



SELF-ESTEEM

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If you want to feel better...

about yourself, the first thing to do is stop being your own worst enemy. Stop getting down on yourself when things don't go the way you would like. Raising your self-esteem will take some work, but you can do it if you're dedicated and patient. **Here are some strategies to help you feel better about yourself:**

Learn to say positive things to yourself. This is a big step toward developing a healthy self-esteem. Instead of cutting yourself down, build yourself up. Don't let that little voice inside your head say, "I can't do it" or "I'm so stupid. I'm going to mess up." If you let that voice continue, you'll eventually believe what it says. You can learn how to encourage yourself and diminish that negative voice. Recognize when you're beginning to think negative thoughts and become a *scientist*: Examine the evidence for your negative thought, and then the evidence against it. Is there another way to view the situation? What could you tell yourself instead? Tell yourself positive things. Tell yourself that you are a good person, that you will keep trying, or that you are going to remain calm.

Only when you begin building yourself up will you become self-confident. You may have had the habit of putting yourself down for a long time, so it might not be easy to change. But it will feel great when you finally do learn how to be your own best friend.

Set yourself up for success. Set some small realistic goals that you can accomplish. For example, maybe you have avoided someone because you were afraid of saying something dumb. Your first goal might be just to

smile and say "hi." Then, pat yourself on the back; it's a step in the right direction. Whatever goals you choose, set yourself up for success. Little by little, these small victories will boost your confidence. After you accomplish one goal, add another step to it. Make it just a little harder. You will be pleasantly surprised at the many things you can accomplish.

Learn to be assertive. Assertive actions can help you get what you want and let you express yourself in a direct and honest way. Being assertive can help you get what you want without hurting others or making a scene. Assertiveness is wonderful for your self-esteem. You actually stand up for yourself in a positive way.

Take responsibility for your behavior. Don't blame other people. You are responsible for whatever you do, both good and bad. When things don't go as you would like, it's easy to say it was someone else's fault. Blaming others makes you look irresponsible. If you make a mistake, correct it. Apologize, if necessary. Ask yourself why you did what you did, and then make sure you don't fall into the same trap in the future.

Respect yourself. Stick with what you know is right. Don't let others sway you with peer pressure and talk you into doing something for the sake of popularity or status. Doing something wrong hangs on your self-esteem like a lead weight; you have to live with the consequences, and you have to live with yourself. The decisions you make need to agree with *your* values and *your* sense of what is right and important in life. Let your behavior show others how good you are. Be friendly, helpful, and cooperative; that's what really counts. The way you treat others will influence the way others treat you in return.

Help others. Whenever you help someone else, you also help yourself. Nothing feels as good as being a good friend or neighbor. Help your friends. Do something nice for your mom or dad. Offer to help a classmate who is down or struggling with a problem. Helping others will make you feel good inside. Helping others leads to a greater sense of self-esteem and self-respect because people like and appreciate what you're doing.

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