

## Self-Esteem - Overview

It is a studied fact that having **little self-regard** leads people towards depression and prevents them from realizing their true potential. It mentally conditions them to tolerate abusive situations and blameful relationships.



**Too much self-love**, on the other hand, results in Narcissism, an enhanced sense of self where people feel entitled to success and think the world owes them for their efforts. It results in an inability to learn from failures. Successful people know how to walk this thin line between entitlement and depression, which we call – **self-esteem**.

### Defining Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the value you place on yourself after judging and defining your beliefs. Self-esteem encompasses both **beliefs** ("I am an efficient manager.") and **emotions** (victory, grief). People assess their self-esteem with questions such as –

- “Am I worthy of this designation?”,
- “Am I living a fulfilling and happy life?”,
- “What is my worth in the eyes of my relatives?”.

People with low self-esteem tend to have a false, inferior evaluation of their own that makes them experience shame, dissatisfaction and guilt even after they perform well. People with low self-esteem should understand that they are better than what they rate themselves as.



## Self-Reflection

People with low-esteem often feel helpless and powerless to take a stand. They don't encourage new ventures and remain dissatisfied **even after getting success**. They tend to blame people for their mishaps and always compare themselves unfairly with others and resent in isolation.

This tendency to always stand in the line of fire, even if the blame should lie with someone else is called **self-trap**. People with low-esteem trap themselves deliberately in abusive relationships, so that they can continue a steady interaction with those people whom they admire and want to stay connected to.

While the cause of low self-esteem may vary from person to person, the underlying reasons for many people having low-esteem are abusive childhood, bullying, failures in relationship, loss in business, and the inability to live up to the expectations in domestic and professional life.



People with low self-esteem end up having a very negative and critical way of viewing themselves. It can even go to extent where people actually find solace when others find faults in them, because that reinstates their negative self-evaluation.

What can be clearly seen as a case of severe undermining of one's own abilities, low self-esteem goes hand in hand with low self-confidence, although both are not the same thing – **low self-esteem is a negative self-evaluation, whereas low self-confidence is a negative self-belief.**

## Do It Yourself Activity

Before we begin to practice self-esteem values in our life, it is necessary to realize where we stand on the positivity scale. The following exercise is designed to present a clear idea on how we view ourselves and how much improvement we need to bring in our thought process. You are requested to be as honest in your answers as possible.

**A small tip** – Write the first answer that comes to your mind.

Fill in the blanks with phrases that you would use to describe yourself in the following areas –

- Education

- Workplace

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- Friends

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- Family

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- Health

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- Peace

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- Strengths

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- Partner

- Spirituality

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- Personality

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- Emotions

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- Career

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- Society

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- Children

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- Parents

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- Skill-sets

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- Hobbies

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## Individual Assignment

Low self-esteem is the result of a long chain of events, incidents, beliefs, and self-criticisms that are not easy to let go of. Here we will see how affirmations can be useful as a cure for low self-esteem.

According to experts, self-esteem can be broadly divided into two kinds –

- **Global self-esteem** – This is a fixed self-assessment of how we view ourselves in relation to the environment we live and work in.
- **Situational self-esteem** – This is a self-assessment on what we do, how we perform a task, and how much appreciation or criticism we get on our results. Depending on these responsibilities and circumstances, self-esteem fluctuates from high (while getting praise) to low (while facing criticism).

## Affirmations

Affirmations are encouraging statements about yourself that are either true or have a strong possibility of being true. Affirmative thinking helps to stop negative self-talk and increase self-esteem. A dose of affirmative self-talk every day can ingrain them as your feelings and beliefs.

## Self-Esteem Values

Using affirmations to replace negative thoughts like "**I am useless at this job.**" with "**I might make mistakes but I will learn fast.**" not only counters negative thoughts but also makes this positive thinking a part of your thought process.

Counter any negative thoughts coming to your mind when in an unfavorable situation, by giving yourself a positive message. The following affirmations can help you to work toward building a positive self-image –

- People respect me.
- People enjoy my company.
- I am confident of my skills.
- I am caring and my family loves me.
- I can handle relationships and work well.
- I am friendly and give positive vibes.
- I love the way I am.
- I love the way I look.

## Positive Self-Esteem

People with high self-esteem acknowledge their strengths and apply them in their daily life. At the same time, they are aware of their weaknesses and address them with a positive approach. In other words, people with high self-esteem know themselves well. This helps them in being realistic in their expectations which puts them in firm control of their lives.

Improving your self-worth isn't an instant result; it's a process that takes time, practice, and a lot of introspection. It is all about learning how to respect yourself and requesting that from the others you work with. Let's see how the people with high self-esteem think.



People with a positive self-esteem exhibit the following qualities –

- Confidence
- Problem-solving
- A friendly and cooperative nature
- No blaming others for their failures
- Being trustworthy and trusting others too
- Know and control the direction of their life
- The ability to say ‘no’ to something they don’t like
- An awareness of strengths and areas of improvement
- Understanding when others make mistakes and accepting
- Knowing personal boundaries and respecting those of others
- Acknowledging a mistake and learning how not to repeat them

It is this positive thinking that gives confident people a positive self-concept, which enables them to see themselves honestly which helps them in getting rid of pre-conceived negative ideas about themselves.



# KNOW THE RULES!



## Negative Self-Esteem

People having a very critical opinion of themselves tend to under-appreciate even the good efforts they have put in, and view even genuine praise as flattery. This undermining of one's own talent and hard-work leads others to treat you the same way.



There is an old saying that **everybody treats you the way you treat yourself**. If you don't take yourself seriously, there is very little chance of others doing so. We have listed some of the most-widely observed qualities of people with low self-esteem.

People with a negative self-esteem exhibit the following qualities –

- Crave perfectionism
- Fear of being ridiculed
- Blaming others for failure
- Fear of exploring new ventures
- Very self-critical and self-effacing
- Feeling unaffectionate towards others
- Fighting with a sense of worthlessness
- Not trusting even close friends and relatives
- Negative attitude and pessimistic view of life

## Lack of Self-Esteem

It was previously thought that people with low-esteem can be made to think positively by praising them in public and speaking highly of them. However, it was later discovered that this actually resulted in even lower self-esteem among the people, as they now had to deal with the added pressure of producing high-quality output too.

As mentioned earlier, people with low-esteem tend to judge even genuine praise as mere flattery, as they themselves conclude that their efforts are way below expectations and hence, not praise-worthy.

## Lack of Self-Esteem and Its Causes

Low self-esteem forms over a period of time by negative experiences like criticism, teasing, and failure in the fields of performance, race, education, and relationships.

As with low self-esteem, positive self-esteem can only grow with time and needs to be substantiated with real occurrences, facts, and achievements. Telling a stranger, "You are a great performer" or "They must be proud of you" never works.



It's advised to praise someone **only when they themselves are willing to acknowledge** that they have put in hard work and are getting a well-deserved compliment.

## Identifying Low Self-Esteem

Negative thoughts and feelings are rooted in some nasty emotional experiences early in life, which later snowball into thought-manipulating beliefs and habits. Before long, we start doubting ourselves which prevents our growth and leaves us feeling dissatisfied. It limits our risk-taking abilities, rendering us pessimistic and bitter towards life in general.



## Do It Yourself Activity

Take a piece of paper and very quickly jot down a few words that represent your positive qualities in the space provided below –

- 1.

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- 2.

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- 3.

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- 4.

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- 5.

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Now read the words.

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### **Were you comfortable doing that?**

People having low self-esteem tend to paint themselves in only a negative light. This makes them disregard their positive qualities, and downplay positive comments about their work from others. They equate thinking good about oneself with being proud and arrogant. This line of thought could be the result of an extremely strict or abusive upbringing, and in most of the cases, it is.

## Building Self-Esteem

Self-esteem involves believing in one's own abilities and depending on them to provide desirable results. It includes having confidence in yourself and appreciating the output of your hard work.

Many people think that gaining self-esteem needs you to attend special sessions or get therapies. However, that might not always be the case. Of course, there will always be a few people who feel terribly bad about themselves and might need medical intervention. However, that's more an exception than a rule.

By and large, one does not need to follow any specific set of instructions or practices to build his self-esteem. It can be enhanced by simple observations and practices that include small changes in behavior and daily routine.

## Steps to Building Self-Esteem

One can build a positive self-esteem by practicing a few simple steps –

- Meet new people.
- Send positive and friendly vibes to people you interact with.
- Spot good qualities in people close to you.
- Tend to your needs and wants.
- Eat healthy food and maintain a proper diet.
- Indulge in pleasurable activities.
- Try and finish a task that you have stalled for long.
- Take part in activities that need your skills.
- Use assertive sentences like "I am good" to build self-esteem.
- Spend time with people whose company you enjoy.
- Display items around you that remind you of your achievements.
- Learn something new to improve your skills.
- Read on something you like before going to sleep every night.

## Spotting Positive Behavior

### Do It Yourself Activity

To help you make a list of your positive qualities, ask yourself the following questions –

What do others like about me?	
What bad qualities I don't have?	

What are my greatest strengths?	
What challenges have I overcome?	
What are my biggest achievements?	
What are my positive characteristics?	
What do I like the most about myself?	
What qualities do I share with my idols?	
What are the moments that give me happiness?	
What someone who knows me will tell about me?	

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## Measuring Self-Esteem

Self-esteem might appear as an intangible attribute, but there are techniques available to measure its intensity!

### Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Rosenberg self-esteem scale is a popular tool to measure self-esteem. It is widely used in social-science research.

Read the statements and rate them on a scale of 0 to 3 according to your agreement to them. If the total is below 15, you need to work on improving and increasing your self-esteem.

- Strongly agree ----- 3
- Agree ----- 2

- Disagree ----- 1
- Strongly disagree ----- 0

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel I am no good.				
I am satisfied in life.				
I have good qualities.				
I am a worthy person.				
I feel useless at times.				
I feel like a failure sometimes.				
I am not very proud of myself.				
I wish I had more self-respect.				
I do things as well as most can.				
I have a very positive attitude.				

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## Pleasurable Activities

Every person has something that he loves to do. We might call it a hobby, but it need not be an activity all the time. Indulging in pleasurable activities is a great



way of building positive self-esteem. Not only does it give you good memories, but it also helps you understand the fact that life's not so miserable, after all.

Here is a list of pleasurable activities that you may indulge in. Mind you, this list is not comprehensive by any means!

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collecting things</li> <li>• Taking long rides</li> <li>• Debating</li> <li>• Playing computer games</li> <li>• Shopping</li> <li>• Playing cricket</li> <li>• Dressing up and looking nice</li> <li>• Meditating</li> <li>• Going on a picnic</li> <li>• Writing diary entries or letters</li> <li>• Rearranging furniture in house</li> <li>• Photography</li> <li>• Gardening</li> <li>• Exchanging emails, chatting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing books (poems, articles)</li> <li>• Going out to dinner</li> <li>• Playing musical instruments</li> <li>• Cooking, baking</li> <li>• Driving</li> <li>• Entertaining</li> <li>• Sketching, Painting</li> <li>• Sleeping</li> <li>• Going camping</li> <li>• Going to the beach</li> <li>• Having discussions with friends</li> <li>• Having family get-togethers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going to a party</li> <li>• Remembering beautiful scenery</li> <li>• Going to the gym, doing aerobics</li> <li>• Reading magazines</li> <li>• Spending an evening with friends</li> <li>• Listening to music</li> <li>• Thinking about my past trips</li> <li>• Relaxing</li> <li>• Going to a movie</li> <li>• Going for a holiday</li> <li>• Jogging, walking</li> </ul>
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