



Drawing the Ideal Self is a version of a Self Characterisation that explores a person's construing of self. It includes a rating of self esteem, a view of past and potential future personal growth and this leads into personal goal setting. It also invites suggestions for supporting future development.

Although these instructions are written with a young person as client, it can be completed with a person of any age and at any stage in therapy/intervention. This technique is particularly helpful when other people feel they do not understand how a young person might behave in the ways they do. It is straightforward to complete but make sure that you test it out on yourself before you use it with someone else so that you are clear about what to do at each step.

Drawing the Ideal Self has 4 parts: elaborating the non-ideal self; elaborating the ideal self; rating progress and clarifying useful supports; and discussion. Remember not to get drawn into discussion at the earlier stages of this technique otherwise the task will be difficult to complete quickly. It will probably take 60-90 minutes if you follow these instructions and it could be completed across a couple of sessions (with a break before Part 3).

Throughout the task, the young person does the drawings and you will write the labels. This ensures that the labels are recorded accurately. Detailed instructions and information about this technique (including an example and details of how to report Drawing the Ideal Self) are in the free handbook, **Drawing the Ideal Self: A Personal Construct Technique to Explore Self Esteem** which can be downloaded from my website: [drawingtheidealsself.co.uk](http://drawingtheidealsself.co.uk).

### **Equipment**

- A4 paper x 3 (with a couple spare in case you need more space)
- Black pen

### **Process**

Part 1 - elaborating the non-ideal self - Drawing the person you would NOT like to be like  
Part 2 - elaborating the ideal self - Drawing the person you WOULD like to be like  
Part 3 - rating, clarifying desired changes and what would help make that happen  
Part 4 - discussion.

**Part 1 - Drawing the kind of person you would not like to be like**

**The person**

Think about the kind of person you would not like to be like. This is not a real person but it could be made up of various people you have known. Make a quick sketch of this person in the middle of the page.

How would you describe this person? What kind of a person are they? Tell me three things about what he/she is like? Write the labels for the client next to the sketch.

**The bag**

This person goes out to school or college each day and takes his/her bag. What kind of a bag would that be and what would be inside it? Sketch and label the items.

**The birthday present**

What would this person like for his/her birthday? Sketch and label the present.

**With family**

How would this person get on with his/her family? Sketch and write descriptions.

**With friends**

How would this person get on with his/her friends? Sketch and write descriptions.

**At school**

How would this person get on at school? Sketch and write descriptions.

**What would be this person's greatest fear in life?**

Everyone is afraid of something. What would this person be afraid of? Sketch and write descriptions.

**History**

How did this person come to be like this? What is his/her history? Was he/her always like this from birth or did he/she become like this? What happened to him/her? Write what the young person says.

**Future**

What will this person's future be like? What will become of him/her? Write what the young person says.

**Part 2 - Drawing the kind of person you would like to be like**

Using the same instructions as for Part 1 above, make a further labelled drawing about *the kind of person you would like to be like*.

**Part 3 - Mapping development and movement towards the person he/she wants to be like**

Place the two drawings on the table, with the first on the left. Place a piece of paper in a *landscape* position on the table in between the drawings and draw a horizontal line half way down the page. The line should be the length of the page, joining the two pictures, as shown below.

Ask the young person to mark where he/she would rate him/herself at various points in time and label each point. The most essential points are *where he/she would say he/she is now* and *where he/she would like to be (ideal self)*. It is helpful to check *the point they would settle for* (is ideal the only option?) and mark this point on the scale. A completed rating might look like the one shown in the Drawing the Ideal Self manual.

**Mapping development over time**

Map where the young person would rate him/herself at different points in time. (E.g. Where were you as a young person of 5? What about when you started secondary school?) Label each point. Ask about the differences between points in time (see instruction manual for details).

**How did you get there?**

Look at differences between points (e.g. between *now* and an earlier point). Ask the young person for the reasons for these changes. E.g. What was happening to help you move up to here? What made you move down to there? This is especially useful for exploring any large changes.

**How could you move towards your ideal?**

Ask for three things others can do to help the young person move from where they are *now* to their *ideal* rating point. Ask for three things the young person could do to help them get to their ideal rating point.

**Mapping different views of the young person**

Where would other people say you were along this line? Why would they say that? (E.g. Where would your mum say you were? What about your sister? Where would your friend say you were?) Ask about the differences in views. What effects do the various views have on the young person?

**Part 4: Discussion**

The final step in the process is to consider what sense the information you have elaborated makes to you and to discuss that with the young person. It is vital to this approach that you do not miss this part out: the whole approach is designed to explore the young person's view and you cannot be certain that the young person feels their views are represented unless you check it out with them.

If the aim is to report back to other people on the young person's views, this needs to be discussed with the young person, outlining what how you will present the explanation and information and whether the pictures can be shown to other people. It is good practice to offer to copy the pictures for the young person but be cautious about when they will take them away and to whom they might be shown. It may be better to hold on to the copies until it is explained to other people so that they make sense when they are viewed.

**Take your interest further**

There are two publications to take develop an interest in PCP without reading texts:

- Coventry Foundation Guide to Personal Construct Psychology: 2018 Edition. Coventry Constructivist Group: <https://amzn.to/2BzFway>.
- A beginners guide to Personal Construct Therapy with Children and Young People, Heather Moran: <https://amzn.to/2tmBO3G>.