

What is Self-Esteem?

HOW WE SEE OURSELVES.
HOW WE FEEL ABOUT OURSELVES.
HOW MUCH WE VALUE OURSELVES.

Self-Esteem is the picture we have about ourselves. It's the combination of unconscious and conscious beliefs that we believe to be true about who we are. Self-Esteem comes from the decisions we made about what we saw happening around us and to us. We start to compare ourselves to others and thus may define who we are by what we see in them good or bad.

Self-Esteem is related to how we feel about ourselves. Our feelings tell us a lot about ourselves. They are neither right nor wrong, they just are. How we feel and how we deal with these feelings greatly impact on how we feel about ourselves positive or negative. What you THINK about your problems has a significant impact on what you FEEL and what you DO /REACT to handle all your life issues (friends, family, school, leisure, etc.)

Self-esteem is about valuing ourselves and understanding how important you are in your life and your interactions with others. It's about how you see yourself and how you feel about your achievements and your failures. It is not about perfection. NO ONE IS PERFECT. To strive for perfection will set you up for personal failure and feelings of low self-worth. You are attempting to achieve something, which is unattainable. It will never be enough because of how you see yourself and define yourself. You will continue to raise the bar and will eventually feel more frustration with yourself. Instead of feeling good about the project you completed you will find faults and define yourself by your faults rather than the reality of your accomplishment.

Self-Esteem is a mix of how we feel, think and act. Good Self-Esteem comes from feeling competent and able to act on our beliefs and thoughts and are able to see and understand the results of our actions. Your self-esteem is also affected by how others (family, friends, coworkers, strangers) interact with you and how you respond to them. Your choice of friends says a lot about yourself. How we treat others impacts on how we feel about ourselves. Being honest with ourselves is key in having good self-esteem. Accepting responsibility for our actions, feelings and behaviors greatly influence our self-worth.

Self-Esteem is also related to how we take care of ourselves emotionally, physically, spiritually and mentally. Are you expressing your feelings appropriately and talking about your problems/feelings? Are you asking your family and friends for help when you are overwhelmed or just feeling "BAD"? Are you eating right and exercising a few days a week? Are you getting enough sleep? Do you have any spiritual beliefs? Do you care about the way you look? Do you challenge yourself intellectually by reading or getting involved in a sport or hobby? Do you spend time with people who make you feel good about yourself and about them?

Improving Self-Esteem

You need to develop an attitude of that says, "I AM GOOD ENOUGH despite my faults, insecurities and imperfections." Who I am is not defined by what I do, what I look like, how much I weigh, or how smart I am." It is about loving you and accepting yourself unconditionally. It is about having the COURAGE to be imperfect, to accept yourself as you are, to take risks, to try new things and to "LET GO" of negative thinking, judgments and self-criticism. It is about facing your fears and knowing that regardless of the outcome you took a risk and faced a fear.

Improving your self-worth is about making your own decisions about how you want to use your free time, setting your own goals and making choices for yourselves. It is about knowing what you like and do not like and feeling comfortable saying it out loud to others without fear of rejection, ridicule or laughter. It is about knowing your strengths and weaknesses and being willing to work on areas that need improving, such as attitudes, friendships, school, or getting along with others better. It is having the **COURAGE** to be honest with yourself and being willing to change in a positive direction.

Being around friends and people who love and appreciate us is another way to feel good about us, which will raise our self-esteem. People who know our faults and like us just the same are good friends. It is also important to not take yourself so seriously and to be able to laugh at yourself. Good self-esteem is from knowing that you have succeeded at things in your life that you once thought were difficult and being able to empower yourself to try new things.

Another important factor in improving our self-esteem is taking care of our bodies. When we feel good physically, we feel energetic and full of life. It is important to eat well, and exercise regularly. It is also essential to get enough rest/sleep. When we are tired, hungry and restless we are more than likely to make mistakes and react in ways that are counterproductive for us and will require time to clean up our mess. We also feel better about ourselves when we care about the way we look and are clean and dressed neatly.

Improving our self-esteem comes from knowing our feelings and how to express them appropriately. You need to know that you have choices in how to deal with your feelings and problems. It is important to develop a plan of action for yourself, which is a positive response to a stressful situation. Instead of verbally attacking, physically hitting walls or cursing/yelling at someone, you can take a walk, call a friend, pray, write in a journal, draw/paint or work on a favorite hobby. By choosing a positive reaction you improve your self-worth. Acting out in a negative way almost never makes anyone feel good about themselves. Nor does putting ourselves down for making a mistake or reacting in a negative way. You need to learn to forgive yourself for how you handled the situation if it wasn't the best way. This is how we learn and grow and improve our self-esteem.

One way to improve negative thinking is to say affirmations. An affirmation is something good we say about ourselves over and over again until we believe it to be true. Say it with **FEELING** because you really believe it. One way to make our affirmations come true is to think about how we will look, feel and act when we are what we want to be. For example, if our affirmation is **I AM SMART**, we can imagine how confident we will feel when we are studying, answering questions in class, or taking tests. Once we start believing our new, positive thoughts, we will automatically make small changes to make those positive thoughts come true.

In order to improve one's self-esteem, one must build their confidence in oneself. Self-confidence comes from self-knowledge, which means **WHO YOU ARE** and **WHAT YOU ARE CAPABLE OF DOING**. It is the belief in your own talents and abilities. It is seeing a new situation as an opportunity for learning and growth. When your self-esteem is strengthened you no longer have to live life so carefully as to avoid rejection because your basic sense of approval comes from within.

What is COURAGE?

I can face any situation. My positive power is stronger than any negative force. Every situation is an opportunity for growth and development. Everything that happens supports my learning process and brings me back to my **REAL SELF**. The challenges I face are always in line with my ability to meet them. I know that whatever I set out to do, I will succeed. Challenge strengthens my faith in myself. I develop courage by doing things that require courage. Courage is knowing who I am.

--Nogah Lord