

SELF-ESTEEM

As you probably know, self-esteem is the way we think and feel about ourselves. Self-esteem can impact on all aspects of our lives, particularly our relationships. If we are confident and self-assured we will tend to find healthier relationships. However if our self-esteem is low we might put up with things we shouldn't such as bullying or violence in a relationship.

Signs of high self-esteem

Someone with high self-esteem generally feels good about their ability to participate, confident in social situations and happy with the way they are.

Signs of high self-esteem	How it feels
Confident	I believe that I can achieve good things and that I make a positive contribution to my environment and in my relationships.
Sense of self-worth	I believe I am important. I deserve to be treated well and I will look after myself as well.
Positive	I generally think in a positive way
Encouraging and supporting others	I will nurture and support my friends and family in everything they do. I will not tolerate anyone who does not treat me well.
Good communication	I know how to ask for the things I want and need, and I am also able to listen to others.
Participation	I will join in team activities or try out a new hobby. Sometimes I will be good at them and other times I'll be dreadful – and that's ok.
Energetic	I give exercise a go and try new things which involve physical activity
Ambition	I have some ideas about the future and what I want to achieve such as travel and work.
Learn from mistakes	I make mistakes and that is ok. I try to see mistakes as an opportunity to learn so I don't do the same thing again.



Signs of low self-esteem

A person with low self-esteem can be very critical of themselves – viewing themselves in a negative way, feeling other people don't think highly of them and that they are not very good at things such as school or sport, or interacting with friends and peers.

Signs of low self-esteem	Example
Insecure	I don't feel important and I don't think that people like me very much.
Shy	I find it difficult to talk to people in social situations or even speak up in class or similar situations. I find it hard to make direct eye contact with others too.
Over-sensitive	People are ALWAYS criticising me and the way I do things – by saying things or looking at me in certain ways. I can't do anything right.
Anxious	I tend to worry about a lot of things and feel anxious a lot of the time.
Untrusting	I don't trust other people really – that includes my friends, family, school-mates. I expect to be cheated and discounted by others.
Lacking confidence	I am not good at anything much and I know other people think that too.
Negative	I tend to see the glass half-empty rather than half-full.
Self-critical	I don't like the way I look or talk or behave. I never seem to be able to quite get it together.
Unhappy	I often don't feel that satisfied or happy about what I do with my time, my relationships or the future.
Hopeless	I am pretty hopeless at just about everything.
Lonely	I feel lonely and isolated a lot of the time.
Fear	I am afraid to try new things



20 ways to improve self-esteem

There are lots of ways to increase your self-esteem and they generally aren't too difficult to do. This list of ideas is just that – ideas. Some may work for you and others may not but if you persevere you will notice a change in your self-esteem.

1. Think positively
2. Focus on your achievements and skills
3. Try not to follow other peoples ideas or trends
4. Acknowledge and enjoy your accomplishments, big or small
5. Make a list of all the things you like about yourself
6. Be kind to yourself
7. Forgive yourself if something doesn't go to plan
8. Avoid comparing yourself to others
9. Try not to set unrealistic standards for yourself
10. Focus on your strengths
11. Change your inner voice from negative to constructive (eg. from 'I've got crap hair' to 'I'm having a bad hair day - hopefully tomorrow will be better')
12. Accept yourself – the way you feel, look and everything you've done
13. If someone is not being a good friend – walk away
14. Get active – exercise quite literally makes you feel good as the brain releases chemicals called endorphins which reduce stress and anxiety
15. Spend time looking after yourself, doing nice things for you
16. Learn from mistakes
17. Take opportunities and try new things
18. Set some boundaries for people in your life (eg. I won't accept people being rude to me)
19. Give your opinion confidently
20. Spend time with people who respect and listen to you



Links

More information about self-esteem and related issues can be found on the following websites:

Completely Gorgeous

www.completelygorgeous.com

Healthy body image information with topics such as body and beauty, shapes and sizes, and self-image and self-esteem.

Our Bodies Ourselves

www.ourbodiesourselves.org

Contains some great links to sites about body image and other girls' and women's health issues.

Weeowiser

www.weeowiser.org.au

A site designed to equip young women with knowledge, skills and attitudes to reject violent, abusive relationships and to expect healthy, safe, equal relationships.

Body Positive

www.bodypositive.com

Feel good about yourself regardless of your weight is this site's motto. Information for people who feel they're over or underweight, or who feel miserable about dieting and themselves. Also has a comprehensive list of links to related sites.

About-Face

www.about-face.org

About-Face equips women and girls with tools to understand and resist harmful media messages that affect their self-esteem and body image. The site also contains facts about how to fight against the fashion industry's obsession with thinness. There are recommended books and links about body image.

Reachout

www.reachout.com.au

Web based service that inspires young people to help themselves through tough times. The aim of the service is to improve young people's mental health and well being by providing support information and referrals in a format that appeals to young people.



BY *choice* NOT CHANCE

Youth Beyond Blue

www.ybblue.com.au

Youth Beyond Blue is about getting the message out there that it's okay to talk about depression, and to encourage young people and their family and friends to get help when it's needed.

ActNow

www.about-face.org

ActNow is a website for young people that gives information on important issues and makes them easier to understand. It's also provides a space to take action, have an opinion and be involved.

Depression Net

www.depressionnet.com

A comprehensive source of information, help, and support for people who have depression or are depressed.

Headroom

www.headroom.net.au

A site about mental health for young people.

The Butterfly Foundation

www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au

The Foundation provides information about eating disorders, body image and improving community awareness.

