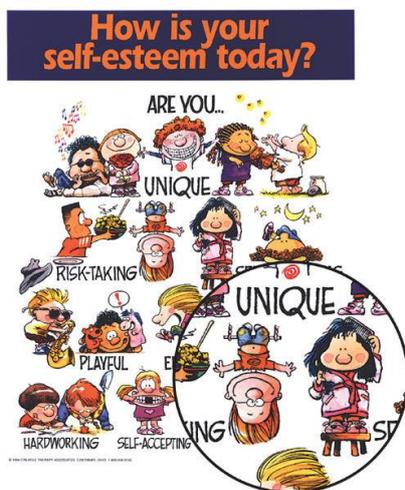


Self esteem and confidence information sheet

What is self esteem?



It's the value you place on yourself. Deep down do you believe you are worthy of love, success, happiness, that you're good, capable? People value themselves to different degrees. Some people don't think they are worthy of anything much. Some value themselves realistically. There is high and low self esteem.

Self esteem is a frank and sober acknowledgement of what we deserve and what we believe we are capable of achieving based on genuine strengths we possess. It is not arrogance or narcissism where there is an over inflation of oneself without any basis in reality. A hallmark of self esteem is a person's integrity and effectiveness in all they do.

What is confidence?

It's the sense that you are capable and competent to meet life's challenges and have abilities to create an effective and rewarding life. It means you are brave enough to have a go at doing things even if you're not sure of the results. You are willing to show yourself to the world, to make mistakes and learn from them, to make failure another lesson rather than a defeat. A hallmark of confidence is a person's courage, self reliance, reliability.

How do you enhance self esteem and confidence?



Reject self criticism. Treat yourself with respect, care and consideration. And be prepared to treat other people likewise. Tell yourself you deserve to have love, safety, success, happiness in your life, knowing that everyone else deserves these too. When you hear yourself or someone else putting you down, argue with what you hear. Critique isn't the same as a put down or criticism. Critique can be useful to help us mature, drop ineffectual behaviour and develop skilful ways of

interacting with others or improving things we do. It can feel like criticism or put downs, but it pays to listen to make sure you're not missing an opportunity to learn something useful. We are all learning till the day we die if we keep an open mind, benefitting from evaluations of our behaviour and attitudes. Maintain openness to new knowledge and skills, but close the door to abuse from yourself or others. Find two positive statements for every negative one you hear, especially from yourself.

Accept yourself. You, like everyone else on the planet, have strengths and weaknesses. Recognise these and create conditions to use your strengths as much as possible. Value and praise your own strengths. Know your weaknesses, do what you can to improve your knowledge, attitudes, abilities, skills, but accept where you will never improve. It's ok, you're still good enough. Remember to apply these ideas to accept others as they are too. No one is perfect. We are in the school of life till we die.

Acknowledge your successes. List your achievements every year or so, more often if you like. Over a lifetime we can forget all the wonderful things we've done, the people we've loved and cared for, the experiences we've had. Do a stocktake of your life at least once a year, starting from when you can remember. Think about the effort, time, passion, energy you put into your achievements. Value them, honour them, celebrate them. Success builds on success so remind yourself of your successes. You'll feel good about them, yourself and your confidence in yourself will grow. Your successes and every time you got up from defeat or failure are instances of personal courage, self reliance, resilience, reliability.

View failures, defeats, losses and rejection as learning experiences, albeit painful ones. Recognise what you took from these experiences to do well afterwards, to become stronger, wiser and more empowered. Stop putting yourself down for all the things that went wrong in your life. Instead use the lessons to make changes that will improve your life and circumstances. Everyone has failures, losses, rejections. There is a saying that the courageous person is the one who falls down 7 times but gets up for the 8th time.

Keep your promises, be on time, be reliable. This is about self respect, respecting others and gaining the respect of others. Promises impact on other people who are counting on you to do what you said you would. How might they react when you prove yourself to be unreliable? How many broken promises will anyone be prepared to tolerate? In contrast, how are people likely to react over time when you become known for keeping your word? Keeping promises shows you are trustworthy and dependable. Breaking promises shows the opposite. Whether you are considered trustworthy or untrustworthy you will be treated accordingly. How do you want to be treated? Notice the difference and how this impacts on self esteem. Choose to behave in ways that allow you to know you are trustworthy and that other people also know you are.

Being on time is similar to promising something. It impacts on other people. When you're late and this is habitual, your family, friends or business associates will become frustrated with you, feel disrespected or not cared about and eventually they won't believe you will ever be on time. They may choose to be late next time to teach you a lesson. They may say "oh s/he's never on time, make your own way there, don't rely on them or you may miss the show". Whenever you show disrespect towards other people it affects how you become. People who disrespect others will find they incur disrespect themselves, from themselves and others. The more careless you become with other people, the more careless you will be perceived by others. This does not enhance your effectiveness, confidence or self esteem. Are you willing to settle for arrogance and self interest rather than a sense of genuine self worth validated by those around you?

Reliability shows you are capable, considerate, trustworthy, respectful, effective. Show up, do the work, participate. Everyone has a part to play in any project, enterprise, family or relationship. Do your bit. You will respect yourself for that and so will everyone else. You will know you are capable and effective in the world. This enhances your sense of self worth.

Display integrity. This is about having standards, values and living by a code of behaviour that honours who you are. Have rules for what you do, how you treat others, how hard you work, what you won't do. Without such rules your personality development will remain immature. No one can like themselves when they act dishonourably, fail their own moral standards and show they have no abiding values. Wise adults live by a code of ethics, standards of behaviour. They have integrity. Standards and values facilitate decision making and problem solving especially when ethical dilemmas emerge. When you stick to sound principles of behaviour you learn to trust yourself to do the right thing. This is empowering and enhances self esteem and confidence. You can count on your own good judgement.

Spend time with people who care about you and any other positive people. Love, acceptance and good feelings rub off from one person to another. Same goes with negative feelings, dislike, rejection, indifference. Which would you prefer? Limit time spent with people whom you have an obligation to be with but who mistreat you. Increase time spent with people who care. You will feel good about yourself, your life, those who care and the world. This improves self esteem and confidence.

