



The First Steps to Improving Your Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is how you view yourself. It's the lens you look through when you consider who you are. If you have low self-esteem, you may view yourself in a negative way. Instead of thinking about how you have the gift for communication, you see yourself as someone who just can't shut up.

When you have low self-esteem, it's easy to fixate on your flaws. But you don't have to let low self-esteem destroy your confidence. There are simple steps you can take to start building up your self-esteem today.

Stop living in the past.



People with low self-esteem often hold on to their old mistakes. They replay them in their minds again and again, wishing they could do things differently. But the problem is that you can't change the past.

The first step toward increasing your self-esteem is to forgive yourself and let go of mistakes. One way you could do this is by journaling about your mistake and destroying the pages when you're finished. Any time you're tempted to

relive your mistakes, remind yourself that those pages of your life are gone and that today's a new day.

Pursue work that you enjoy.

Low self-esteem can take a toll on your ambitions. You may be stuck at a job you hate because you worry that another employer won't want you or that you have nothing valuable to bring to another employer.

Building up your self-esteem can help you find work that you'll enjoy. Start by looking at your current job. What do you enjoy? What areas do you shine in? Try asking your boss these questions or look at your old job reviews for answers.



If you're in a job you hate and you can't change it, do things you enjoy in your free time. Pick up an old hobby or look for a new one. This is a simple way to discover talents and abilities that you didn't know you had.

Finish a project you really care about.

Focus on what you're naturally drawn to. Maybe you're crafty and

can knit blankets. Maybe you love creating new recipes in your kitchen. When you focus on finishing projects you enjoy, your self-esteem will slowly increase. You'll start to feel better about yourself and have the energy to do even more of the things you love.

When it comes to building up your self-esteem, understand that it's a gradual process. Concentrate on taking small steps toward your goals and be kind to yourself when you make a mistake.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. What mistakes do you struggle to forgive yourself for?
2. What do you enjoy about your job? What do you dislike about it?
3. What projects do you enjoy working on in your spare time?

Roadblocks to Believing in Yourself

Believing in yourself is often touted as the cause of success. But if you have low self-esteem, it's not easy to believe in yourself. You may struggle to step outside of your comfort zone and look for a way to make your life better. You may believe that you don't have the means to better yourself or that you don't deserve a better life.

You can change your life and it starts with believing in yourself. But first you must identify what's holding you back. Here are three common self-esteem killers that can keep you from living out your true potential.



Comparison



Do you look around and feel like everyone else has a handle on life but you? This is a common feeling, especially in our digital age. Maybe you have a friend on Pinterest who always seems to have a clean house. But you don't see what her house looks like when the kids have the flu and there hasn't been time to do any laundry.

Seeing your friend's good days can leave you feeling like you're a failure because your house doesn't look clean all the time like your friend's house is. When you're on social media, you're constantly exposed to the best side of someone's life. You rarely see the ugly parts, too. It's important to remember this when you're scrolling through your news feed.

Past Situations

The past often shapes us and affects us far more than we realize. Negative situations in your past can make it hard for you to believe in yourself. Maybe you were in a toxic relationship with a partner who verbally abused you. Maybe you grew up with an alcoholic parent or maybe you were bullied in middle school.

Your past can be the biggest threat to your present if you don't act. It can take a toll on your self-esteem and crush your sense of confidence. If you've been in a bad situation in the past, you'll need to re-train your thought process. You may need the help of a therapist or life coach to help you deal with painful situations from your past that are keeping you stuck.

Current Relationships

Are there current relationships with a dynamic that keeps you questioning yourself? Sometimes, other people can undermine your sense of self-esteem. They may do it subtly by making unkind remarks and dismissing these remarks

as jokes. They may discourage you from acting a project you were excited about. They may tell you that you're not good enough to reach your goals.

Few things are more painful than a friend or loved one that is unkind and unsupportive. If possible, try to have a conversation with this person about their behavior. In a healthy relationship, there's room on both sides for honesty.

But if your loved one or friend still won't be supportive, you should consider limiting how often you interact with them. If you do have to be around this person for some reason, try to have a nurturing activity planned for yourself later after your interaction.

Just like you can switch your iPod to a different song, you can change your thoughts about yourself from negative to positive. It takes a lot of work and it doesn't happen immediately. But as you begin to focus on your positive qualities, you'll experience a boost in your self-esteem and find it easier to believe in yourself.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. Who do you compare your life to? Why?
2. How has a past situation affected your self-esteem?
3. Is there someone in your life that makes you feel insecure? Who is it? In what ways is this person crushing your self-confidence?

Is It Your Environment that Needs to Change?

Low self-esteem and a lack of confidence can be caused by several things. Many people think that to fix low self-esteem, you must look inside yourself. While it's true that there are internal things that cause low self-esteem, there are also external factors that can contribute to low self-esteem.

Instead of looking inside for all the reasons you're not more confident or successful, let's look at the space you live in. Ask yourself these questions and spend some time thinking about your answers.

Are You Playing Small?

Sometimes we feel small because we're living small. This doesn't mean that you must drop everything and go backpacking through Europe right now or that every moment of your life must be an epic adventure.

But for many people with low self-esteem, it's easy to get into a rut. You start believing that you can't do better and so you stop trying. You create a self-fulfilling prophecy without realizing it. Look at your life right now. What limitations have you accepted without challenging them? What areas of your life have you accepted as "good enough"?




Are You Encouraged and Uplifted by Your Friends and Family?

We are deeply influenced by the people we spend time with. This can be a good thing if you're spending time with positive people. But if your friends and family are unkind or negative, that same attitude can rub off on you.

Ask yourself how you'd feel if you didn't speak to a certain friend or family member for a week. Would you feel relieved at the thought of missing Aunt Sylvia's rants about the job she hates? Would you feel sad if you missed that call from your sister who helps you see the best in the world?

If there's someone negative in your life, you don't have to cut them out completely. But do look for ways to limit your time together and don't be afraid to change the topic of conversation if things take a negative turn.

Are You Pursuing New Experiences?



When a flower doesn't bloom
you fix the environment in which it
grows, not the flower

-Alexander Den Heijer

Often a lack of confidence and self-esteem can be caused by becoming too comfortable. You do the same things in the same way every single day. You don't change things up. You don't challenge yourself to experience new things and you don't go beyond what's safe and comfortable. This can cause you to stop growing as a person.

When you go outside your normal and look for new experience, you open yourself up. You discover new ways to do things. You find solutions that you wouldn't have come up with any other way. You learn more about yourself and the world around you.

You can find new experiences into your life just by looking for opportunities outside of your comfort zone. Try a different type of cuisine. Drive a different route to work. Volunteer at an organization that you wouldn't typically support. Take a weekend road trip and see where you end up.

Your environment shapes your self-confidence, so don't be afraid to look around at your life and make some changes. Surround yourself with people and experiences that build up your self-esteem and make you happy.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. In what areas of your life are you playing small? Why?
2. Look at your social circles. Do you surround yourself with positive or negative people? Which people are positive and encourage your growth?
3. When was the last time you tried something new? How did it turn out?

Conquering Negative Self Talk

Low self-esteem can cause negative self-talk. This can further lower your self-esteem causing a vicious cycle where you continually feel bad about yourself. The good news is that you can change the way you talk to and about yourself. When you conquer negative self-talk, your self-esteem will improve. You'll gain more self-confidence and you'll feel more optimistic about your life in general.

If you're ready to break the cycle of negativity, you need to understand these essential truths.



Actions follow thoughts, so your thoughts are important.

Your actions always begin with your thoughts. If you think that you're destined to be overweight, then it doesn't matter how many diet books you buy or how many nutritionists you talk to, you're still going to be overweight. You'll stay overweight because you haven't changed your mindset.

If you want to change your life, you must change your thoughts first. Instead of thinking that you're destined to be overweight, flip the script. Say to yourself, 'I am in control of what I eat and how much I eat'. Doing this changes the story you're telling yourself. You just went from the victim in this story to the victor.

You don't have to be carried away by negative thoughts.

You are the only one with the power to change your mental soundtrack. Just because you have a negative thought doesn't mean you have to listen to it. You have the power to change your focus. Instead of concentrating on the terrible day you had, start thinking about a simple pleasure you're anticipating like getting to change into your warm pajamas tonight or hearing your son's laughter during a silly bedtime game. By focusing on the positive, you're teaching yourself to let go of negative thoughts.

Garbage In = Garbage Out



It's hard to stay positive if you're constantly consuming negative information. If you really want to change your negative self-talk, then you must focus on consuming good stuff. You want to read and watch content that lifts you up. Not only will you feel better, you'll notice that your self-talk is more optimistic when you focus on the good.

Practice positive affirmations.

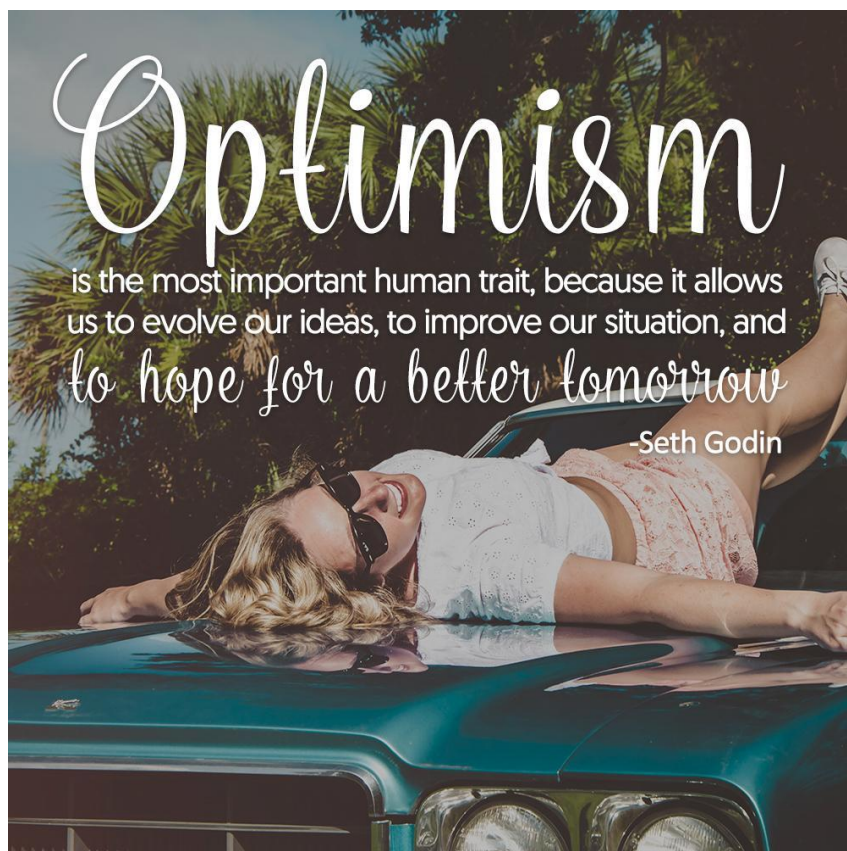
What you say about yourself becomes your truth. That's why it can be helpful to practice positive affirmations every day. Start by looking in the mirror and telling yourself, 'Today, I choose to be happy' or 'Today, I choose to fully accept

myself'. When you speak these thoughts out loud, they'll begin to affect how you talk to yourself and how you live your life.

Everyone struggles with negative self-talk at some point in their life. The important thing is not to beat yourself up when you realize your thoughts are negative. Accept that you had a negative thought and replace it with a positive one.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. What are some of the negative things that you think about yourself? How do these thoughts affect you?
2. Flip the script—What are three positive things about yourself that you could replace these thoughts with?
3. What are some ways that you're letting negativity in? How can you find more positive messages?



A Future You Can Believe In

When your self-esteem begins to rise, you realize you have options you never hoped for. Suddenly, your future isn't bleak and

depressing. It's exciting and filled with new opportunities and experiences. Rather than dreading the future, you're anticipating it. So, what's next? How do you get from where you are today to that bright, shiny future that you're looking forward to?

It's time to dream a dream.

Start by dreaming. What is it that you really want to do? Try to think about what you'd like your life to look like if money and time weren't factors. Would you take dance classes? Start your own business? Embrace your inner artist? Travel across the country in an RV?

You can't work toward your dreams until you've identified them. It's OK to have multiple dreams. Most people are multi-passionate. They have a passion for several different things. You don't have to just pick *one* thing and be that for the rest of your life.

What does your future self want to accomplish?

It's time to figure out what you want to accomplish. This isn't about titles or money or fame. It's about how you want to be remembered. How will leave your mark on the world?

Do you want to be remembered for being that sassy businesswoman that provided clean drinking water for an entire village in a third world country? Do you want to be remembered as the artist and foster mom of countless teens that didn't have a place to go? Do you want to be the secretary that decided to go to medical school at age fifty?

What do you see as the major roadblock to making that happen?

Anticipating roadblocks ahead of time can be helpful when you're thinking about the future. Common roadblocks might include time, money, or a lack of emotional support. You don't have to have all the answers right now. Just acknowledge the roadblocks. By doing this, you'll be better prepared mentally and emotionally when you encounter setbacks or problems along the way.

What does your life look like when that road back is in your rear mirror?

No matter who you are or what you're trying to achieve, you will encounter roadblocks. In order to prevail over them, you must have a clear vision of your future. This vision must be strong enough to motivate you when you're still living your 'before' story. If your goal is to go back to college, then imagine that moment when you walk across the stage in your graduation gown. If your goal is to start a business, imagine that moment when you get your first client. Hold onto your vision.



Dreaming about your future and planning for it can be exciting. It can also feel a little scary at times. But don't let the fear stop you. You deserve a beautiful future filled with dreams.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. What are the dreams you have that you're afraid to go after? What exactly about your dream scares you?
2. What are some roadblocks that are keeping you from being your best self right now?
3. How do you want to leave your mark on the world? What do you want your legacy to be?