advice/thoughts to them from opposing sides – 'moral' or 'immoral.'

When they reach the end, the student must decide which advice they will take and what their 'conscience' is telling them.

Some example scenarios could be:

1. You see someone drop a £20 note.
2. You see your friend stealing a chocolate bar from the shop.
3. A classmate is being bullied by someone you know.

DISCUSS:

Following your conscience is not always 'black and white'.

Present the debate question and allow children time to think about their arguments 'for' and 'against' before debating the points.

DEBATE:

Is it never OK to steal? (page 116–117)

- Encourage argument and counter argument and building on each other's ideas.
- You may want to introduce the words 'punishment' and 'forgiveness' into the debate.
- Can you think of any other 'grey areas' where right and wrong is concerned?

REFLECT:

Journal

Reflect on your moral and ideas around conscience.

- When have you followed your conscience?
- What moral views about right and wrong do you hold?
- When might you use empathy alongside your conscience?



5. CONCLUDING REFLECTION TASK: A Portrait of My 'Self.'

START:

Use page 186 of The Book of Me. Discuss the flags and what each part represents. Also look at self-portraits from various artists.

At the start of this book, we said that your self is like an undiscovered country. Now you've discovered a bit more about it, it's time to give yourself a flag.

Countries use flags to show their identity. The different colours and symbols are used to represent things that are important to that country.



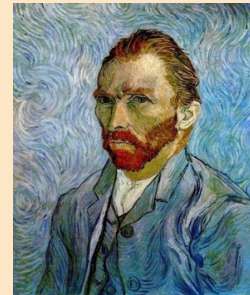
Flag of Ghana

The red represents the blood of the forefathers. The yellow represents the wealth of the country. The green represents the country's forests. The black star represents the freedom of the African people.

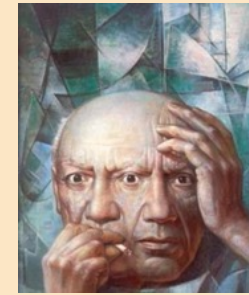


Flag of The Bahamas

The blue represents the blue seas. The gold represents the golden sands. The black triangle represents the strength of the people.



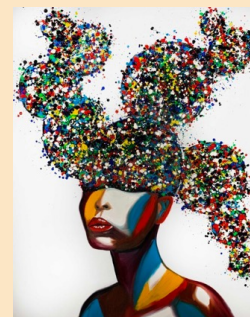
Vincent Van Gogh



Pablo Picasso



Joan Miro



Itay Magen

CREATE:

Give children free choice to create something that represents themselves, their feelings and their beliefs and that summarises their learning from this mini topic.

Ideas could be: a self-portrait, a poem, a flag, a model. They may wish to add annotations or to record a spoken word piece to go alongside it to explain their representations.

**REFLECT:**

Final Journal Entry on page 3.

- Concluding reflections: children to reflect on the ways they now better understand their 'self' and how this will help them in the future.
- How are you better equipped to manage and understand emotions in yourself and others?
- Why is kindness and empathy so important?
- Reflect on how your learning has already strengthened relationships with others or how it may do this in the future.