Self Identity & 
Sex Role Development

Overview
The question “who am I” is asked continually throughout our lifetimes. Self identity is a process which begins in infancy. The child gradually comes to see him or herself as a separate person who has certain characteristics which are or are not valued by the family, culture, and society. If the child feels valued and loved, a high or positive self esteem will result.

Children incorporate into their sense of self their gender identity. Depending on societal and familial expectations children learn what is considered appropriate behavior for boys and girls.

Parents socialize their sons and daughters into typical or non typical sex role behaviors by modeling the roles and reinforcing the desired behaviors.

Questions To Consider
1. What factors constitute self identity?
2. What is meant by cultural identity?
3. How do children learn who they are?
4. In what ways do family and society influence the child’s developing self esteem?
5. In what ways do parents encourage less stereotypical behaviors in boys and girls?
6. How do children learn the behaviors which their family and society consider appropriate for boys or girls?

Vocabulary
Read these terms with their definitions before viewing the program.

- Attachment: An affectional tie between two people with a consistent desire for contact and closeness.
- Cultural identity: Knowing one’s roots, recognizing and accepting group name.
- Gender identity: The knowledge that one is a boy or a girl.
- Personal power: The child has a sense that he or she can make things happen.
- Reinforcement: The process whereby a particular behavior is rewarded, thus ensuring its repetition.
- Self esteem: A person’s evaluation of his or her own qualities that becomes a global judgement of self worth.
- Self identity: A person’s sense of him or herself as a separate person, with particular characteristics.

Instructional Objectives
When you have successfully completed this module, you will be able to:

1. Define self identity and cultural identity.
2. Discuss the development of self identity from birth through the school age years.
3. Discuss the influences on self esteem during the childhood years.
4. Describe sex role behavior seen in play.
5. Identify familial and societal influences on sex role concepts and behavior.

Self-Test
After studying the objectives and watching the video take the self-test to check your progress.

Select the phrase which best completes the following statements.
1. Self identity refers to:
   a. a person’s sense of her or himself.
   b. how one identifies oneself as male or female.
   c. how one characterizes him or herself socially or ethnically.
   d. all of the above.

2. Recognizing one’s roots and accepting the group name is known as:
   a. gender identity.
   b. cultural identity.
   c. self esteem.
   d. all of the above.
3. Place in order the following descriptions of the development of self identity:
   ____a. the child knows own strengths and weaknesses.
   ____b. the child defines boundaries between self and rest of world.
   ____c. the child sees self as a separate individual.
   ____d. the child observes self as a member of a particular racial and ethnic group.

4. Using the words in list below, fill in the blanks to complete the statements.
   a. Children who feel ___________ and ___________ have high self esteem.
   b. Success at problem solving ___________ self esteem.
   c. High self esteem is linked to overall ___________, ___________, and ___________.
   d. A sense of personal ___________ leads to ___________ self esteem.
   e. Helping children achieve ___________ enhances self esteem.
   f. A good sense of ___________ is an important ingredient in developing self esteem.
   g. Children are ___________ participants in the development of their sense of self.
      
      achievement  growth patterns
      active       high
      attachment   loved
      behavior     power
      boosts       success
      valued       

5. Place “true” or “false” next to each statement.
   ____ a. Boys naturally prefer block play while girls play with dolls.
   ____ b. Children engage in stereotypical play if this behavior is modeled or reinforced by the parents.
   ____ c. Teaching new non-sexist terms broadens children’s view of the roles of women and men.
   ____ d. Observing adults sharing household tasks has no bearing on sex role behavior.
   ____ e. Books and television have little influence on the behavior of girls and boys.
   ____ f. Sex role behaviors are shaped by the ways parents socialize their sons and daughters from infancy.