

BUILD YOUR SELF ESTEEM

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You are probably very aware when a relationship with someone else feels unsatisfying, abusive, devaluing or unappreciative. But how often do you think of your relationship with yourself?

This is the relationship that you take with you wherever you go. We cannot escape the things we do that make ourselves unhappy.

Your self esteem relates to how you measure up to what you expect of yourself – simply put “*whether you are good enough.*”

We judge things all the time in our daily life – whether the service you are getting is good or not, whether you like something or someone, whether someone’s behaviour feels right or wrong.

We do this with ourselves as well. We evaluate ourselves and compare ourselves to some model of what we feel is acceptable. For you, it might relate to your looks, your talents, your progress in some area of your life or it may even extend to your family ie if you don’t feel that your children have achieved enough you do not feel good enough.

A healthy self esteem relates to being able to see yourself in a balanced way, to understand where your strengths are, what your shortcomings are, which of those you wish to change and what about yourself you need to ACCEPT.

It also involves being realistic about how you judge yourself and how critical you are of things that you can rather let go of or accept in yourself.

Lets look at some ways in which a poor self esteem manifests in some everyday examples. Ask yourself :-

1. **Can I receive a compliment with “thank you” instead of putting it down in some way** e.g. telling the other person how easy it was, pulling a face or in some way devaluing my achievement or accomplishment. This means that you hold onto your poor self worth even though there is evidence to the contrary.
2. **How often do I find myself remarking on how stupid I am when I do something that was not really that catastrophic** e.g. forgetting something or getting something wrong. The effect of speaking to yourself like that is the same as speaking to another person like that - it undermines you.
3. **Do I generally assume that others will like me when I meet them or that they will find fault with me?** If it is the latter then maybe you are seeing them through your own eyes. We call this projection. Maybe you imagine that they have will be as critical of you as you are of yourself.
4. **Am I perfectionistic in my attitude to my work, looks, body etc in order to feel okay about myself** i.e. if I am not perfect I am not good enough. This is all or nothing thinking. Since we can never be perfect it means you never get the satisfaction of feeling okay.

The interesting thing is that we tend to elicit from others what we imagine will happen. One of the reasons for this is that we behave towards them according to how we think they will respond to us.

So.....if you believe that others will respond positively towards you and be pleasant you are more likely to be more approachable and less defended than if you believe that they are critical of you and find you unacceptable. It is true that not everyone likes us just as we don’t like everyone but a good starting point is not to make assumptions before you know.

Write a description of yourself now. Just write, don’t think. Look at all the words you use. Do you find it easy to describe what you don’t like about yourself but struggle to find words to describe your talents, your uniqueness,

your value? Do you feel you have to constantly achieve in order to be of worth? That you have to be doing things for others or giving in to them to be liked?

Maybe it is difficult to imagine that you have an inherent worth **just because you exist.**

Your sense of self worth will be reflected in the choices you make, the people you attract into your life, the kind of behaviour you put up with from other people, the way you let loved ones treat you and speak to you and the way you treat yourself. Do you keep people in your life who are destructive to you?

It is also important to look at whether you are able to receive and take in what is being offered to you. You may have people in your life who are emotionally responsive and supportive but you may not be used to being treated well.

If necessary, read literature on improving self esteem, boundaries, assertiveness and related topics. It is also useful to remember that you have choices about how you think, feel and behave and need to become aware of how you use those choices.