

# Confidence Boosting for Appearance Differences

Information for children and young people



Just because you might look different to other young people your age, this does not mean you have to feel different. However, sometimes our worries about what other people might think or say to us can make us feel less confident.

This leaflet is here to help you build your confidence and find ways to manage difficult thoughts and situations about your appearance difference.

## What does it mean to look different?

- Maybe you were born with something that makes your body look different
- You may look different because of a burn or a scar after an accident
- It may be that you had an operation that has changed parts of your body or face
- Maybe you have a condition that has changed your appearance, for example alopecia or acne.

As you can see, there may be lots of different reasons as to why you look a little different. Confidence is about understanding, accepting and believing in yourself for who you are. It is not about being 'outgoing' or 'popular', you can be quiet and still be confident.

## Tools for boosting my confidence

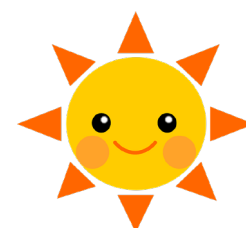
### Focus on your positives

Sometimes we can give ourselves a hard time and we might only notice all the negative things that are going on in our lives. It may be difficult to notice the positives about yourself and this can make you feel rubbish.

Focusing on the positives can be encouraging and can help us be more confident.

**Here are some questions to help you get started to think about some of your positive qualities:**

- What do other people say they like about me?
- What do I like about who I am?
- What are some of my achievements?
- What are some challenges I have overcome?
- What are some characteristics I like in other people that I also have in common with them?



**Write your positive qualities down below:**

\*Don't be shy - include any thoughts, no matter how small or unimportant they might seem.

### Kind thoughts

Thoughts can pop into our head out of nowhere and they can often be difficult to ignore. This can sometimes be scary because thoughts can affect how we feel and what we do. But it's important to remember that thoughts are just thoughts, not facts.

Having kind thoughts is easier said than done, but it can be a good way to help change how you think and feel about yourself. You might find it easier to do this by thinking what you might say to a friend of yours.

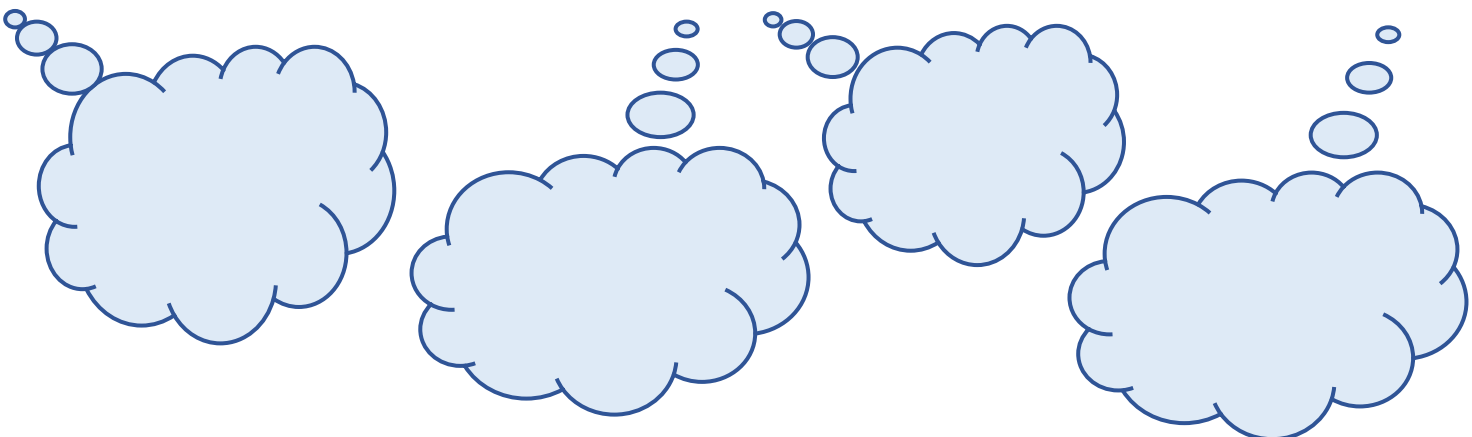
**Here are some examples of kind thoughts:**

- I am unique and proud.
- I am strong!
- My friends think I am \_\_\_\_\_.
- I am trying really hard even though I feel anxious.
- I have managed before and I will manage again.
- I am proud of how well I am managing.
- I am doing OK and I can show that I am OK.



**What are some of your kind thoughts?**

**Write them down below or you could keep a note on your phone as a reminder.**



## Try something new

Try something new, like a new hobby or visiting a new place. Stepping out of your comfort zone can be difficult, but it can also be exciting. Every time you try something new, the excitement of having challenged yourself will boost your confidence.

## Act confident

Act confident, even if you don't feel confident.

Listening to music that makes you feel good about yourself, and life can have a powerful impact on your confidence.

Wear something you love or try expressing your personality through style and colours.

You can try practicing acting confident alone or in front of a mirror. Who knows – maybe after a while you'll notice that you're not acting anymore.



## Speak up

Assert yourself and give your opinion about what you might feel or need. Speaking up is about standing up for yourself, but remember to also be respectful of other people's feelings.

### Top tips on speaking up for yourself:

- Practice saying “yes” and “no”
- Practice what you want to say beforehand or maybe write it down
- Speak clearly and politely
- Don't apologise when you ask for something you need
- Use eye contact
- Keep your head high.



## Dealing with other people's reactions

Here are some tips on coping with reactions other people might have.

### Staring

Often people stare because they are curious, and they might not mean to make us feel uncomfortable.

Have you ever looked at someone for longer because you were interested in what they were wearing or how they had their hair styled? Maybe you didn't mean to stare, but the other person might have felt stared at too.

This does not mean that it is OK for people to stare, but it might help you understand that other people don't always mean to be rude when they stare.



### If you are feeling uncomfortable when someone is staring at you, there are some things you can try:

- **Smile.** Most people will smile back at you and then look away.
- **Ignore the staring.** It is your choice whether you want to ignore the staring or not. It does not mean you are letting them win.
- Use your **kind thoughts** from above.
- **Speak up.** If you feel OK to do so, you can speak to them. You can either ask them politely to stop staring, or you can try talking to them about a completely different topic.

## Questions about my appearance difference

You might feel more confident in answering other people's questions if you have an answer already prepared.

**What you say is completely up to you. Here are some things you might want to think about when preparing an answer:**

- Do you want to give a short or a long answer? You might not want to discuss it at all, and that is also OK.
- Who is asking? If it is someone you know, you might feel comfortable to share more information than if a stranger is asking you.
- Where are you? You might not want to answer a question on a bus when there are lots of other people about.

## Tools for dealing with unwanted attention

These tools can help you prepare for unwanted attention, and they can also be a quick way to help distract yourself from any unhelpful thoughts. These tools have been recommended by the **Changing Faces** charity.



### Tool: Explain – Reassure - Divert

#### To the other person:

#### To yourself:

#### 1. Explain

- Explain that you have an appearance difference.
- Say as much or as little as you like.
- Explain to yourself why they might be asking.
- Reflect on the situation and your feelings.

#### 2. Reassure

- Reassure the other person, they might be worried about you.
- Help them understand your appearance difference.
- Reassure yourself that you are able to cope in these situations.
- Using your kind thoughts might be helpful.

#### 3. Divert

- Divert their attention away from you.
- It is often helpful to give a quick answer and then change the subject.
- Try to distract yourself by focusing on something else, such as an activity, a song or something happening around you.

#### Here are some examples:

**"It is just a scar. I have had it for ages. It doesn't hurt me anymore. I'm just away for lunch, what are you doing now?"**

**"I don't like the question, but they are just curious and I can give them a quick response. I have dealt with these questions before and I am able to do it again. I can try and think about what I would like for lunch to try and distract myself."**

### Tool: 3, 2, 1 Go

**3 things to do if someone stares at you:**

**2 things to say if someone asks a question:**

**1 thing to think:**

## Social media

Using social media can play a big part in staying connected with friends and what is happening in the world. However, social media can also cause a lot of worry for young people, whether they have an appearance difference or not.

People can often feel overwhelmed by social media and the online world, but it's important to remember that not everything you might see is real as most images are edited.



### Top tips for social media

- **Follow accounts that make you feel good about yourself.**

If it makes you feel uncomfortable, upset or anxious – block, mute or unfollow them.

- **Online safety and privacy settings.**

Make your accounts private. This way you can control who follows you and who doesn't.

Strangers are strangers – you should be cautious with strangers whether you are in person or online.

Think before you post – does it make you feel good and confident? Who can see the post?

Remember that what you post online stays online. Even deleted posts can be saved or screenshotted, including Snapchat.







- **Report any bullying or abuse on social media.**

You can report any cyberbullying or abuse directly via the app.

- **Limit your time online.**

Try to avoid using social media just before bed and first thing in the morning.

## Useful links and QR codes

Organisation	Helpful for...
<b>Changing Faces</b> 	<p>Advice, guidance, and support for children, young people and adults living with an appearance difference:</p> <p><a href="http://www.changingfaces.org.uk">www.changingfaces.org.uk</a></p> 
<b>Reach UK</b> 	<p>Advice, guidance and support for children and young people living with upper limb differences:</p> <p><a href="http://www.reach.org.uk">www.reach.org.uk</a></p> 
<b>Children's Health Scotland</b> 	<p>Self-management peer support group for children with a long-term health condition</p> <p>Follow the link to self-refer:</p> <p><a href="http://www.childrenshealthscotland.org/service/smsconnect/">www.childrenshealthscotland.org/service/smsconnect/</a></p> 

Paediatric Psychology and Liaison Service, Royal Hospital for Children and Young People  
 With Thanks to the Changing Faces Charity

