

# Self-Esteem

## What is self-esteem?

Self-esteem is the belief we have about ourselves. Healthy self-esteem exists when we believe we are valued, competent, worthy, loved, and accepted. Unhealthy self-esteem exists when we believe ourselves to be incompetent, rejected, unworthy, unloved, and lacking in value to others.

## High self-esteem comes from:

- Acceptance, respect, love
- Being listened to, being taken seriously
- A feeling of connectedness, and belonging
- Honesty [with tact and sensitivity], integrity
- Honoring uniqueness
- Authentic expression of feelings
- Encouragement, support, appreciation
- Being trustworthy, trusting others
- Safety, security
- High and attainable expectations
- A sense of personal power; having choices
- Personal and social responsibility
- Forgiveness; allowing and learning from mistakes
- Having meaning in life, a sense of purpose

## Low self-esteem comes from:

- Rejection
- Conditional love or no love at all
- Lack of attention, being ignored
- Not being listened to or taken seriously
- Emotional abuse such as ridicule, criticism, sarcasm, blaming, humiliation
- Prejudice
- Comparison, perfectionism
- Expectations that are too high or too low
- Focusing on externals (appearances, behavior, performance)
- Guilt, shame, resentment
- Physical and sexual abuse or exploitation

## Characteristics of healthy self-esteem:

- Likes oneself, makes positive comments about self
- Feels valuable
- Does not feel he/she has to be good at everything
- Does not compare self to others
- Gives genuine compliments easily
- Accepting of others
- Accepts challenges and takes calculated risks
- Cares how others feel
- Tolerates frustration well and is flexible
- Listens well

## **Ten ways to enhance your self-esteem:**

### 1. Put your past in perspective

We cannot undo the past, however we can look back and draw strength from our past victories and obstacles that we were able to overcome. Making good use of the present is an effective way to prepare for a successful future.

### 2. Energize yourself with positive self-talk

You are what you think you are. Our bodies will respond with more energy and strength when our thoughts and actions are positive.

### 3. Surround yourself with positive people

Just as "misery loves company" so does productivity. Positive and productive people gain energy and motivation from each other. When you are around positive people, you will become more positive and good things will just naturally happen.

### 4. Identify and assert your strengths

Take stock of your strong points. These are the special traits that your foundation of success must be built on.

### 5. Identify and eliminate weakness

Make note of your weak points. Make a commitment to work on improving these areas. Tackle them one at a time by setting goals and implementing an action plan for their improvement.

### 6. Vitalize your vision

Take time to ask yourself, "What do I really want?" As you get a clear vision of what you want in any area of your life, you will also become more aware of the resources and opportunities available to help you turn your vision into reality.

### 7. Set realistic goals

Aim high and be realistic. Set short and long-term goals.

#### 8. Take action

In order to achieve your goals, you must move towards them. You must take action. Taking action also means taking risk. However, if you don't risk anything, you won't gain anything.

#### 9. Be persistent and consistent

We may not always get what we want when we want it, but it does not mean we can not get it. When we fall short of our goal, re-think it. Then set a new time-frame and keep moving towards it.

#### 10. Keep rejection in perspective

Rejections are a part of life. Everyone gets rejected in life. If you take rejection too personally you may avoid taking the risks necessary for your growth.

And don't forget to celebrate your successes each day!

[Saint Mary's College Resources](#)

## Other Resources

Web sites with more information:

Enhancing Your Self-esteem

<http://www.srg.co.uk>

(Click on Managing Yourself)