Module 1: Self-Awareness
Chapter 1
LESSON 1 – DESCRIBING ME

Materials Needed: Poster with class rules, chart paper, graphic organizers Describing Me and My Characteristics

Before you begin:

Explain the posted class rules.

Explain the topic of the lesson, why the lesson is important to learn, and what the activities will be. (See Guide for Conducting the Lesson.)

ACTIVITIES:

Step 1:

Brainstorm with the group the adjectives that a person might use to describe someone. Tell students these are not physical descriptions, such as hair color, tall, short, etc. Rather, the students should find words that describe how a person acts or treats others or affects them. All suggestions should be accepted initially. Save these suggestions as they will be used again in later lessons.

Step 2:

Go through the list as a group and eliminate those words that the group decides are physical descriptions (see sidebar note). Put the new list on chart paper. Keep the list as it will be used in Lesson 7.

Note: If students have difficulty doing this, you may model by providing a few self-describing words. Students should add to the list. Facilitate this process by questioning; do not make decisions for the group.
**Step 3:**

Have each student fill in the graphic organizer **Describing Me** by listing ten of the adjectives that describe himself or herself.

**Step 4:**

Have the students pair off and spend the next 10 minutes discussing their adjective lists and receiving feedback on which two or three are the best descriptors of each individual. Partners should tell each other which adjectives most accurately describe them using specific examples of situations in which the partner observed the other student demonstrating these characteristics.

**Step 5:**

Rotate partners and repeat the sharing described above. A third rotation is optional, depending on the size of the group and time available.

**Step 6:**

Return to the large group and **debrief** by asking students the following questions. For the literal questions, the facilitator may use any of the group evaluation tools identified in the Facilitator’s Manual, “Tips for Facilitators.” For follow-up metacognitive (‘how’ and ‘why’) questions, call on students for individual responses:

- Did you and your partner easily agree on the words that you initially thought describe you?
- Why or why not?
- What did you learn about yourself from this activity?

*Note: You may need to provide a model of this sharing by out loud thinking about situations in which you demonstrated one of the adjectives you used to describe yourself.*

*Note: If students are reluctant to answer these questions, provide an out loud thinking model such as “I learned that I like knowing that others also think I am helpful. What did you learn about yourself?”*
Step 7:

The facilitator should allow 3-5 minutes for the students to respond in their journals to the following questions:

- What have I learned in this lesson about myself?
- I intend to practice what I have learned by ....
- I need more practice on ....
- I have questions about ....

As they are writing their responses, you can also be jotting notes about the lesson in the facilitator’s journal.

HOMEWORK

As a homework activity, ask students to complete the graphic organizer My Characteristics and record when and how they do things that demonstrate the descriptive adjectives they have chosen. Students should keep an informal list of what they observe about their behavior associated with those descriptions. Explain that the graphic organizers Describing Me and My Characteristics will be reviewed in Lesson 5 and modified as the students learn more about themselves. Be sure to give students an opportunity to share their observations at the beginning of the next lesson.

Alert

The facilitator should be alert to students who have listed only negative characteristics for this activity. Additional time may be needed to work with these students to help them discover positive attributes that they may not realize they possess.
DESCRIBING ME
Self-Awareness: Chapter 1 Lesson 1

From the list that you and your classmates have made, choose ten words that best describe you. Remember, you are not describing how you look but rather how you act, feel, and treat others.

1. _____________________  6. _____________________
2. _____________________  7. _____________________
3. _____________________  8. _____________________
4. _____________________  9. _____________________
5. _____________________  10. _____________________

As you and your partner discuss your lists, discuss the following questions:

1. Why did you choose the words you selected to include on the list above that describe you?

2. Why do you feel these words describe you? Give examples.

3. Which of these descriptions do you feel proud of?

4. Which of these words describe things about yourself that you would like to change? Why?
Use this handout to write down situations when you notice you are doing something that shows that one of the adjectives on your list describes you. Notice how you demonstrate each characteristic and how often. Keep an ongoing list of what you observe. We will look back at the list in Lesson 5. We will also take a few minutes at the beginning of our next lesson for you to share your observations.

Characteristic:
__________________________________________________________________________
Situation: ________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Characteristic:
__________________________________________________________________________
Situation: ________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Characteristic:
__________________________________________________________________________
Situation: ________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Characteristic:
__________________________________________________________________________
Situation: ________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Guide for Conducting the Lesson
Chapter 1, Lesson 1

The following is not intended to be an actual script, but rather a guide for conducting the lesson. The facilitator should endeavor to create an atmosphere of acceptance and trust by modeling and outloud thinking to demonstrate how to openly share information about oneself in a nonjudgmental atmosphere. Through questioning, the facilitator can help students learn how to self-monitor and self-evaluate so that self-correction of misperceptions and resulting inappropriate behaviors is possible. Students are then able to self-direct social behaviors competently. Throughout the discussions, ask questions that direct the student toward self-evaluation without controlling the outcomes of the self-evaluation.

Before you begin:

Facilitator: “In the next few months, we are going to learn as much about ourselves as we can because the more we know about ourselves the more power we have to decide how to behave and how to become the people we want to be.

“Before we begin, let’s review the classroom rules for these lessons. (Facilitator should create a poster for ongoing use listing these rules prior to the first class session.) “Rule 1: What is said here, remains here. This rule is important because we must develop a sense of trust with one another so that we can feel comfortable sharing. Rule 2: Only constructive disagreement is acceptable. This means that if you disagree with the discussion or a response to a question, you must do so in a positive manner. For example, if I disagreed with a statement that you made, I might say ‘Can you explain why you said (believe) that?’ or ‘I’m not sure I understand what you mean, can you tell me more?’ rather than ‘That’s stupid.’ Rule 3: Only positive comments about others are acceptable. Think about how you feel when someone says something negative about you. We want these classes to be a positive experience for everyone so that everyone feels good about sharing.”

While, as a class, you may decide to add additional rules, no more than 5 rules are recommended.
Step 1:

**Facilitator:** “Now let’s begin by trying to think of some words that describe people in general. These words should not be words that tell us what a person looks like such as hair color, tall, short, etc. They should be words that tell us how a person feels about himself or herself and behaves toward others. Let’s make a list. Does anyone have some words to put on our list?”

All suggestions should be accepted initially. If no one volunteers to begin or the group seems to be stalled after a few contributions, provide some descriptions of yourself using **out loud thinking**.

**Facilitator’s example:** “Let me see. I have some words to put on the list too. I notice that I am often shy when I meet new people, so I want to put ‘shy’ on the list, because I think that describes many people. I think I am shy because in new situations with people I don’t know, I get very quiet. I also like to help people, so I would like to add ‘helpful’ to the list. I think I am helpful because when I see someone struggling to do something, I try to make it easier by doing something to make it easier to do. *(Student’s name)*, give me another word to put on the list.”

**Student response:**

Continue asking students by name to add words to the list until no one else can add a word. Keep the list of adjectives on chart paper as they will be used again in Lesson 7.

**Step 2:** (Use this step if words are included that are physical descriptions or otherwise inappropriate):

**Facilitator:** “Let’s look at our list again. Remember that we are trying to include only words that describe a person’s feelings or behavior, not how they look. Does this word describe a feeling or behavior?”

Remain a facilitator even if the group chooses to leave a word that you believe is not appropriate. However, you may use **questioning** to help students evaluate a word more carefully.

**Facilitator’s example:** “Please explain for the group how this word describes a feeling or behavior, *(student’s name)*. How do you know that it describes a feeling or behavior rather than a physical attribute?”

If a student uses physical descriptors, **ask metacognitive questions** similar to those above that will help the student evaluate the word more closely. If students still have trouble differentiating feelings and
behaviors from physical attributes, use **outloud thinking** to demonstrate this **self-evaluation** of word choices.

**Facilitator’s example:** “When I added the word ‘shy’ to our list, I knew that this was a feeling or behavior and not a physical attribute because it did not describe how I look, like the color of my hair or eyes or the shape of my face. A person would not know that I am shy just by those things. They would have to watch how I act in new situations with people who are new to me to know that I am shy. Feelings can sometimes be even harder to see than behaviors, because sometimes people who are shy don’t act like they are uncomfortable in new situations, but they tell you that is how they are feeling inside.”

**Student response:**

**Facilitator:** “(Different student’s name), do you agree? Why or why not?”

**Student response:**

**Step 3:**

When the list has been thoroughly examined and agreed on, ask students to look at their graphic organizer **Describing Me.**

**Facilitator:** “Look at your graphic organizer. You have ten spaces on your sheet. Choose ten of the words from our list that best describes how you feel and behave. If there are other words not on the list that you feel would better describe you, use them but be sure they are not words that just describe how you look.”

Walk around the room to answer questions and help students who use words not listed on the board. When the students have finished their lists, give the following instructions.

**Step 4:**

**Facilitator:** “Now that we have all finished our lists, let’s spend some time discussing our lists with partners to help us decide how accurate we have been. Look at the bottom of your graphic organizer. There are some questions listed there that we want to think about as we look at our lists.”

Read the list for the group if some members are poor readers.

**Facilitator:** “Now divide into pairs and decide which **two or three** words on your list best describes each of you. When you tell your partner that one of the words on his or her list is a good one, try to give specific examples.
But remember to be positive. We want to help each other appreciate ourselves and not feel bad about ourselves.”

If needed, provide a model of how to give specific examples. Choose a word from one student who is self-confident or use a description from your own first out loud thinking modeling.

Facilitator’s example: “For example, I put the word ‘helpful’ on our list. A specific example might be that yesterday a lady dropped her packages so I stopped to help her pick them up. (Student’s name), if you had the word ‘helpful’ on your list, I would say I agreed with that one because just now I saw you help someone find the right place on the graphic organizer.”

In some instances you may need to assign partners. When possible, students should be allowed to pick someone they trust and with whom they feel comfortable, especially in the initial pairing. Allow up to 10 minutes for the first pairs to discuss their lists and to decide on two or three best words from each partner’s list.

Step 5:

Facilitator: “Let’s choose new partners and do the same thing. See whether your second partner agrees with your first partner on the two or three words from your list that best describe you. If all agree, circle those words on your list.”

Allow up to seven minutes for the second pair to discuss the lists. If time permits, a third rotation can be allowed. However, be certain to leave time for debriefing.

Step 6:

When all rotations are complete, call the group together and ask the following debriefing questions.

Facilitator: “(Student’s name), was this a hard activity to do? Why?”

Student response:

Facilitator: “(Student’s name), did you and your partners easily agree on the words that you initially thought describe you? Why or why not?”

Student response:
**Facilitator:** “(Student’s name), what did you like about the activity? Why?”

**Student response:**

**Facilitator:** “Was there anyone who did not like the activity? Why?”

**Student response:**

**Facilitator:** “What did you learn about yourself today, (student’s name)?”

If students are reluctant to answer this last question, provide an **outloud thinking model.**

**Facilitator’s example:** “I learned that I like knowing that others also think I am helpful. I noticed that when I said I thought I was helpful, other people thought so too, and I felt good that they agreed. (Student’s name), did you learn something about yourself?”

Allow time for additional student responses.

**Step 7:**

**Facilitator:** “O.K., this has been a good lesson. We are almost finished, but before we break, I would like you to take a few minutes to jot down your thoughts about this lesson in your student journal. We will be doing this journaling at the end of each lesson. This gives you the opportunity to think about what we have discussed in the lesson and pinpoint some ideas that you are discovering about yourself.”

Allow 3-5 minutes for the students to respond in their journals to the **debriefing** questions. As they are writing their responses, you can also be jotting notes about the lesson in the facilitator’s journal.

**HOMEWORK**

**Facilitator:** “For homework, I want you to notice when and how you do things that demonstrate the adjectives that you have chosen. Using your graphic organizer **My Characteristics,** keep an ongoing list of what you observe. We will look back at the graphic organizers **Describing Me** and **My Characteristics** in Lesson 5 and modify them as you learn more about yourself. We will also take a few minutes at the beginning of our next lesson for you to share your observations. Any questions?”
Alert
The facilitator should be alert to students who have only negative characteristics selected for this activity. Additional time may be needed to work with these students to help them discover positive attributes that they may not realize they possess.