

## Increasing Self-Esteem

**“Nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent.” – Eleanor Roosevelt**

Self-esteem can be thought of as an umbrella term for the way we view ourselves, the way we judge ourselves, and the way we value ourselves. Similar words like self-concept, self-respect, and self-efficacy have related meanings that can slightly vary. They share the fact that we are forming an opinion of our own selves in some way.

When we think of ourselves in a positive light with statements such as “I am capable” or “I love my sense of humor”, we are more likely to have a healthy sense of self-esteem. On the other hand, if we find ourselves saying comments in a negative manner such as “I am a bad mother” or “I am ugly”, it is likely that our self-esteem is low or unhealthy.

Having healthy self-esteem is meant to be something that empowers us and balances our view of ourselves. It is not narcissistic, selfish, or extreme. Instead, it is a humble acceptance of strengths, weaknesses, and everything in between. Self-esteem is having the general sense that it is okay to be you, embrace you, and to just love *you*.

Below you will find examples of what healthy vs unhealthy self-esteem may look like, and helpful tips on how to raise it.

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### Healthy self-esteem:

- “I am good at \_.”
- “I deserve to be treated well.”
- Having a favorable attitude towards yourself.
- Understanding and accepting your strengths and weaknesses.
- Accepting and learning from your own mistakes.
- Respecting your boundaries and keeping yourself safe from harm.
- Having confidence in making decisions.
- Using kind language towards yourself.
- Find meaning and purpose in your life.
- Have loving and healthy relationships.
- Seeing the world realistically.
- Sharing their opinions honestly.

### Unhealthy self-esteem:

- “I am useless.”
- “I will never amount to anything.”
- Having an unfavorable attitude towards yourself.
- Ignoring your strengths, focusing on your weaknesses, and being unable to accept or see any good in yourself.
- Highlighting your mistakes and being unable to forgive yourself or move past them.
- Disrespecting your boundaries and putting yourself in harms way.
- Difficulty with decision-making.
- Using unkind language towards yourself.
- Have difficulty finding purpose or meaning in their life.
- Have toxic or unhealthy relationships.
- See the world unrealistically.
- Are unable to share their opinions.

**Tips and reminders to help you gain a healthy sense of self-esteem:**

- Take care of yourself (eat healthy, sleep well, exercise, have healthy coping skills).
- Practice being kind to yourself (use positive self-talk, affirmations).
- Look at yourself from a different perspective (what would a friend say, how are your weaknesses opportunities for growth?).
- Challenge negative thoughts about yourself. Replace them with realistic or more positive statements. (I will never do \_ right  $\Rightarrow$  I did not do \_ correctly, but I will practice and try again.)
- Help others or volunteer for a good cause. Doing good will help you feel good about yourself.
- Surround yourself with positive influences. (seek out healthy environments and social circles)
- Learn to be assertive when necessary and to respect your own boundaries.
- Try to reduce comparisons with others and find acceptance in yourself.
- Work on forgiving yourself for previous mistakes and bad decisions.
- Celebrate your small wins and don't discount the positives.
- Learn to accept the things you cannot change. (We can only control our own thoughts, actions, and behaviors.)
- Understand what healthy and unhealthy signs of self-esteem look like and notice your engagement in each side.
- Ensure your values line up with your behaviors. (Be open to honest feedback when you value honesty from others. Be accountable for your actions when you expect others follow through with certain tasks.)
- Understand that your negative beliefs about yourself are not facts. They are opinions, and therefore can be changed or improved.
- Previous negative experiences do not mean similar future experiences will always be the same. (Not everyone will judge you, laugh at you, disrespect you, etc. Not every trip will be difficult, unbearable, unmanageable, etc.)
- Reject the attempts of others trying to manipulate you. Work on having enough self-respect and courage to speak up for yourself.
- Practice healthy communication skills and learn to feel comfortable with expressing yourself in a confident manner.
- Appreciate variety in life. Bad days are just as valuable as good days (consider how).
- Learn to love and see the value in others despite their imperfections.
- Allow yourself rest and relaxation when you need it (engage in self-care).
- Take on new challenges. What were the benefits of winning or failing at them?
- Receive therapy to heal past traumas that may be hindering your progress towards healthy self-esteem.
- Say no when you want to say no. Say yes when you want to say yes. However, understand the consequences to each and make the choice that is best for you.
- Set realistic goals and expectations for yourself. Work on them gradually.
- Increase your self-awareness and explore your own identity. How in touch are you with yourself?
- Practice visualizing your success. What is it going to take to get there?

**Self-Esteem Worksheet**

Review the following questions and answer them to the best of your ability. Be as honest as you can. You can use these as journal prompts as well!

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### About Me

- What motivates me to get up in the mornings?
- What 3 things do I value the most in life?
- Think of 3 words that describe you.
- Pick a person you respect or admire. How are they similar/different to you?
- Describe a happy memory. What made it so special? How were you acting or behaving?
- Name 2 challenges you have overcome in your life. What did each teach you?
- What have been the best compliments you have received? Do you agree with them?

### Decision-making

- How would you approach a friend who you have noticed is behaving differently?
- What can you do to help a stranger who seems to be in need?
- What would you do if your boss asks you to do something you are not comfortable with?
- Consider your response if your partner starts to make you feel guilty for saying no.

### Reframing Negative Thoughts

\*Change each sentence to a new realistic or positive statement.

Ex. "Why is this happening to me?" ⇒ "What can I learn from this experience?"

- "I am the worst at math." ⇒
- "I will never be happy." ⇒
- "Nobody will ever love me." ⇒
- "I am a mess." ⇒
- "I am too nervous to go to the interview." ⇒
- "Everyone is judging me."

### Self-Care

\*Fill in ideas of self-care activities you can complete for each category.

Ex. Personal ⇒ play a video game; find a new hobby; cross something off bucket list.

- Physical ⇒
- Emotional ⇒
- Social ⇒
- Spiritual ⇒
- Personal ⇒
- Professional ⇒
- Financial ⇒