



Managing Self Esteem

A Self Help Guide for
Students and Parents

Self Esteem

We all have issues with self-esteem from time to time. Self-esteem is about how much we value ourselves. This can change from day to day or from year to year and can have a big part to play in how you feel and how much you enjoy or worry about things. It is important to feel good about yourself.



Self-esteem is how we value and perceive ourselves. It's based on our opinions and beliefs about ourselves, which can sometimes feel really difficult to change. Self-esteem is about getting to know what you are good at and not so good at. A lot of us think about how much we like other people or things, but don't really think much about whether we like ourselves. It's not about thinking you are perfect because nobody is perfect. Even if you think some other people are good at everything, you can be sure they have things they are good at and things that are more difficult for them.

As we go through different stages or challenges in life we have times that we feel better or no so good about ourselves. Starting a new school, moving house, changes in the family and many other factors can affect our confidence, but with support we usually get through the more difficult times.

Your self-esteem can affect whether you:

- like and value yourself as a person
- are able to make decisions and assert yourself
- recognise your strengths and positives
- feel able to try new or difficult things
- show kindness towards yourself
- move past mistakes without blaming yourself unfairly
- take the time you need for yourself
- believe you matter and are good enough
- believe you deserve happiness.



How to Improve Self Esteem in Ourselves

Many of us have an inner voice sometimes called our 'inner critic'. Your inner critic may criticise what you do and the way you look and this may lead you to start to feel bad about yourself. Because this voice comes from you, you can **TAKE CONTROL** of it and choose to listen to only the positive things it tells you.

Imagine your inner critic as being someone who is going to help you in the future. If it starts to tell you something that isn't helpful, remind it that it is on your side and you only want to receive positive messages. It may take some time to train your inner critic into looking out for the good and positive things about and around you but be persistent and keep trying.

Listen to what others have to say and focus on the good points. Focus on the positive statements about who we are and what we can become and experience. This can help focus on what we want. When you think about positive statements, write them down and say them as if they already exist. For example "I am a fast swimmer" **NOT** "I will swim fast". Put emphasis on the words "**I AM**" as this will help you to believe it can and will happen.

Top Tips to Improving Self Esteem

Be Kind To Yourself

- **Get to know yourself.** Try to learn more about yourself – for example what makes you happy and what you value in life. Some people say they find it helpful to write in a journal.
- **Let yourself have feelings.** It's important to remember that you're a human being who can experience a wide range of emotions.
- **Consider what self-esteem means to you.** You might realise you're basing your sense of self-worth on things that aren't useful or helpful for you.
- **Try to challenge unkind thoughts about yourself.** You might automatically put yourself down. If you find yourself doing this, it can help to ask: "Would I talk to, or think about, a friend in this way?"
- **Avoid comparing yourself to others.** Try to remember that what other people choose to share about their lives isn't the full picture and comparing ourselves isn't realistic.
- **Say positive things to yourself.** It might feel really strange at first, but you'll feel more comfortable the more you do it.

Look After Yourself

- **Try to get enough sleep.** Getting too little or too much sleep can have a big impact on how you feel. See our pages on coping with sleep problems for more information.
- **Think about your diet.** Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can make a difference to your mood and energy levels. See our pages on food and mood for more information.
- **Try to do some physical activity.** Exercise can be really helpful for your mental wellbeing and some people find it helps improve their self-esteem. See our pages on physical activity for more information.
- **Spend time outside.** Spending time in green space can help your wellbeing. See our pages on nature and mental health for more information.

Try To Notice Good Things

- **Celebrate your successes.** No matter how small they may seem, take time to praise yourself and notice what you did well. It could also help to remember past successes.
- **Accept compliments.** You could make a note of them to look over when you're feeling low or doubting yourself.
- **Ask people what they like about you.** It's likely that they see you differently to how you see yourself.
- **Don't put too much weight on negatives.** If someone says something unhelpful or unkind, you might find you focus on that and ignore anything positive.

- **Write a list of things you like about yourself.** For example, you could include character traits, skills or experience, beliefs or causes that matter to you or things you enjoy doing. You could ask other people for suggestions too.

Build a Support Network

- **Talk to someone.** Family, friends, someone that you trust. If you don't feel comfortable talking to someone you know there are other sources of support
 - Samaritans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 116 123
 - Kooth.com
 - School Nursing Service – Chat Health 07480 635050
- **Try peer support.** Making connections with people who have similar or shared experiences can be really helpful. For example, online communities like Mind's Elefriends can be a good source of support. See our pages on peer support and online mental health for more information.

Learn to Be Assertive

- **Practise saying no.** It could help to pause, take a breath and consider how you feel before agreeing to do something you don't want to.
- **Give it time.** Being assertive can feel difficult if you're not used to it, but it can feel liberating - and it gets easier the more you do it.
- **Don't take too much on.** It's ok to set boundaries around how much you do for other people. Over-stretching yourself to please others can drain your energy and affect your wellbeing.

Set Yourself a Challenge

- **Do things you enjoy.** You could take up a hobby, learn something new, do a creative activity or simply take the time to read a book or go for a walk.
- **Try volunteering.** You might decide to volunteer your time for something you feel passionate about. For more information on volunteering, see the [Do-it Trust website](#).
- **Set small goals,** such as trying a recipe, learning the days of the week in a new language or simply looking for information on something you'd like to do. Try to do one thing that pushes you slightly, just something that makes you feel like you're making progress. Just allow yourself time to gradually build up your self-belief again.
- **Do something for yourself every day.** Try to get into the habit of doing something to be kind to yourself or look after yourself.
- **Let yourself have fun.** Remember you don't have to be perfect at something to enjoy doing it.