

Self-Esteem

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Providing Opportunities to Value Yourself and Others

A recent book advertisement entices consumers by stating people with high self-esteem make more money, have a better love life, live longer, and generally are happier and healthier. With all these properties, it would benefit everyone to develop a high self-image.

Unfortunately it's not that simple, and buying a book or participating in special programs cannot guarantee a higher self-esteem.

What if I suffer from low self-esteem? Will it really impact my life? Can it affect my family or my career?

Research has shown that persons with high self-esteem accept challenges, work to develop new skills, enjoy meeting new people and being with others, and adapt to change effectively. People with lower self-esteem often have limited confidence in their own abilities and skills, may be reluctant to try new opportunities, could have a distorted view of themselves and others, and enjoy fewer personal long-time relationships.

How Can I Raise My Own Self-Esteem and That of My Family?

Before you embark on the journey of self-improvement, let's take a minute to simply define self-esteem. It is your self-image or how you feel about yourself. The thoughts and feelings can be both positive and negative and are based on your own unique experiences and relationships. Especially as we grow older, an important factor is how we handle these experiences in our lives. For example, while

very negative comments to a young child could impact his/her self-image, as adults we have opportunity to filter out comments and provide self-feedback and/or grow from the experience.

Self-esteem can be changed, but it's important to remember that this is a lifelong process and not the result of special courses, books, or activities. It is a lifetime commitment to improve the quality of your own life and the lives of those around you.

Here are some points to begin focusing on:

- ◆ **Strengths:** We all have strengths as a result of hard work and life experiences. Write down a few of your own special strengths each day. *It is not conceit*, but a process of noticing and building upon your strengths. Only then can you really be of service to others.
- ◆ **Weakness:** As humans, we all have faults, obstacles to overcome, habits that need to be changed, ideas that hinder rather than help. There are some we must accept, but many can be changed. Begin the process by being honest and focusing little by little on those we can change.
- ◆ **Praise:** Find creative ways to praise—not flowery fluff, but real compliments on jobs well done! This is just as important for ourselves as others. Practice praise each day. Today's children are in great need of positive reinforcement. Think of a way today of how you could praise someone and do it immediately after the meeting.
- ◆ **Planning for success:** Each year we have 365 days and each day 24 hours. It's up to us to use time most effectively. In the words of Dr. Robert Schuller, "Fail to plan and you plan to fail." Make obtainable goals and develop a roadmap to

get there. Be sure to allow stops for refueling with inspiration and rest and time to be focused; don't try to change the world in one day.

- ◆ **Encouragement:** Develop a "can-do" attitude. Picture achieving a goal in your mind. Encourage yourself daily with check-ups and don't forget to celebrate the short-term goals as well as the end result. It is also important to remember others: Send a note to someone who is beginning a new self-improvement program; praise a child who got an improved grade on one test; thank a family member for a daily job well done!
- ◆ **Respect:** Value the special unique person you are. No one else has had quite the same experiences and relationships as you. Celebrate that you are an individual and allow others to be an individual also. In fact focus **today** on individual positive traits of several family members or friends. Somehow let them know you're proud of their traits.

In summary, your self-image is a vital part of how you interact with others and attain goals and objectives. One's own level of self-esteem is based on the unique personal experiences and relationships one has had. Self-esteem can be changed, but it is a lifetime process and involves taking control of thoughts and putting positive interaction into life situations.

Did is a word of achievement
Won't is a word of retreat
Might is a word of bereavement
Can't is a word of defeat
Ought is a word of duty
Try is a word each hour
Will is a word of beauty
Can is a word of Power

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* from "HELPS for Organizational Creativity,"
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