

Understanding Mental Health



Self-Esteem

What is Self-Esteem?

Self-esteem is how you think and feel about yourself. What kind of person are you? Think of a few words that describe you. What came to mind? Caring, honest, intelligent, interesting? Or did characteristics such as boring, unhappy, or unsuccessful seem to fit better?

The words you choose to describe yourself give an indication your self-image. Positive qualities indicate high self-esteem; negative qualities suggest lower self-esteem.

Self-esteem affects all areas of your life

Your success at school, work, social and family relationships, as well as your hopes and dreams for the future are all influenced by the image you have of yourself. People with high self-esteem take responsibility for their actions, are proud of their successes and seek new challenges. Those with lower self-esteem lack the confidence to respond to opportunities and become easily frustrated.

People with high self-esteem like themselves and believe in their abilities. Instead of comparing themselves to others, they accept their own strengths and weaknesses and find satisfaction in judging themselves by their own standards.

Self-esteem can be developed

It's important to build inner strengths. Qualities such as reliability, honesty, a sense of humor and interest in people are positive qualities that should be the basis for building self-esteem. You will feel better about yourself if you accept, enjoy and build on your strengths.

You can improve your self-image by setting small, realistic goals you feel confident you can achieve. When goals are met, praise yourself. When they're missed, learn from your mistakes and move on. Gradually work at learning and developing new skills.

Employment or volunteer work provides opportunities to discover and test abilities. Making decisions, completing tasks and interacting with others can build self-esteem. Responsibilities and accomplishments at home or at school also can provide opportunities to build self-esteem.

Tips for building your self-esteem include:

- Accept yourself.
- Find opportunities to praise yourself.
- Use your own standards to evaluate yourself.
- Allow yourself to be imperfect.
- Learn from your experiences, but don't let past mistakes put a cloud on today or tomorrow.
- Set realistic goals.
- Look for new challenges and opportunities.

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- Put an end to negative self-talk.

High self-esteem will help you cope with disappointment and loss. It will help you view your mistakes not as failures but as learning experiences.

Tips for parents

Parents can do a lot to build their children's self-esteem. You should begin by understanding normal childhood development so you can accept shortcomings and provide realistic expectations. When your children fail to meet those expectations, make sure they know that you still love them.

Give your children responsibilities that are appropriate for their age level and level of maturity, and provide opportunities for success. When you see behaviors that need to be corrected, make it clear that you still love the child. It's the behavior you don't like. Really listening to what your children have to say will tell them that you think they are valuable people. Look for opportunities to ask your children for their opinion.

Praise is a wonderful way to build self-esteem. Praise should be honest and should reflect on the child as a whole person, not on just a specific accomplishment such as a good report card or athletic success. Helping your children develop self-esteem is more important than anything a parent can do for them.