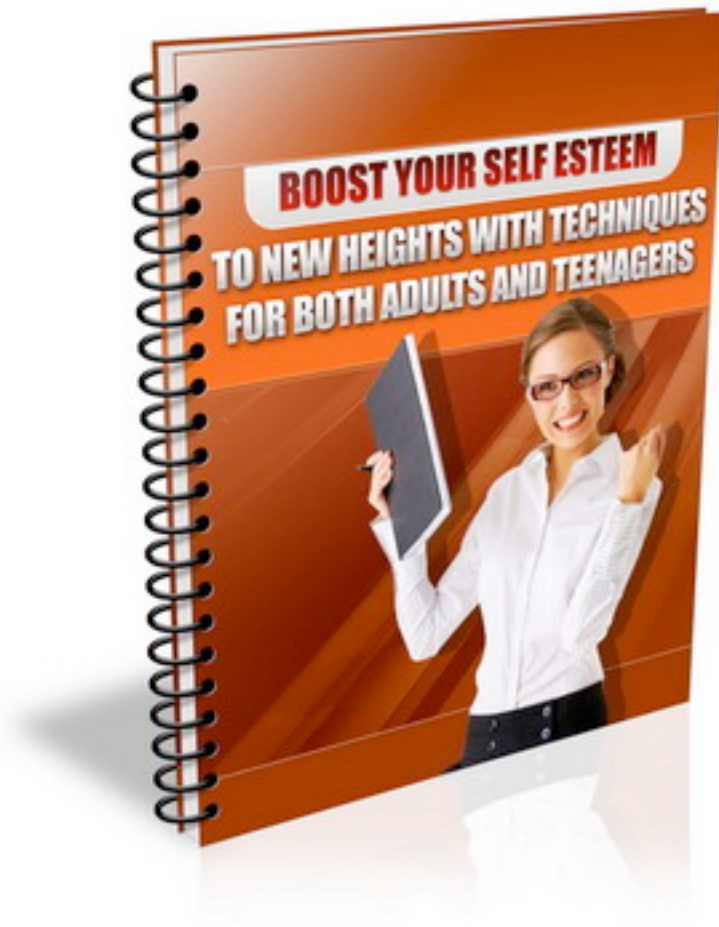


BOOST YOUR SELF ESTEEM



**TO NEW HEIGHTS WITH TECHNIQUES FOR BOTH
ADULTS AND TEENAGERS**



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INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE OF SELF-ESTEEM

Would you say you're a prideful person? Chances are you wouldn't because of course we equate pride with vanity and arrogance. A prideful person must always be bragging about what they have, where they've been, and why they're so much better than you.

Would you say you have self-esteem or self-confidence? While pride is often equated with arrogance, self-esteem and self-confidence are typically things that we admire in others and want for ourselves. When we see a colleague gracefully making a presentation at the office or a classmate breezing through a speech, we wonder how they can do that so easily and wish we had their confidence. And when we get nervous over the smallest class participation or question asked by the boss, we realize how a lack of confidence and esteem can cost us dearly.

But what really is meant by self-confidence? What is self-esteem? Why are these things good but we think of pride as being bad?

Why are these things important in one's everyday life? How can a lack of self-esteem hurt you and how can enough of it be a real asset to you?

And of course the biggest question of all, how can you build it in your life?

DEFINING SELF-ESTEEM

Just what is self-esteem? How is it different from pride or arrogance?



To define this term, think of the word "esteem" in general. When you esteem something you hold it in high regard. You treat it well. So self-esteem means that you value yourself and hold yourself in high regard.

Self-confidence can spring from self-esteem and they usually go hand in hand. When you hold yourself in high regard and consider yourself as worthy of respect, then you have confidence in yourself. This doesn't mean that you don't recognize your flaws and quirks, but you know that overall you're just as important and just as worthy as the next person.

But what about pride? How is this different and why is pride often considered a bad thing? Excessive pride means not just putting a value on yourself but putting a value that is above the value of others. When you're too prideful you put more value on yourself than is necessary and often allow this to lead to hurtful actions. Someone that is too prideful may indulge their own wants while neglecting the needs of their family. They may brag about something they have in front of someone that doesn't have these things without any concern for how it makes that person feel.

In many circumstances pride has certainly lead to hurtful acts, but a measure of pride is not necessarily a bad thing. When a person takes pride in their home, they keep it well maintained and clean. When they take pride in their appearance, they mind their hygiene and arrange themselves nicely when it comes to their hair and clothing. Taking pride in one's children can be a good thing as well, to a certain extent.

It might be said that the key here is balance. You can esteem something without putting it on a pedestal where it doesn't belong. You can have self-confidence and a measure of pride without letting these things hurt others. If you're balanced in your attitude then you're sure to have self-confidence and self-esteem without being too prideful.



VALUE OF SELF-ESTEEM

Why worry about self-esteem? Why worry about how much you have in your life and how to increase it? Isn't being humble a good thing? Shouldn't people put themselves in second place and put others ahead of themselves?

Of course there are times when this is true. A child's needs should come before a parent's wants. Taking care of aging parents is always the right thing to do, whatever that care may entail. Courtesy often demands that we allow someone else to be put ahead of us, such as when we allow someone to merge ahead of us in traffic or when we hold the door for someone else. Proactively doing these things is the opposite of pride, where we expect others to always hold the door for us!

Having the right amount of self-esteem is important. This means that we feel good about ourselves, have the confidence to step up when called upon, and will keep ourselves from being hurt or abused by others or by our own thoughts. When a person has the right amount of self-esteem this means they don't hesitate to participate, thinking that others are looking down on them. They take care of themselves, have the confidence to try new things, and don't get overly upset or discouraged when they do things wrong or make mistakes.

Typically a person with a level of self-esteem is also happier. They do not get discouraged easily or feel that they are missing out on things since they don't hesitate to associate with friends and family.

But when self-esteem is low, a person can be depressed, anxious, hesitant, and discouraged. They may miss out on relationships, friendships, job opportunities, and so much else. Often they assume that good things are not for them and they don't deserve anything in life.



For some, this can also affect those around them. When someone has low self-esteem they may pass this thinking onto their children. If they are constantly comparing themselves to others and coming up short, their children may learn to do the same. If they are always saying that they're not good enough and don't deserve things, their children may also learn to think this way about themselves.

And those who suffer from low self-esteem may allow themselves to be mistreated by others. When you don't esteem or value something, you don't mind if it's treated abusively. This is true of objects or of people. If you don't esteem or value yourself, then you may allow other to treat you in an abusive manner. This can lead to more feelings of worthlessness and of one's children being abused as well.

There are many reasons to consider how you can increase your self-esteem and why it's so valuable in life. And there is no reason to be without it! Self-esteem can be taught and it can be learned. It can also be increased as well.

INCREASING SELF-ESTEEM

Do you believe that you can increase self-esteem? It may seem that this trait is something that people have or they don't have. And for some, having a good self-image and lots of confidence does seem to come naturally. They can just naturally make a presentation or breeze through a social situation without a second thought.

Chances are these people already do the things we're going to cover in this book, whether or not they're aware of what they're doing. They may already tell themselves that they have just as much worth as the next



person and that they deserve every bit of happiness they get. They may also simply assume that they will do a good job on that presentation, that new people they meet will like them, and thinking such as this. They may not realize what they're doing, but this is how they think.

And you can learn the same things. You can learn the thinking you have that interferes with your self-esteem and self-confidence and can then learn how to replace those thoughts with more positive ones. Teaching yourself confidence and learning your own value may be a struggle, but it can be done.

In this book we're going to show you:

- The many reasons that people lack self-esteem, including their appearance, their family dynamics, and their own attitudes and opinions about things.
- How to tell if you have low self-esteem, to the point that it should be addressed.
- Why you need to understand that true self-esteem and confidence come from within and are not based on how others view you or treat you.
- Ways to think differently about yourself and how to project confidence to the world so that the actions of others will follow your own.
- How to learn self-confidence and self-esteem in the workplace, at home, in relationships, and wherever you are and whatever you do.



Self-esteem is a valuable commodity and one that you can grow and develop, no matter how much it may be lacking in your life currently! It can lead to more confidence and in turn better opportunities for a career, stronger personal relationships, and just a more positive outlook overall. So if you're ready to start growing that self-esteem to reclaim your life, let's begin!

WHY THE LOW SELF-ESTEEM?

If self-esteem is so important and so beneficial and vital, why is it so low today? Humans have a sense of self-preservation, that is, they try to save their own lives when in danger, so why doesn't this type of behavior translate to one's emotional health and life? Why don't we just naturally attach a sense of value to ourselves so that we can have the things in life everyone deserves and so that our lives become better and more fulfilling?

Obviously the answer is complicated and no doubt different for everyone. What causes your low self-esteem will not be the same as what your neighbor or child suffers with. However there are some common factors that typically contribute to low self-esteem. Let's look at them here.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

As humans, we do put a certain value on one's physical appearance. Typically we're drawn to those that we find physically attractive or that catch our eye for whatever reason. Those that are not physically attractive have a harder time finding mates and even jobs. Often we judge those who are not physically attractive as being less than desirable or may assume they're lazy, stupid, or incompetent, even if we don't realize we're judging them this way.



This isn't to say that this is a good way of thinking. A person's looks may have nothing to do with their character. Carrying a few extra pounds doesn't mean you're necessarily lazy and not having a handsome face doesn't mean you're stupid or incompetent. But as logical as that is, it still happens that people are judged by their looks.

Which can make it difficult for those who are less than stunningly beautiful to have a measure of self-esteem. If you know that people judge others by their looks, and know that your looks are only average or less than, it becomes easy to think less of yourself as a person. Since you have less of what people value, you feel less as a person overall.

Of course it can become even more difficult when people aren't even subtle about treating you differently because of your looks. When you're rejected in romantic relationships or have people make crude or thoughtless comments about your looks, your self-esteem can take a nosedive. It's difficult enough to fight subtle rejections and judgment because of your looks, but when those things aren't even subtle anymore then it's even more difficult!

OBESITY AND SELF-ESTEEM

Those that are overweight and obese seem to have a special problem with self-esteem as it's tied to their appearance. In today's society obesity is seen as being equivalent to having the plague! When you're overweight people often assume you're lazy, dirty, stupid, and all-around useless. It's not unusual for people to discriminate against the overweight and obese when it comes to jobs and even housing.

Of course there's nothing to say that being overweight makes you any of these negative things. There should be no reason for someone to judge



someone else because of a few extra pounds. But the fact of the matter is, it does happen. This can mean a terrible burden of low self-esteem for those that are struggling with their weight.

FAMILY AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS

There's no denying that one's family and personal relationships can have a lot to do with one's self-esteem. Messages received as a child can be difficult to erase from the mind, and the way a person is treated with friends and intimate relationships can also play a large part.

IN THE FAMILY

The way a child is treated has a lasting impact on his or her life. When a child is taught that he or she is worthless, stupid, lazy, or for some reason unacceptable, this is a tough message to undo. Many who are abused or neglected as children suffer from poor self-esteem and a poor self-image throughout their entire lives.

And it's important to note this can mean mental and emotional abuse as well. A child doesn't need to be physically abused to suffer long-term consequences. Words can hurt, and a child can continue to hear those words long after a parent has stopped saying them.

There are other ways that a family's dynamics may come into play when talking about a person's low self-esteem. For instance, some family members may ostracize those who don't follow the same religion. They may also look down on one that doesn't get a secondary education or make judgments because of that person's job or financial situation, because of



their choice of marriage mates, the way they raise their children, and for many other reasons as well.

DIVORCE

A divorce can greatly affect a person's self-esteem, especially if one's spouse was cheating or doing something else hurtful. It's easy to take their behavior personally; you may assume that if you were a better person they wouldn't do those things. Your ex-spouse may even tell you that.

A person's social stature after a divorce can also affect their self-esteem. Their friends may ostracize them or neglect them out of awkwardness. Their own family may react negatively, as may the children. These things can chip away at a person's self-esteem every single day.

FRIENDS; LACK OF THEM

The way a person's friends treat them will also affect their self-esteem. Some friends tease and make fun of others, not realizing how sensitive this person is. They may leave out a certain person from their plans and talk about their other trips and plans when in front of them.

While this may be inadvertent on the part of those friends, it can still make a person feel as if they're lacking worth or if there is something wrong with them. And when a person lacks friends for whatever reason, this too can hurt their self-confidence. A person may be of a particular age, may not be very outgoing, or just may not have friends because of their situation in life. Whatever the reason, this can hurt their self-esteem as they wonder if they are the problem and if they even deserve friends.



PATTERNS AND FEAR

Imagine for a moment that every time you reached out to open your refrigerator door, you got a small shock. What would you expect the next time you went to the refrigerator? A small shock, right?

Patterns in circumstances can create physical, mental and emotional reactions in people. If every time you see your uncle Joe he makes crude and crass remarks or is so rude that you become uncomfortable, you're going to naturally tense up every time you need to see your uncle Joe. If your boss is rude and degrading to you then of course you'll dread the sound of his or her footsteps.

There are many ways that these patterns of circumstances can create reactions and expectations in us. In turn this can lead to a lack of self-esteem, depending upon those circumstances. Consider the following:

FAILING

Suppose you try something and you fail or don't do so well at it. This might go back to when you were in school and didn't make the basketball team or cheerleading squad or got a "D" in chemistry. No doubt you were hurt and your self-esteem and confidence took a beating.

Suppose you tried a few things and they didn't turn out the way you plan. You don't get that great job you applied for, you got denied a mortgage loan, that business you opened needed to fold after just a short time. How do you think these things might affect your self-esteem?

Obviously if you try one thing and don't succeed you may very easily be able to continue trying and not give it much thought. You might not get that one



job you applied for but get a different one. Another lender might give you a mortgage loan or you reapply in a few years and finally get a house. Everyone fails at something at some point in their lives or they don't do as well as they hoped the first time around. But often these so-called failures are put into perspective as achievements outweigh them overall.

But when you seem to fail time and again or concentrate only on failed ventures, failed relationships, and other such circumstances, then it's easy to think that you will never succeed. There must be something wrong with you or else you wouldn't fail all the time, would you? This pattern can lead to that type of thinking which in turn chips away at your self-esteem.

Your confidence levels are also affected by this pattern. If you are sure you will fail, how can you have the confidence to even try something? The abilities you do have will be overshadowed by what you see as being this constant failing in your life.

TRUST

Have you ever had someone betray your trust? Chances are you have; most people have at one time or another. It might be something old and trivial such as your best friend in sixth grade telling everyone about the crush you had on a classmate, or it may have been something more significant such as a spouse being unfaithful.

The betrayal of trust hurts in many ways. Often someone that betrays trust can seem as if they're laughing at us, such as that friend that made fun of your crush in school. Or they can be taking advantage of us - you trust your spouse so you don't check up on him or her constantly, and they take advantage of that in order to cheat.



But how is a betrayal trust, especially when it happens time and again, something that affects your self-esteem? How are the two tied in together?

Usually we think, albeit self-consciously, that if we were worth consideration and respect then people wouldn't betray our trust. They don't betray the trust of those they have regard for, so we get the message loud and clear - we're somehow less than those who are respected in this way.

REJECTION

Everyone faces rejection at one point or another in their life. Not getting a job to which you apply is a form of rejection. You may be turned down for a date or have someone break off a relationship. An offer to help someone is rebuffed, a potential friend doesn't return a phone call. When a spouse leaves or when children decide they want to live with the other parent, these are all forms of rejection.

In many cases rejection can also be shrugged off if we have enough acceptance to make up for that. When one potential date rejects you but another begins a relationship with you, then the initial rejection doesn't seem so bad. A painful divorce can be much less so when we start a new relationship. One job application is rejected but another company hires you, and so on.

However when rejection becomes a pattern, this too can rob a person of their self-esteem. If you were worthy and valuable and respectable then people would want you, not reject you.

Unfortunately rejection can happen, not just with strangers but also with family and even so-called friends. One child might be overlooked as parents play favorites. Siblings may reject one child and use him or her as an object



of teasing or bullying. In some families, a family member may be rejected if they don't share in the same religious beliefs. All of these things can add up to a pattern of rejection and bad feelings about oneself.

YOUR LACK OF SELF-ESTEEM

So what about you? Why do you lack self-esteem? What are your different issues?

If you're like most, you may be struggling with many different issues related to your self-esteem, not just one. You may have been rejected quite often as a child and may have failed at some attempts in different areas. Or maybe you put on some weight and were served divorce papers at the same time.

Whatever the reasons, all hope is not lost. Self-esteem can be reclaimed and you can learn the healthy ways of thinking that will get it back for you. But let's first find out if you really do have low self-esteem and if so, to what extent.



Do You Have Low Self-Esteem?

If you have low self-esteem you may already be aware of the issue, but for others, it may be difficult to distinguish between it and other mental and emotional concerns. Having a bad day can make you feel bad about yourself or receiving criticism can sting for days, but this may not necessarily mean you suffer from chronic low self-esteem.

And of course this issue can be intertwined with other issues, such as depression, anxiety, post traumatic stress disorder, and stressors that mimic the symptoms of having low self-esteem and a lack of self-confidence.

But there are some ways you can tell if you suffer from a lack of self-esteem. Consider some of the following symptoms and see if they don't apply in your case.

ADDICTIONS AND DISORDERS

Since a lack of self-esteem can lead to depression and anxiety this can mean that a person "drowns" their feelings in addictions and behaviors such as eating disorders. When you use narcotics or drink too much, you release endorphins, those feel good chemicals in the brain that relax and calm you. It's not unusual for someone with a lack of self-esteem to fall prey to many addictions.

You may not think you have an actual addiction and may assume that you use drugs or alcohol only for recreation. But there are some things to consider this regard. One is that narcotics are illegal! If you're using these, why are you risking jail time and huge fines just to feel good? And when it comes to drinking, do you often get drunk? Do you always drink when you



want to enjoy yourself? Do you ever drink too much and then drive home? These things may signal, if not an addiction, a sure problem with alcohol.

EATING DISORDERS AND OVEREATING

Eating disorders and overeating are quite similar to other addictions. Eating releases those same endorphins and makes a person feel good. If you're prone to constant overeating, eating in secret, or gorging yourself on a regular basis then you may have a food addiction just like someone else has an alcohol or drug addiction.

And many eating disorders are about control. Often an anorexic person becomes overly controlling as to their eating and this leads to the disorder.

Only a doctor can truly diagnose an addiction or disorder of any type, but this information should give you something to think about as to symptoms of low self-esteem. If you constantly seek out narcotics or alcohol or eat to feel good, you may be trying to mask some feelings inside of yourself that are related to low self-esteem.

SELF HARM

Closely related to addictions and disorders would be behaviors that are harmful to yourself. This can mean cutting, hitting, and other such habits. Those with low self-esteem feel a need to punish themselves, may feel more in control when they harm themselves, or need to feel pain to feel anything at all.

Causing harm to oneself is a very serious matter and one for which a person should get help. There are support groups and doctors that specialize in this



type of behavior and its treatment. Letting this behavior go unchecked can result in severe physical problems, including infections, scarring, and things such as these.

DEPRESSION

There are many reasons as to why someone would suffer from clinical depression. It can be genetic, it can be the result of circumstances they're experiencing (prolonged job loss, divorce, death of someone close, relocation, aging, "empty nest" syndrome, just to name a few), or it can be the result of learned thinking patterns.

But depression can also result from a lack of self-esteem. When you put little value on yourself, this can lead to negative thinking and to the "what's the point?" thinking that is common with depression.

When a person has depression, they have little interest in things that they once enjoyed. This would include hobbies, friends, family, their career, and recreation. They often don't want to go anywhere or do anything or be around anyone. You can see how a lack of self-esteem would cause these problems.

When you lack self-esteem, you may feel as if you're not worthy of being around others. You might feel nervous about everything you do and how you do it. You may also assume you're doing things wrong or that people are laughing at you behind your back.

So it's no wonder that someone lacking self-esteem and self-confidence would then suffer from depression. How can you have an interest in things or enjoy the company of others when you assume everything you do is



wrong? How can you enjoy these things when you assume people are looking down on you?

Very often a lack of self-esteem leads to depression, and having depression can make a person feel even worse about themselves. This vicious cycle can continue endlessly if a person does not address it directly.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

There are many physical symptoms tied in with low self-esteem and depression, and the many other emotional disorders that come with these. The body and the mind are connected; any stressful situation will cause a person to react physically.

SLEEP DISTURBANCES

When you suffer from low self-esteem, your sleep may be interrupted in many different ways. You may have insomnia or may sleep too much. Insomnia can be caused by bad feelings about yourself; you toss and turn in bed as you think about all the things you've done wrong and how terrible you are. You may sleep too much as you dread getting out of bed and facing another day.

Sleep disturbances can lead to other physical problems as well. When you sleep too much your metabolism goes down and this causes grogginess and lack of energy throughout the day. It can also lead to weight gain.

Not sleeping enough can mean the body not getting adequate rest. Blood circulation can be compromised which can mean tissue damage in all areas of the body. Not getting enough sleep can mean mood disorders as the



brain too suffers these consequences. A person can be irritable, short-tempered, frustrated, angry, easily upset and startled. And of course these problems can just contribute to the problem of low self-esteem! You won't feel very good about yourself if you're constantly snapping at others and are angry and upset all the time.

DIGESTIVE DISORDERS

Mental and emotional disturbances often cause stomach and digestive disorders. Usually the stomach secretes extra acid when the body is under duress, in order to digest food and empty the stomach so a person can be physically ready for conflict. But when you're not digesting food and you have that extra acid in the stomach, this can mean many digestive disorders. This can mean acid reflux, indigestion, stomach cramps, and many other concerns.

SKIN PROBLEMS

A person suffering from low self-esteem can have their stress show itself on their skin. This might mean shingles and other rashes, acne, dry skin, oily skin, and blotchy skin. The connection between skin problems and emotional disturbances is not entirely clear but they can be connected to feelings of low self-esteem. And of course having unattractive skin can mean additional problems with low self-esteem!

AVOIDANCE

When you don't feel good about yourself, you typically don't enjoy being with others. You may assume that others are looking down on you, laughing at you behind your back, or criticizing you to other people. You may also



assume that you're doing things wrongs and that you don't fit or don't belong with others anyway.

This can lead to avoiding social situations altogether. You may avoid as many situations at work that bring you into contact with others, and things such as church, family dinners, and just going out with friends. Many who have low self-esteem also avoid intimate relationships and even just dating.

Avoidance can lead to even more lack of self-esteem as loneliness and depression both set in. As a person becomes more and more isolated they can become more and more convinced that they don't deserve friends and socializing, and the never-ending circle of low self-esteem continues.

This isn't to say that someone needs to be a social butterfly or should accept every social offer extended to them or otherwise they have low self-esteem. Some people are naturally homebodies, meaning they enjoy staying in. Others are just more comfortable in smaller groups and may not know many people with whom they have things in common. Some families are not naturally close and social. And a person can go through a temporary set of circumstances that makes them uncomfortable around others.

But when avoidance becomes a habit then it may be tied into a lack of self-esteem. When you would always rather be at home, alone, than out with others this may be a signal of something serious.



SELF ESTEEM – GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

Of course one of the easiest ways to figure if you have low self-esteem is to just ask yourself that question. Do you think you have low self-esteem? Do you see yourself as a failure, as someone that doesn't belong, or that doesn't deserve to be happy and to have nice things? Do you assume that you're just doomed or defective or undeserving?

Chances are if you have low self-esteem, you know it. You know that you have a low opinion of yourself and you know that you don't put a high value on your own happiness.

Give some consideration to these various symptoms of low self-esteem and think seriously about how many may apply to you. You might have one or you may have several, and of course they will be to varying degrees in anyone's life. And think about your own ideas in this regard and if you just know that you have low self-esteem. If you think you have it, chances are you do! So let's get started in addressing it and learning how to change this.

IT STARTS FROM WITHIN

Very often people assume that they will have more self-esteem if and when people treat them better. Obviously the way others treat us has quite a bit to do with how we see ourselves and how we view ourselves. If our parents rejected us or siblings despised us, that can have long-lasting consequences. Being rejected by a spouse through a divorce or having children that have abandoned us can of course make anyone feel bad.



But consider for a moment those who do seem to have confidence and esteem. Think of that coworker that breezes through a presentation without a second thought. He or she probably suffered rejection and setbacks at one point. You may also know a friend or relative that is divorced and they don't take it as hard as you. Everyone gets rejected or fails at something or suffers some bad treatment from someone, sometime.

So what is different about these ones and the effects that this treatment has on you? Chances are that those with confidence and esteem are paying attention to their inner voice more than the sound of these other voices, or the treatment they're getting from others.

YOUR FEELINGS

Let's think for a minute about the importance of your inner voice and your own opinion of yourself. To illustrate, let's use the example of something you really, really love and enjoy. Think of your favorite band or food or place to vacation. You love this thing or place and absolutely relish every time you get to enjoy it.

Now suppose someone comes along and tells you that this band's music is stupid or that spaghetti is tasteless or Malibu is boring. Someone criticizes this thing that you absolutely love; what do you do?

When this happens, do you change your opinion of this thing or place? Do you start thinking that maybe you don't really like this particular band and that they are really bad? Or that spaghetti or chocolate or cheesecake is tasteless? Do you start to dread your yearly vacation to Malibu or the Grand Canyon or Las Vegas? Probably not; you know these favorite things of your are enjoyable and someone else criticizing them won't change that. You also know that everyone's opinion is different; someone else doesn't need to love



deep dish pizza for you to love it and someone else doesn't need to enjoy a show in Vegas for you to think it's the greatest place on earth.

You may also subconsciously realize that while someone's words in this regard may detract a bit from your enjoyment of these things, there are probably just as many people that love the same things you do as the number of those that don't. In other words, for every one person that doesn't like a particular food, there is probably another person that loves it just as much as you. Many people probably love the same music you do or enjoy vacationing in the same spot you do, so of course the naysayers aren't that important to you.

So what about yourself? There may very well be those that don't like you or that have treated you poorly over the years. But why should this change your opinion about yourself? If you love and esteem yourself, their opinion shouldn't detract from that and of course they shouldn't have the final say either.

People that have confidence often know this, albeit subconsciously. They like themselves and know that there are others out there that like them too, so the few naysayers or critics they've had in their life don't take center stage with them. Those opinions don't change the opinion they have of themselves.

INNER VOICE

No doubt you've heard about your inner voice and perhaps now understand why and how it is that what you say on the inside can be more important than what you hear from others on the outside.



Your inner voice can work for your good or your detriment, depending upon what you say to yourself. You can build up your own self-esteem and confidence with your own thoughts or tear yourself down with them as well. Let's take a look at how this works on both sides of the issue.

YOUR OWN WORST CRITIC

How does your inner voice work to tear down your self-esteem? How can your own thoughts be used against you to make you feel bad about yourself and to chip away at your confidence? There are a few common issues with this.

One is that you may always be assuming what people think of you or may be assuming bad things will happen. When you are called on to make a presentation at work, you assume everyone thinks you did a bad job, you assume you're going to lose your job, you assume the worst about what you've done.

Very often that inner voice can pick apart anything and everything about yourself. You criticize your own outfit, your career choice, that thing you said to your friend the other night, and so on. When your inner voice is this critical or harsh or assumes the worst about you, well, no wonder you have no esteem or confidence!



BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM WITH YOUR INNER VOICE

If your own inner voice can weaken your self-esteem and tear down your confidence, it can also build up these things. The key is to understand how to use it properly to do this.

The first step is to catch yourself when you start criticizing yourself internally. You can't do anything about these thoughts if you don't realize what you're doing. It may be difficult, but you need to tune into your own thoughts and really hear them.

When you hear those negative, critical thoughts, it's time to get them out of your head. You need to dismiss them as quickly as you would dismiss someone criticizing your favorite food. If someone were to criticize your favorite steak dinner or ice cream flavor, you wouldn't even give their words another thought. So it is with the words going through your head; you need to dismiss them and dismiss them quickly.

Once you get into the habit of doing this then it's time to replace those thoughts. When you start to hear yourself say that you're a failure or you'll never have anything good or that you're worthless, you need to introduce other thoughts in your head. These will replace those negative thoughts and will help you to start seeing yourself in a more positive light.

Here are some suggestions for thoughts you can introduce to replace those negative ones:



- I may have failed at some things in the past but I have also succeeded at some things. Assuming I will always fail is shortsighted and inaccurate.
- I am just as capable and competent as the next person. I have no reason to lack confidence in myself and I have every reason to believe I can do a great job when it comes to the task at hand.
- There may be those that don't like me but there are many people that do like me and enjoy my company as well. Being rejected by one person doesn't mean I should expect to be rejected by everyone.
- My family is not the ultimate authority on my self-worth. They may reject me or criticize me because of my religious beliefs, sexual orientation, choice of careers, and things such as these but their opinion is not as important to me as my own. I believe in who and what I am and that is all that matters.
- My looks, bank account, family situation, and other circumstances do not determine my worth. Many people wish they were better looking, richer, had a nicer job, were married, had children, and all these things and that doesn't make them less worthy either.

It might be somewhat difficult to start arguing with yourself and these thoughts may seem unnatural at first, but it's good to use them constantly. You can even introduce them to your thinking at various times during the day; practice them in the mirror in the morning or before bedtime. Close your eyes and say them over and over again when you have a minute at the office. If you do this then they'll become second nature to you.



YOUR BELIEFS

When it comes to your inner critic and how you feel inside, you need to really tune into your own feelings. Going back to the illustration of your favorite food or vacation spot, you know you have a hard time believing a critic of these because you really do enjoy that food or resort. Those beliefs are genuine and true.

So what about your beliefs when it comes to yourself? What do **you** believe is true about your own self-worth? What do you really think of yourself versus what other people tell you?

Give this some serious thought. Consider your strengths and your weaknesses. Consider your personality overall. Think about good things you do versus your faults and imperfections.

No doubt you'll immediately think of your flaws and imperfections, and this is typical of those who have little self-esteem. But set those aside and think about your positive personality traits. Think about your interests and abilities. How do you feel about them?

If you set aside your negative thoughts you may realize that you have wonderful qualities and positive traits that are very valuable. You believe that your interests and choices and abilities are perfectly fine and respectable. Others may look down on your choices or mock your opinions or not share your interests and beliefs, but you know they all have value.

Your beliefs should take precedence over those of others, especially the naysayers. When you meet someone that criticizes you or disagrees with you, it's then important to set aside their opinions for your own beliefs.



YOU GET WHAT YOU PROJECT

When you're around someone that is positive, smiling, upbeat, and just plain fun, how do you feel? In some cases you might be irritated at someone with a constantly sunny disposition, but chances are you typically feel upbeat and happy when you're around this person. And this person is probably surrounded by others that are upbeat, happy, smiling, positive, and fun.

On the other hand, what about those that are sad, depressed, angry, irritable, opinionated, domineering, and rude to others? They are probably surrounded by those that are angry, domineering, and rude, if they have people around them at all.

This isn't really an accident. People typically get what they project. In many cases people are treated the way they allow others to treat them and the way they project their own feelings and attitudes. As an example, do you ever wonder why abusive men wind up with women who never press charges against them or leave them? Typically those women have such low self-esteem that they project the message that they'll tolerate abuse, and abusive men pick up on that message and wind up with those women. On the other hand, women who would never allow themselves to be abused usually don't wind up with abusive men, or don't allow them to stick around if abuse does occur. They are projecting the message that they won't tolerate that behavior, and so it happens less frequently with those types of women.

We're not saying that victims of domestic violence are somehow at fault for their situation because of their own behavior, but the fact is that very often what you project and the way you see yourself is the way others see you. They then act accordingly.



This can work for your good or can be detrimental. While someone that allows themselves to be victimized will send out those subtle messages, someone that sees themselves as worthy and esteemed and valuable will attract people that will treat them this way.

As an illustration of how this really works, suppose you walk into an antiques store to browse. Most of the items are strewn about, on shelves and even on the floor. But there is one item that is behind a glass case and that is well lit and displayed beautifully. You may not know anything about this item, but you know it's valuable - because of how it's presented. It's set above all the other items in the store and the way it's lit and displayed tells you to treat it with care.

That item may not actually be any more valuable than anything else in the store and again, you may not even know what it is. But we as humans respond to how something is displayed and presented all the time.

As another example, consider how marketing is a multi-billion dollar industry. Products are marketed and packaged a certain way to make them seem appealing. A home that is on the real estate market may be staged a particular way to make it more eye-catching. The way something is presented has a lot to do with how people perceive it, and this includes people as well.

YOUR FEELINGS WITHIN

The way you project yourself will start with how you feel inside. This is something we've already covered; you need to get control of your feelings within and make sure they're positive and genuine. It may take some time to grow these feelings inside yourself but that inner voice will be key.



When your inner feelings are genuine and real, you will project them. This is true of everything inside of you; if you love your job, you'll be enthusiastic about being there. If you hate spaghetti, your face will crinkle up every time it's in front of you. And when you love yourself and have genuine feelings about your own worth and esteem, this will be projected as well.

FAKING IT

But what if you're still struggling with those internal feelings? What if you're still not positive about yourself? While you're still learning how to value yourself in a genuine way, you might want to consider faking it!

This means that while you may be struggling inside with feelings of worthlessness or a lack of esteem, you can still project positive feelings about yourself to the world around you. You go through the motions of being positive and upbeat while still learning how to have these genuine feelings inside.

Consider this when you go out with others and don't feel very positive about yourself. If you're with friends or at work and find yourself thinking negative thoughts, which in turn leads to a negative attitude, then try faking your response. Put a smile on your face whether or not you actually want to smile. Join in the laughter and conversation.

BEING PROACTIVE

To get what you project, this will mean actually projecting positive thoughts and attitudes toward others. Being proactive about this will mean taking the initiative to send out those positive vibes to others.



When a person has a lack of self-esteem they often avoid doing things with others and may be shy about taking the initiative with people as well. This is understandable; if you think people will reject you or look down on you then of course you'll begin avoiding others.

So how can you be proactive about projecting a positive attitude towards people if you tend to avoid social situations? One thing you might consider is finding a situation in which you're comfortable and which will help you to be more proactive and positive. For instance, can you call a few friends and have them get together at your house for a night of cards and pizza? Or have everyone go to a movie or nightclub? These excursions are neutral enough that you won't be uncomfortable and enjoyable enough that you will have a good time without worrying about how you seem to others.

Being proactive can also mean seeking out others with a positive attitude. Do you know someone at church or at your workplace that could use an encouraging word? This can be a good way of projecting positive thoughts and feelings without taking a risk that you'll be rejected or that you'll "fail" in your attempts to be positive.

BODY LANGUAGE

What can you tell from a person's body language? Actually, quite a bit. The way a person carries themselves and communicates through their body language says a lot about their mood, their overall feelings, and their self-confidence levels. The way a person walks can project confidence, sex appeal, aggressiveness, or sadness and shame.

If you're doubting these statements, take some time when you're with a group or can do some people watching to really notice body language and see what is conveyed by it. Someone walking with their head straight up



and shoulders squared usually looks confident and assured. Someone with their shoulders slumped and eyes on the ground looks sad and depressed.

When someone is confident and assured and have a measure of self-respect, they attract those that treat them with respect. If you project yourself as someone that deserves consideration and esteem and value, that is what people will return. And the way you present yourself physically plays an important role in this.

Think of your body language overall and ask yourself what type of message you're projecting about yourself. How is your posture, your facial expressions? Do you smile or frown? Do you sit up straight or slump in your seat or when you're walking? Do you carry yourself as someone that commands respect and attention or that is engaging and approachable, or as someone that is sad, depressed, and worthless?

You might want to take some time to really look at the body language of others and see how they carry themselves. Notice how some sit up straight and project confidence versus others that don't. See how gestures and body language change when a person is flirting or is in a casual environment. Study how that coworker that is so confident stands or sits when in a meeting or is giving that presentation.

Practice good body language at home. Sit up even when watching television. Keep your chin up a bit to project confidence. Imitate what you see in movies and television, when you see characters that are professional and confident and notice how they stand or sit or even walk.



DRESS AND GROOMING

Your dress, grooming, personal hygiene and things like these also say a lot about how you feel about yourself. When you care about something, you take care of it. You present it well, keep it clean, maintain it, and so on. The same could be said of you as a person - if you care about yourself and are confident with self-esteem, you will take care of yourself.

This isn't to say you need to wear only designer clothes and high-end makeup and get your hair done at a fancy salon. But you can and should give these things some thought as far as your budget and circumstances go. Do you bathe every day? If not, why not? Is your hair always clean? Do you have an updated hairstyle or cut? Do you keep your hands and fingernails clean? What about your facial hair? And this applies to men and women as well! It doesn't cost much to shave, wax, pluck, trim, and practices such as these.

As for your clothes, what do they say about you? You might not be able to afford the nicest things but do your clothes fit well? Are they flattering to your figure and body? Do you have a tendency to wear only black and big and boxy clothes, or clothes that are obviously too tight?

If money is tight you can still typically find ways to afford clothes that are more presentable than what you may typically wear. Try resale shops and thrift stores. Go online and shop eBay and other sites where prices are usually lower. Toss out clothes that are unflattering or that don't present a good image and start to build your wardrobe slowly over time so that you have items you do enjoy wearing.



SELF-ESTEEM BUILDING EXERCISES

Who likes to exercise? Very few people do; even celebrities often admit to working out only because they need to in order to continue working! But physical exercise has many advantages; it strengthens the muscles, the lungs, the heart, and all areas of the body. It increases blood circulation and oxygen circulation, and these elements have healing properties for the body's cells and systems.

As physical exercise has many advantages, so will exercises that are meant to build your self-esteem. Understanding the importance of self-esteem coming from the inside should motivate you to give these exercises your attention. Let's go over them and how you can apply them in your life to build self-esteem.

DOING FOR OTHERS

Doing volunteer work and other such activities can have a positive effect on your levels of self-esteem. This is because a person typically feels good about themselves when they help out others. You're performing a valuable service, seeing that others have problems just like you, and are appreciated by those whom you help.

You might not have the time or energy or means to do something significant but there are always volunteer opportunities for anyone in any set of circumstances. If you don't belong to a church or religious organization that performs volunteer work, you can find opportunities online. There may also be opportunities posted at a local college or your supermarket's bulletin board.



Ideas for volunteer work that just about anyone can do may include:

- Working at a soup kitchen, preparing and serving food.
- Performing household chores for the elderly and handicapped.
- Delivering meals for shut-ins.
- Doing cleanup work in urban areas.

If you do a bit of research and make yourself available, you'll find volunteer opportunities that are perfect for you and your circumstances.

PRACTICING AFFIRMATIONS

Affirmations are reminders that you are worth respect and value. If you tell yourself this, you'll believe those words and start to exude confidence from within. You'll also be able to argue with yourself and with others that may criticize you and try to make you feel bad.

Here are some affirmations you can use to help build your self-confidence and esteem:

- I am a worthwhile, wonderful, caring person.
- I deserve respect, happiness, and joy.
- I love myself and know that others do too.
- My successes far outweigh my failures.
- The opinions of others are not as important as my own opinion of myself.
- I am entitled to my own beliefs, choices, and opinions and others should and will respect them.



- I am happy, confident, and upbeat.

Affirmations work when you use them regularly. Try them every day. Say them to yourself over and over again. Try them first thing in the morning and at night as well. Write them out and keep them in front of you.

Remember that what you think will be what you project and what others will pick up on as well. If you can learn to change your thinking you can then learn self-esteem and self-confidence. It might take some work and practice, but it will pay off in the long run.

SETTING GOALS; ACCOMPLISHING

How can you incorporate setting goals into your self-esteem exercises? And why would this help you to increase your confidence and esteem?

There is a great deal of satisfaction one can get from setting and reaching goals and achieving these. If you're dealing with a sense of failure in your life, making your own goals and accomplishing them will mean proving to yourself that you're not a failure and that you can and do achieve things. You also feel more empowered and this leads to more confidence about yourself.

But what types of goals are we talking about here? Should this mean large goals such as going back to school or getting married? These are important but may seem overwhelming, especially if you're struggling with low self-esteem. Instead, start with small goals you can readily accomplish and work toward those. Then you can build yourself up to achieving things that are more significant.



Here are some suggestions for short-term goals you might consider:

- Cleaning out a closet, attic, basement, or dresser drawers.
- Cleaning out kitchen cupboards and organizing them.
- Losing two pounds.
- Going an entire week without a candy bar, dessert, fries, or other common treat that you're trying to avoid.
- Going for a walk at least three times this week.
- Sending one greeting card or email to one person that you know could use a smile in their day.

Notice that these goals are not only quick and typically easy to achieve, they can also make you feel good about yourself. You've accomplished something; you've gotten a part of your home organized, you've cared for your health, you've reached out to someone else. This builds your confidence and helps you to feel better about yourself.

You can then move on to more substantial goals once you start getting over your fear of failure. While you still don't want to be overwhelmed, consider some of the following:

- Sit down with your calendar and a college catalog and consider how you can work in extra classes so that you can finish your degree or learn a new skill that will assist you in your career. Go slow if needed; take classes just one night per week if that's all you can schedule rather than thinking you'll go full-time while still working.
- Sign up to volunteer one night or one weekend afternoon at a local soup kitchen, shelter, or other venue that needs help in your area.



- Check your local school system or nearby colleges to find a class you would enjoy taking, if you don't need to take something for your career. This can be something that's just fun and even silly; consider ballroom dancing, graphic arts, French cuisine, or anything else you would just enjoy.
- Think of something you want to correct in your life and start making a plan to do this; for instance:
 - Gather up your bills and other financial papers and investigate a consolidation loan or credit counseling service to get yourself out of debt.
 - Investigate a weight loss program to help you shed unwanted pounds.
 - Join a dating service or singles group so that you can meet someone special.
 - Think of joining a church, leaving your church, or investigating new churches if you have a need in this area.

These goals are all very enriching and help you to feel more confident and to enjoy your life overall. As you achieve them you begin to feel better about yourself and begin to see that you can achieve your goals.



WHERE, WHEN AND HOW TO BUILD SELF-ESTEEM

With all this information you're probably well on your way to feeling better about yourself and to appreciating or esteeming yourself more. But let's take a look at some more specific examples of how you can build self-esteem in certain situations and circumstances.

SELF-ESTEEM IN TEENAGERS

Is it any wonder that teenagers often suffer from low self-esteem today? Teens are often very shallow and judge each other according to looks, clothes, material possessions, and things like these. They haven't yet learned how to appreciate people for their good qualities and positive personality traits. This means that a teenager that is average looking and who doesn't have the nicest things in life can be dismissed, ridiculed, bullied, and rejected.

It also doesn't help that the media constantly shows teenagers that look a particular way, dress a particular way, and whose lives are very different from the everyday. This can make teenagers feel as if they should have certain things, should look a certain way, and should be living a certain way. And if they don't, the teenagers themselves can become their own worst critics!

Teenagers, both girls and boys alike, can suffer from a lack of self-esteem due to their looks, their grades, their wardrobe, their athletic abilities, and just about anything else. Girls have a special problem with body image as



they're often encouraged to be thin to an unhealthy degree. Boys however can also suffer from a poor body image, especially as they get older and start to share a locker room and when athletics become important to others around them.

So how to counteract this? How to make sure that a teenager has the healthy self-esteem that's necessary and that he or she doesn't fall prey to these messages and images around them?

MIND THE BODY LANGUAGE

As with adults, the way a teenager presents himself or herself will go a long way toward determining how others treat him or her. Remind your teenager to stand up straight and to smile. If they're not feeling very confident, they too can fake it! Keep the chin up and the eyes off the ground.

PUT THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

Remind your teenager that what they're going through may be difficult but this is not how their life will be. As people get older they get more mature and treat each other better. Adults don't typically bully, tease, and ostracize one another because of what they wear or because they don't have the latest hairstyle. This may happen with some adults, but usually they're the minority.

And as they get older, they will find that people put more value on things like personality traits, a hard work ethic, intelligence, a sense of humor, and these things. They may not be very popular right now because they didn't make the football team or cheerleading squad, but how do they think this will affect them when they're adults? Rarely in an office do people worry



about who can throw a football or whether or not you can form a human pyramid! These things just aren't important in the adult world, even though their peers may put a lot of value on them now.

You might also want to teach them a perspective about their own abilities and strengths as well. They may be putting too much emphasis on how they look or dress. Remind them that these things are not truly important and that they need to appreciate their good points. The things they don't have shouldn't be as important as the things they do have.

ENCOURAGE THEM

To help your teenager build self-esteem, you need to counteract the effects of what is being done to them by their peers. Encourage them to seek out activities they'll enjoy and which will build their self-confidence. Encourage them to make friends with those who do appreciate them, even if that means meeting other kids at church, through extended family, or through volunteer work.

You can and should also encourage your teen to develop appreciation for their own strong points. What are they good at? What are their positive personality traits? If they struggle with this, it may be time to find things at which they can excel or that will make them feel more confident.

For instance, do volunteer work with your teenager. Ask them about their interests so they can be explored; this might be music, drama, animals, and subjects such as these. They may be hesitant to even consider their own preferences so they'll need some encouragement from you.



MAKE THEM IMPORTANT

You can also help your teenager's self-esteem by making them important. While things do need to be put in perspective, remember that there are things that are important to them that may not seem important to you. However, this doesn't mean you want to dismiss these things so readily. Remember that to a teenager, school and their friends are their entire world so you don't want to act as if they're somehow silly and trivial.

While you cannot and should not indulge your child's every whim, you do want to be mindful of how clothes and these types of things are important. Do what you can to be sure your teenager is at least presentable. If they prefer one brand or style over another, allow them to have some personal choices when you can. Think back to how important it was for you to have a certain brand of clothes or haircut or electronic gadget, and remember that your teenager feels the same way you once did!

SELF-ESTEEM IN YOUR CAREER

As you see that coworker breeze through that presentation or handle a difficult client or boss with ease, do you feel envious or jealous? Do you wish you had that much self-confidence in yourself so that you could handle things the same way?

Building self-esteem in your career is not impossible although it may take some work and practice. Usually it boils down to how you see yourself and how you present yourself to others; let's take a look at what this means.



HOW YOU VIEW YOURSELF

When it's time for a big presentation or you need to have a meeting or confrontation with someone, what is your reaction? If you have low self-esteem no doubt you assume you'll fail, everyone will be disappointed in you, and that someone else could do better.

This lack of self-esteem is coming from within. You don't know that you'll fail and you don't know how others will see you. Additionally, even if others are critical of you, this doesn't mean you need to feel that same way or that the criticism is justified. After all, some people are critical just by nature and everyone has their own opinions!

You need to step away from this thinking and consider how you're simply sabotaging yourself. Your view of yourself needs to change from within.

Review everything we've said about affirmations and your own opinion of yourself. See how this relates to your lack of self-esteem and confidence in your career. Go through the exercises we've outlined and apply them to your job. Tune out that negative and critical inner voice and replace it with one that is reassuring.

PRESENTING YOURSELF TO OTHERS

How do you present yourself to others in the workplace? If you assume you'll always get something wrong or fail in everything you do, how can your boss or coworkers have confidence in you? If you apologize in advance for the poor job you'll do on a presentation or call or meeting, then of course they'll expect you to be doing a poor job!



The way you present yourself to others will have a lot to do with how they treat you and in turn how you see yourself. While you're working on building real confidence, remember to fake it if necessary. Pretend that you have confidence and esteem and a high value, even if you're still struggling with these issues.

Think seriously about how your body language and your words reflect the opinions you have of yourself. Consider how you may be contributing in shaping and molding the opinions that others have of you. If you give this some thought you'll increase your confidence in your career and present yourself in a much better way.

REACH OUT

And one final way you can increase your confidence in your career is to reach out and do more. Take classes at night to improve your skill set. Volunteer for projects. Put in a bit more effort with everything you do.

This can increase your confidence because you know you'll be highly skilled in what you're doing. If you learn something new then you have something additional to offer an employer. You know that you're doing a job to the best of anyone's abilities since you know the latest software programs or whatever else is needed. You'll also have the confidence of knowing that if this employer no longer needs your services, you can more readily find one that will.

As you take on more projects, you'll also no doubt notice that your confidence levels rise. Your employer will appreciate your hard work and you'll see that you can accomplish anything. The more you do, the better you'll feel.



This will also apply when you put extra effort into projects and work you have. You will be proud of the work you've done if you take time to really do it right. no doubt this will not go unnoticed by your employer either; they'll see that your work is of high quality especially in comparison to everyone else's.

CONCLUSION: IT'S UP TO YOU

It would be nice if a person could just take a pill that cured them of all their ailments, both physically and emotionally. While there are medications that can address certain mental and emotional issues, building self-esteem is going to up to you. You will need to address the issues that give you low self-esteem and work on the practices that will build up your confidence and esteem as well.

It might seem daunting, and if you've struggled with this problem your entire life then it may take some real work on your part. The exercises and points we've made in this book may seem very unnatural to you and you may balk at them, at least at first.

But consider all the benefits of building your self-esteem. You'll be able to tackle problems at work more readily. You'll be able to take on new challenges in your career and perhaps even reach out for a career path of which you've always dreamed. You won't falter when called upon to handle responsibilities and will know that your work is stellar and outstanding.

You will also have the confidence of knowing that an employer would be fortunate to have you. You know that even if you lose this job, you'll get another. You'll also know that there's nothing you can't do; if you want to study medicine or film or interior design, you'll do just fine in your studies and will exceed your own expectations.



Having more self-esteem will help you to enjoy your friends and family more. You'll feel more at ease and more relaxed when in groups. You'll stop avoiding situations and will be more outgoing as well. You'll have the confidence to avoid thinking that people are laughing at you or that you don't deserve to be happy.

When you build your self-esteem, you'll be able to have all the relationships in your life that you want. This means romantic relationships, friendships, and close family ties. You won't doubt yourself when with your significant other and cause tension between you. You won't need the approval of others so much that it interferes with your own decision making.

This means that others will no doubt treat you much better as well. When you value yourself, others will too. When you know that you deserve respect and consideration, others will pick up on that and give those things to you. When you stop tolerating abusive or neglectful behaviors, those people treating you this way will stop or move on. What you do for yourself will be reflected in how others see you as well.

And when you have more self-esteem and confidence, you'll just feel better overall. You'll be more relaxed and happy and positive. You'll have fewer physical problems related to a lack of esteem and fewer emotional and mental concerns as well. You may find that you sleep better, look better, and just feel better.

Going through all these exercises and tips when it comes to self-esteem may seem overwhelming. But at the same time they're actually very freeing. If you are in control of your own self-esteem then you can address it and change it. This is very empowering. You can do what you need in order to improve yourself; you don't need to wait for others to get the hint and start treating you better.



Knowing that self-esteem starts with you means that you are in charge of how much you have and how to improve it.

So don't wait another day. If your self-esteem is lacking, start practicing what we've taught you. Keep up with it and don't get discouraged if it takes time to build and if you have some slipups along the way. Repeat exercises as needed, and remember why you're doing this.

Self-esteem will help you to achieve everything you want and deserve out of life, so start working on it today, right now!