









## Building Self-Esteem Through Self-Confidence & Positive Assertiveness

The process of building self-esteem is involved with self-confidence and positive assertiveness. Identifying personal attributes that others admire in you and by practicing open and honest responses to situations that occur at home, in the workplace, and in society you can improve your ability to assert your rights and express your expectations. Knowing that you have a right to have opinions, to say no without feeling guilty and to be treated with respect is an important step in changing the way you feel about yourself.

**Determining Your Self-Esteem:** mark true (T) or false (F) on these 25 statements

Statement	T	F
I feel my life/work/career has progressed more because of luck, not because I deserved it.		
I often find myself thinking, "Why can't I be more successful?"		
I do not believe I am working up to my potential.		
I consider it a failure when I do not accomplish my goals.		
When others are nice to me I often feel suspicious.		
It is difficult to see co-workers promoted because I feel I am more deserving.		
I do not necessarily believe that my mind has direct influence on my physical well-being.		
When things are going well, they usually will not last for me.		
I place a high value on what others think of me.		
I like to impress my supervisor.		
I find it difficult to face up to my mistakes.		
I am not always comfortable saying what I mean.		
I find it hard to say I'm sorry.		
I tend to accept change slowly because of fear.		
Procrastination is a good word to describe my work habits.		
I often find myself thinking, "Why even try, I won't make it."		
When someone praises me, I usually do not believe them.		
I do not think others want me to advance professionally.		
I avoid people who I think do not like me.		
My attitude towards life could improve.		
If honest with myself, I tend to blame my parents for how my life is turning out.		
I find it difficult to look for the good in others.		
I do not think people can change their attitude.		
I do not believe that working on my self-confidence will make a difference in my self-esteem.		

**Add up you answers: # TRUE**

**# FALSE**

- If you scored over half TRUE, you may want to spend some quality time with yourself thinking about your life. Think about why you feel this way.
- If the majority of your answers are FALSE, you seem to have good self-esteem and are on your way to greater success and satisfaction.

**SELF-ESTEEM:** how well you think of yourself compared to other people. Low self-esteem means you think you are not a valuable person, and that everyone else is better than you. It is also a symptom of depression.

**Some signs of low self-esteem are:**

- Feeling 'not good enough' even if you are
- Decreased self-confidence
- Putting yourself down all the time
- Being too scared to try new things
- Making no effort because it will go wrong
- Losing your temper over little things
- Picking fights with others
- Worrying about getting even for imagined wrongs
- Blaming others for your problems
- Constantly bickering about petty issues

The first step to improving your self-esteem is wanting to make a change. Change can only happen when YOU want to do it, not when someone wants you to do it. Celebrate your achievements, however small you might think they are, make a big deal out of it, it will help you feel better. Try being nice to yourself and others. If you make a mistake, do something wrong, or something doesn't go as well as planned, don't worry, we all make mistakes, we wouldn't be human otherwise. Learn from the situation, do it differently next time, and move on with your life. Try and concentrate on the things you are good at and talented in and avoid trying, saying, and doing things just because you feel you have to.

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**What achievements can you brag about?**

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**What does self-esteem mean to you?**

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**What are two signs of low self-esteem?**

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**List two ways that you can build your self-esteem.**

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**What are some positive consequences of being assertive?**

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**What is a personality asset?**

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**HOW ASSERTIVE ARE YOU?** Answer honestly to gain insight about your current level of assertiveness. 1 = never; 5 = always

Statement	Circle One
I ask others to do things without feeling guilty or anxious.	1 2 3 4 5
When someone asks me to do something I don't want to do, I say no without feeling guilty or anxious.	1 2 3 4 5
I am comfortable when speaking to a group of people.	1 2 3 4 5
I confidently express my honest opinions to authority figures.	1 2 3 4 5
When I express powerful feelings (anger, etc) I verbalize them easily.	1 2 3 4 5
When expressing anger, I do so without blaming others for 'making me mad'.	1 2 3 4 5
I am comfortable speaking up in a group situation.	1 2 3 4 5
If I disagree with the majority opinion, I can 'stick to my guns' without feeling guilty or being abrasive.	1 2 3 4 5
When I make a mistake, I acknowledge it.	1 2 3 4 5
I tell others when their behaviors create a problem for me.	1 2 3 4 5
Meeting new people in social situations is something I do with ease and comfort.	1 2 3 4 5
When discussing my beliefs I do so without labeling others as crazy, stupid, ridiculous, or irrational.	1 2 3 4 5
I assume that people are competent and trustworthy and do not have difficulty delegating tasks to others.	1 2 3 4 5
When doing something I have never done, I feel confident that I can learn how.	1 2 3 4 5
I believe my needs are as important as those of others and I am entitled to have my needs satisfied.	1 2 3 4 5

Add up your ratings of each statement, TOTAL SCORE =

60 or higher = consistently assertive philosophy and handle yourself well in most situations

45 - 60 = fairly assertive outlook

30 - 45 = natural response is often passive or aggressive

15 - 30 = considerable difficulty being assertive

#### NON-VERBAL BEHAVIORS

PASSIVE	AGGRESSIVE	ASSERTIVE
Biting fingernails	Shaking fist	Eye contact
No eye contact	Chin jutting forward	Sitting up straight
Head down	Arms crossed	Smiling
Muffled or mumbled speech	Standing uncomfortably close	Calm
Closed body posture	Raised voice	Looks interested
Slumped shoulders	Using swear words	Eyebrows lifted
Nervousness	Shaking with anger	Engaged in conversation

**Passive Behavior:** nonassertive and indirect. Communicates a message of inferiority. Allowing wants, needs, and rights of others to be more important than your own. Creates a 'win-lose' situation in which you lose and others win. Leads you to becoming a victim rather than being a winner. When passive you seem 'wishy-washy', tend to become a 'push-over' and a 'complainer'. Others begin to think you don't take yourself seriously or don't know what you want.

**Aggressive Behavior:** is complex as either active or passive. Can be direct or indirect, honest or dishonest. Always communicates an impression of superiority or disrespect. Putting your wants, needs, and rights above those of others. Attempting to get your way by not allowing others a choice. Usually inappropriate because it violates the rights of others. May aggressively 'win' by making others 'lose', but sets oneself up for retaliation from them, no one likes a bully. Makes you look cocky, bossy, and dismissive to others rights and feelings. Leads to hurting and alienating others.

**Assertive Behavior:** active, direct, and honest. Communicates an impression of self-respect and respect for others. View our wants, needs, and rights as equal to those of others. Works towards 'win-win' situations and outcomes, by influencing, listening, and negotiating so that others choose to cooperate willingly. Leads to success without retaliation and encourages open, honest relationships. Standing up for the rights of yourself and respecting those of others. Believing in the right to your ideas and feelings and allowing others the same. The antidote to fear, shyness, passivity, and even anger. Nothing will change until the victim recognizes their rights are being denied and decides to make a change.

**ACTIVITY TO DEVELOP ASSERTIVE RESPONSES:** Write one or more assertive responses to the situations presented.

**A friend repeatedly makes plans with you and then cancels at the last minute.**

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**Reinforce Good Self-Image with Affirmations** - strengthen your self-image. Read them on a constant basis and be persistent. Changing your perception for yourself and replacing your self-image with a new one, takes time and effort. Say right now: "I know I am a worthwhile person! I believe in myself and my abilities. My self-confidence is high and I can do anything I want in life. People love and respect me, and nothing can stop me from becoming who I want to be!"

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**Do Something Nice for Yourself** - When your self-esteem is low, you tend to believe and think that you do not deserve anything good. For this reason, you never allow yourself to enjoy life to the fullest, and you never do anything nice for yourself. A great way to improve your self-image is learning to love yourself, and show appreciation for yourself. Do something nice that would make you happy – for example, schedule a spa session, or get a new haircut. Doing something nice for yourself will make you feel better about who you are, which will certainly improve your self-esteem.

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**Practice Laughing... at Yourself Also** - If your self-esteem drops a little whenever someone teases you, the only solution you have is laughing... at yourself. Developing a healthy sense of humor can help you improve your self-esteem, especially if you learn to make light of life, and give up taking yourself so seriously. If someone makes a joke that is unintentionally hurtful, laugh. If someone makes a joke that is meant to be hurtful and humiliating, just laugh. Don't receive that energy... Chances are, everyone else will be surprised by your reaction, and those who tried to humiliate you will not bother next time. Moreover, not giving them the satisfaction of seeing how much you dislike the joke, or how much it hurts you, will help your self-esteem thrive.

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**Make a Contribution** - Increasing your self-worth is a matter of what you do to be worthy in your own eyes – and there is no better way of improving self-esteem other than making a contribution. For example, you may help clean up your neighborhood, or volunteer for a local cause. If you are still in high school or at university, you might offer to help one of your classmates improve his grades, because yours certainly are. If you are good at something, and know someone who would like to be too, give him a helping hand – he will surely appreciate your efforts, and you will feel worthier.

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**Find a Hobby You Can Pursue Independently** - Hobbies can help you enrich your creativity, and also improve your self-worth – so why not find one you can pursue independently, with no one to tell you what you are doing wrong? If you are unsure of what hobby to go for, think about what you would like to do. Perhaps you love holding a digital camera in your hands, and photographing wildlife, or various stances of urban living. Or maybe you like the thrills of treasure hunting with a metal detector? Heck, it can be anything really! Anything that makes you feel good and passionate about it. The things that inspire you and fill you with enthusiasm. Just do it! Once you start pursuing your hobby, you will soon be amazed by the many accomplishments you will have, which will make you proud of yourself, and will also improve your self-esteem.

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**Use Positive Self-Talk** - While talking to yourself in the mirror might sound creepy, it can actually be an excellent self-esteem exercise to help you improve your mental image about yourself. If you have a mirror in your bedroom, that is going to be even better, as you will not have to use the one in your bathroom. Find a moment when nobody else is at home, close the door of your bedroom, and stay in front of the mirror – now begin your positive self-talk session. Give yourself all kinds of compliments, constructive critiques, and share your everyday experiences with yourself. Remind yourself of your accomplishments, of what worthy people have said good about you, and empower yourself with positive words, such as: "I know I am a worthy person, and I will never let anyone change that." If you like, you may opt for a different approach, and talk just as if you were talking to a friend: "Don't listen to them, Stephanie. You are a very worthy person, don't let anyone change that – ever." Use positive self-talk every day if possible – it will be similar to keeping a journal, but there is a difference: you will never tell your journal the things you will actually tell to yourself.

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**Have a Positive Focus Group** - A positive focus group is an extremely valuable activity that can help you improve your self-esteem. Positive focus groups can be organized with your family or friends, as they are certainly people who appreciate your traits and abilities, and therefore will not make any negative comments or remarks about you. Break the group into pairs, then set a time limit – if there are only three or four people attending the positive focus group, there is no need to break it into pairs. Focusing on one person at a time, the rest of the group talks about all of the things they like about him or her. When the time is up, another person becomes the subject of the conversation – and this goes on until every person in the group has been in the positive focus. It's a very powerful technique, but some people are shy to do it. Don't be, choose only the people that you feel comfortable with and explain them why you are doing that. They will gladly accept to help.

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**Rely on Self-Hypnosis and Visualization** - Self-hypnosis can be an excellent technique to improve your self-esteem, and increase self-worth, especially when you practice it daily. Inducing how worthy and valuable you see yourself, will allow you to become a more confident person who can do anything she or he wants.

1. To hypnotize yourself, you will first have to find a quiet spot where nobody will bother you – for example, your own bedroom, your backyard, or even the local park. Sit comfortably, or lie down, and close your eyes. Let go of all the thoughts in your mind – acknowledge, accept, and let them go, saying "Thanks, but no thanks."
  2. Focus on your breath, on how the air is filling up your lungs, and then leaving your body. Go deeper and deeper and imagine going down with an elevator. Ever floor you go down, you sink deeper and deeper into a relaxed state. Go 20 floors like this and when you touch the bottom become completely relaxed.
  3. Count to ten, and on every count breathe very deeply. Then start visualizing yourself as a confident person who can achieve any goal, a person who is confident, who can stand up in front of others, who is not afraid to share his opinions even when they are entirely different than others, and who has an infinite value as a person.
  4. Imagine how your supervisor congratulates you for a project you have completed all by yourself, or how a person you admire praises your traits and abilities. Envision yourself accepting others' hurtful comments, and standing up to them proudly.
  5. Now tell yourself: "I value myself as a person. I am a worthy person, and nobody can ever change that. I will never let anyone change that. I will never doubt my abilities or worth, and I will always love myself, no matter what mistakes I do."
  6. At the end, tell yourself the following: "From now on, I will always think of myself as of a great person – a confident, trustworthy, and very capable person who can accomplish any goal."
  7. Enter the elevator one more time and go to the 20th floor. With every floor, feel new, fresh and powerful energy entering, and flowing through your organs. Feel the power and enthusiasm rushing throughout your entire body.
  8. Open your eyes, put a big smile on your face, wait a few minutes to get out of the trance, and do something nice for yourself.
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