

Building Self-Esteem

MCC Medical Patient Education Module

Positive self-talk

The way that you think about yourself has a huge influence on your self-esteem. If you keep telling yourself that you're no good, you might just start to believe it even though it's not true. If you notice that you practice negative self-talk often, check out some ways that you can challenge your negative thinking and build your confidence levels.

Don't compare yourself to others

It can be really tempting to measure our own worth against other people. So what if your friend is awesome at table tennis and gets great marks? You just need to figure out what your niche is. Everyone is great at something - what are your strengths?

Let go of the past

Using Mindfulness techniques to not dwell on the past and forgive yourself of past learning experiences.

Exercise

Exercise helps to improve your mood. End of story.

Don't strive for perfection

It's really great if you want to do things well, but keep in mind that perfection isn't possible. Check out one person's story of coming to terms with their sweet imperfection.

Don't beat yourself up when you make a mistake

Everyone on the planet makes mistakes – it's in our basic human nature. Why should you be any different? When you stuff up, don't stress, just learn from it and move on.

Focus on the things you can change

There's no point wasting all your energy thinking about things that you can't change. Why don't you have a think about some of the things that are in your power to control and see what you can do about those?

Do things that you enjoy

If you're doing things that you enjoy you're more likely to be thinking positively. Schedule time for fun and relaxation into every day.

Celebrate the small stuff

Start small and work your way up – you can't expect any huge progress to be made overnight.

Be helpful and considerate

Not only is helping people a great way to boost the moods of others, but you might find that you feel better about yourself after doing something particularly excellent.

Surround yourself with supportive people

Don't hang around people who bring you down. Find a group of people who make you feel good about yourself and avoid those who tend to trigger your negative thinking.

Start Small

Start with something you can do immediately and easily. When we start with small successes, we build momentum to gain more confidence in our abilities. Each completed task, regardless of how small, is a building block towards a more confident you. What are some small actions you can take immediately to demonstrate that you are capable of achieving goals you've set for yourself? For example, clean your desk, organize your papers, or pay all your bills.

Create a Compelling Vision

Use the power of your imagination. Create an image of yourself as the confident and self-assured person you aspire to become. When you are this person, how will you feel? How will others perceive you? What does your body language look like? How will you talk? See these clearly in your mind's eye, with your eyes closed. Feel the feelings, experience being and seeing things from that person's perspective. Practice doing this for 10 minutes every morning. Put on music in the background that either relaxes you, or excites you. When you are done, write a description of this person and all the attributes you've observed.

Socialize

Get out of the house or setup a lunch date with a friend. Socializing with others will give us opportunities to connect with other people, and practice our communication and interpersonal skills.

Do Something that Scares You

As with all skills, we get better with practice and repetition. The more often we proactively do things that scare us, the less scary these situations will seem, and eventually will be rid of that fear.

Do Something You Are Good At

What are you especially good at or enjoy doing? Regularly doing things that you are good at reinforces your belief in your abilities and strengths. I (Tina) can be very efficient with completing errands or administrative work. Whenever I have a few hours filled with ways in which I've maximized my time, I feel highly productive and this boosts the confidence have in my abilities as an organized and efficient person.

Set Goals

According to a study done at Virginia Tech, 80% of Americans say they don't have goals. And the people who regularly write down their goals earn nine times as much over their lifetime as people who don't. By setting goals that are clear and actionable, you have a clear target of where you want to be. When you take action towards that goal, you'll build more confidence and self-esteem in your abilities to follow through.

Help Others Feel Good About Themselves

Help somebody or teach them something. When you help other people feel better about themselves and like themselves more, it will make you feel good about yourself. See what you can do to make others feel good or trigger them to smile. Maybe giving them a genuine compliment, helping them with something or telling them what you admire about them.

Get Clarity on Life Areas

Get clarity on the life area that needs the most attention. Your self-esteem is the average of your self-concept in all the major areas of your life. Write down all the major categories of your life, e.g., health, relationships, finance, etc. Then rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 in each area. Work on the lowest numbered category first, unless they are all even. Each area affects the other areas. The more you build up each area of your life, the higher your overall self-esteem.

Create a Plan

Having a goal alone won't do much. Get clarity on your action items. One of the biggest reasons people get lazy is because they don't have a plan to achieve their goals. They don't know what the next step is and start to wander off randomly. When you're baking a cake, it's a lot easier to follow a set of clear instructions, than randomly throwing ingredients together.

Get Motivated

Read something inspirational, listen to something empowering, talk to someone who can uplift our spirits, who can motivate us to become a better person, to live more consciously, and to take proactive steps towards creating a better life for ourselves and our families.

Get External Compliments

As funny as this point suggests, go find a friend or family member and ask them "*What do you like about me?*" "*What are my strengths?*" or "*What do you love about me?*" We will often value other people's opinions more than our own. We are the best at beating ourselves up for things not done well, and we are the worst at recognizing what we've done well in. Hearing from another person our strengths and positive qualities helps to build a more positive image of ourselves.

Affirmations & Introspection

Use affirmations, but in the right way. Some people think that when they're in a slump, using positive affirmations will help them get out of it. I love affirmations, but I've realized you have to use them in the right way. Sitting on your couch and saying "I am highly motivated and productive" does nothing. Say something like "I am sitting here being very unproductive right now, is this the ideal me? What would be my best self?" Your affirmations have to be the TRUTH. Once you're honest, take the first step towards doing the thing, no matter how small.

No More Comparisons

Stop comparing yourself to other people. Low self-esteem stems from the feeling of being inferior. For example, if you were the only person in the world, do you think you could have low self-esteem? Self-esteem only comes into the picture when there are other people around us and we perceive that we are inferior. Don't worry about what your neighbor is doing. Accept that it'll serve you more to just go down your own path at your own pace rather than to compare yourself. Pretend you're starting over and begin immediately with the smallest step forward.

Self-esteem comes from self-dominion. The more power you have in getting yourself to take the right actions, the more self-esteem you will have. Your level of self-esteem affects your happiness and everything you do.