

How's Your Self-Esteem?



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What is self-esteem?

It's your self-image, or how you feel about yourself.

Your self-esteem is made up of thoughts and feelings you have about yourself. These may be:

Positive

For example:

- I'm good-looking.
- I'm smart.
- I learn from my mistakes.
- I'm fun.



Negative

For example:

- I'm ugly.
- I'm stupid.
- I'm afraid to fail.
- I'm boring.



The more positive feelings

you have about yourself,
the **higher** your self-esteem.

The more negative feelings

you have about yourself,
the **lower** your self-esteem.

Some feelings

you have about yourself may be difficult to express or explain. That's because you're a unique individual—there's no one else in the world like you. That's reason enough to be proud!

Why should I think about my self-esteem?

Because self-esteem affects the way you live:

- how you think, act and feel about yourself and others
- how successful you are in achieving your goals in life.

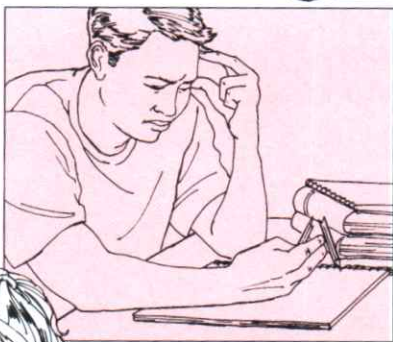
High self-esteem can make you feel:

- effective
- productive
- capable
- lovable.



Low self-esteem can make you feel:

- ineffective
- worthless
- incompetent
- unloved.



Self-esteem can be improved.

Don't let past failures hold you back. You owe it to yourself to learn to feel good about who you are!

Some factors that influence your self-esteem

Your level of self-esteem is based on the unique experiences and personal relationships that have made up your life.

At home:

- relationships with your partner, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, etc.
- experiences with family from birth right up to the present.



In your social life:

- relationships with childhood and adult friends, neighbors, boyfriends and girlfriends
- experiences with clubs, sports teams and hobbies.

In school:

- relationships with classmates, teachers, administrators and counselors
- experiences with schoolwork, extracurricular activities, sports, discipline, etc.



On the job:

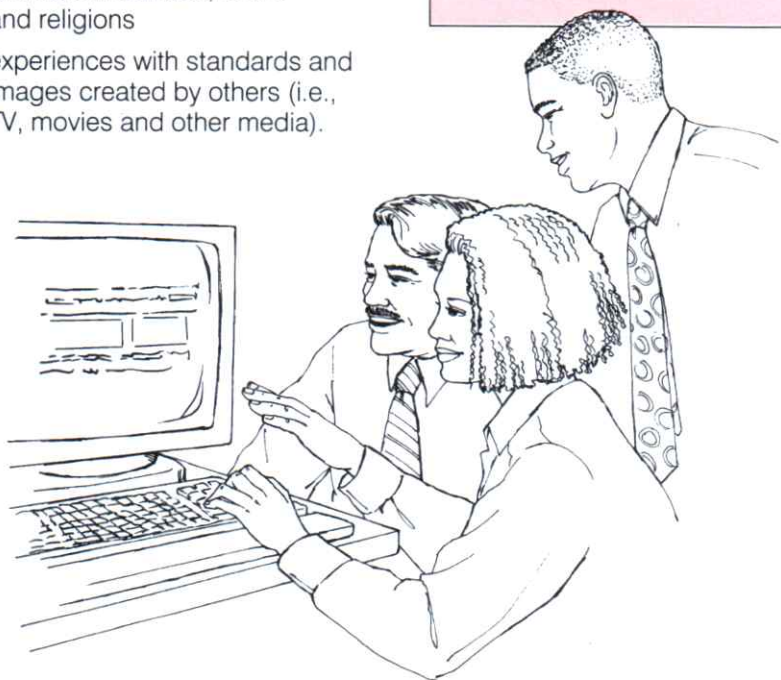
- relationships with supervisors, co-workers, employees
- experiences with hirings, firings, promotions and levels of job responsibility, as well as your ability to support yourself and your family.

In society:

- relationships with members of different cultures, races and religions
- experiences with standards and images created by others (i.e., TV, movies and other media).

In general:

- Positive experiences and fulfilling relationships help raise self-esteem. Negative experiences and troubled relationships tend to lower self-esteem.
- No single event or person can determine your level of self-esteem. It develops over time, constantly changing with experience.



The importance of high self-esteem

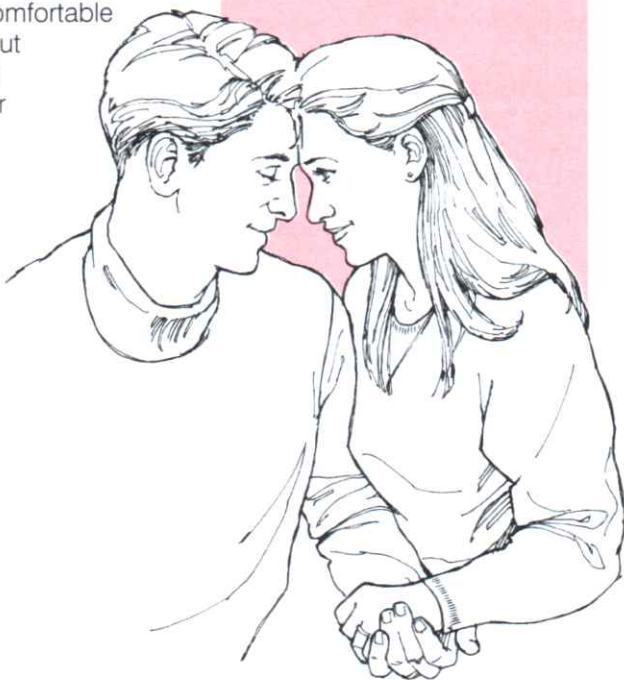
Feeling good about yourself enables you to:

Accept challenges

When you have high self-esteem, you're not afraid to develop your abilities. You're willing to risk trying new things. If you don't try, you can't grow.

Enrich your life

Happy people are a joy to be around. By being happier with yourself, you'll be eager to meet new friends. By being more comfortable and open about yourself, you'll develop closer relationships.



Maintain confidence

Believing you can do something is half the battle. It allows you to involve yourself completely with whatever you're doing. Wholehearted effort helps to bring improvement to performance.

Remain flexible

Change isn't easy. It's unfamiliar and frightening at times. However, a positive self-image makes it easier to accept new ideas and ways of doing things.



With high self-esteem, you can:

- be the person you want to be
- enjoy others more fully
- offer more of yourself to the world.

Some common effects of low self-esteem

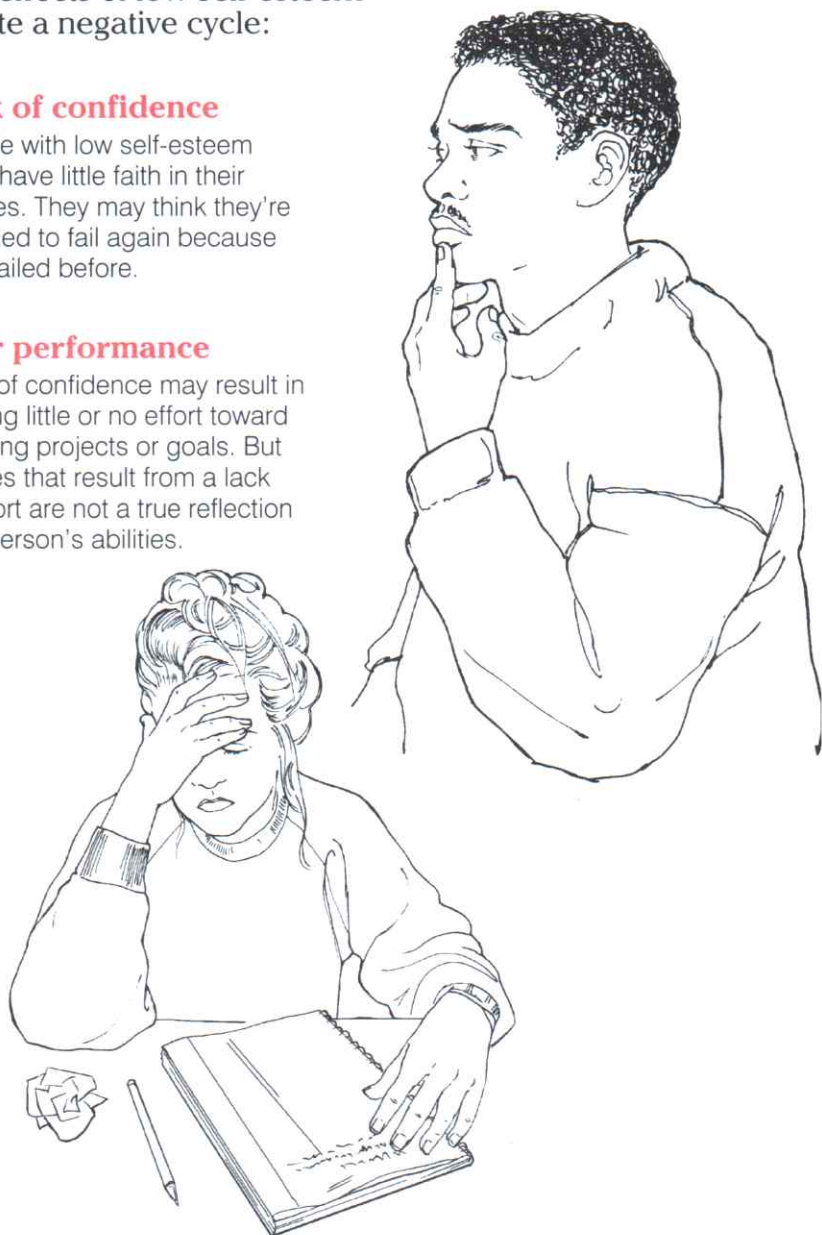
The effects of low self-esteem create a negative cycle:

Lack of confidence

People with low self-esteem often have little faith in their abilities. They may think they're doomed to fail again because they failed before.

Poor performance

Lack of confidence may result in making little or no effort toward realizing projects or goals. But failures that result from a lack of effort are not a true reflection of a person's abilities.



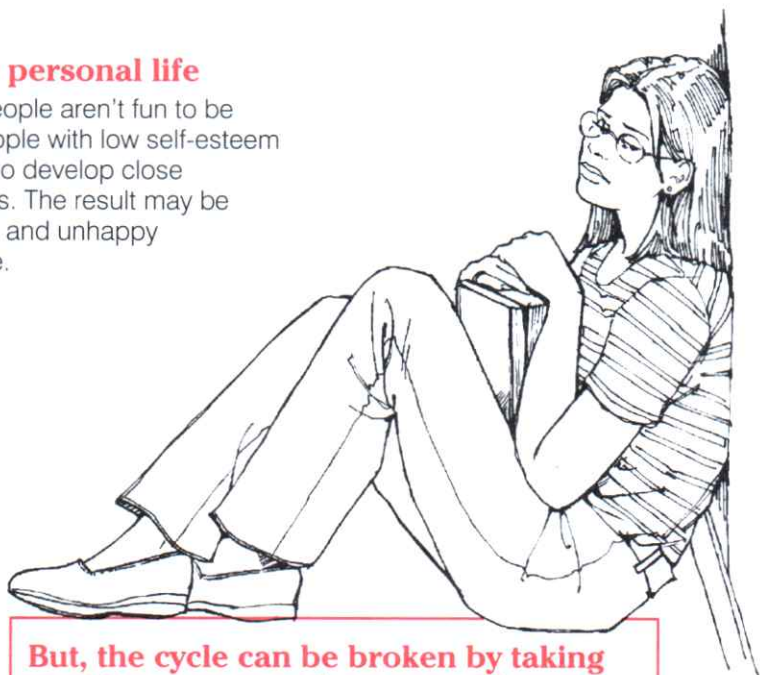


Distorted view of self and others

Some people won't give themselves credit for their accomplishments. These people may think others look better in comparison. They may also believe that things just happen to them—that they don't **make** them happen.

Unhappy personal life

Negative people aren't fun to be around. People with low self-esteem find it hard to develop close relationships. The result may be a lonesome and unhappy personal life.



But, the cycle can be broken by taking positive steps to raise your self-esteem.

How do you feel about yourself?

Assess your own level of self-esteem.

Honestly answer these questions.

Most people feel bad about themselves from time to time. So, when answering these questions, think about how you feel most of the time.

	YES	NO
1. Are you easily hurt by criticism?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are you very shy or overly aggressive?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do you try to hide your feelings from others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do you fear close relationships?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do you try to blame your mistakes on others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Do you find excuses for refusing to change?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do you avoid new experiences?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you continually wish you could change your physical appearance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Are you too modest about personal successes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Are you glad when others fail?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered most of these questions "yes," your self-esteem could probably use improvement.





- | | YES | NO |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Do you accept constructive criticism? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Are you at ease meeting new people? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Are you honest and open about your feelings? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Do you value your closest relationships? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Are you able to laugh at
(and learn from) your own mistakes? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Do you notice and accept changes
in yourself as they occur? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Do you look for and tackle new challenges? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Are you confident about
your physical appearance? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Do you give yourself credit when credit is due? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Are you happy for others when they succeed? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**If you answered most of these questions “yes,”
you probably have a healthy opinion of yourself.**

**Whatever the level of your
self-esteem now, you can take
positive steps to improve it!**

How to think positively about yourself

Make it a point to be your own best friend.
That means giving yourself:

Acceptance

Identify and accept your strengths and weaknesses—everyone has them!

Encouragement

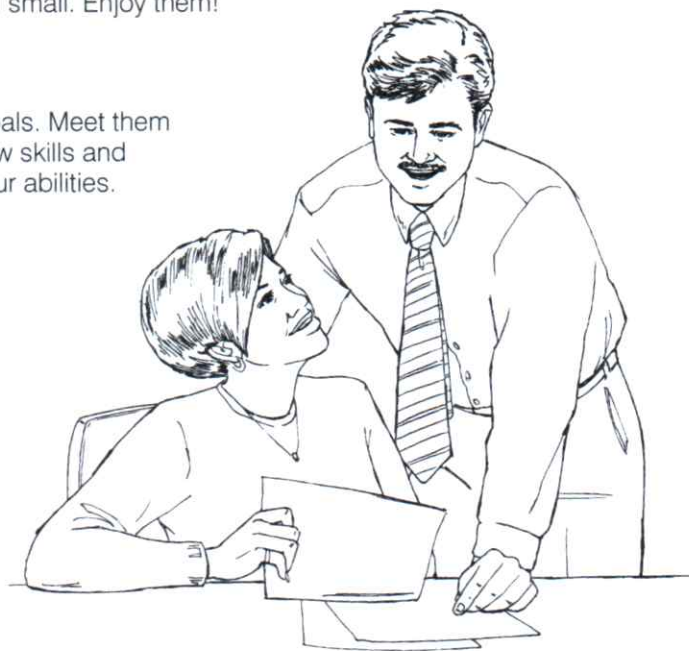
Take a “can-do” attitude. Set a reasonable timetable for personal goals. Offer yourself encouragement along the way.

Praise

Take pride in your achievements, both great and small. Enjoy them!

Help

Set realistic goals. Meet them by learning new skills and developing your abilities.



Time

Take time out regularly to be alone with your thoughts and feelings. Get involved in activities you can enjoy by yourself, like crafts, reading or an individual sport. Learn to enjoy your own company.

Trust

Pay attention to your thoughts and feelings. Act on what you think is right. Do what makes you feel happy and fulfilled.

Respect

Don't try to be someone else. Be proud of who you are. Explore and appreciate your own special talents.

Love

Learn to love the unique person you are. Accept and learn from your mistakes. Don't overreact to errors. Accept your successes and failures—those who love you do.



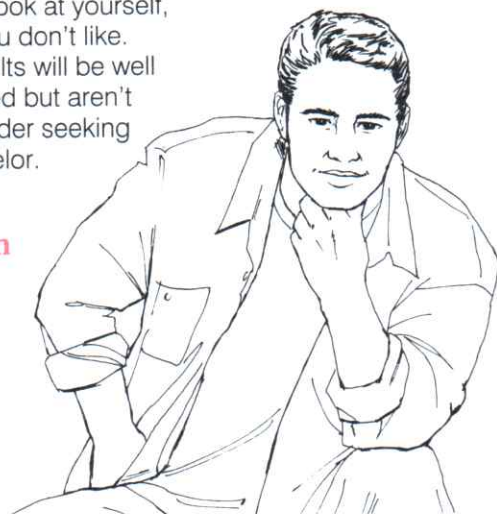
Questions and answers

Is it easy to change self-esteem?

No. It means taking a hard look at yourself, then changing the things you don't like. This takes time, but the results will be well worth the effort. If you've tried but aren't making any progress, consider seeking help from a qualified counselor.

Does high self-esteem guarantee success?

No, but it does guarantee feeling good about yourself and others—no matter what happens.



Can I help others feel better about themselves?

Yes. Let your positive attitude rub off on others by offering encouragement. Help them to open up. Don't put others down. Be patient with their faults and weaknesses (everyone has them).

Does high self-esteem mean self-centeredness?

No. It's not egotism or snobbishness. These are usually false fronts for feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem. Having high self-esteem is appreciating your uniqueness so you can respond to others in positive and productive ways.



Think positively about yourself.

Take pride in your individuality.

Help yourself by developing your talents and abilities.

Encourage yourself whenever you need it.

Praise yourself when you deserve it.

Trust your own judgment.

Love yourself.

You can improve your self-esteem—it's really worth the effort!



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