



This workshop is not a replacement for treatment by a professional, but an opportunity to review skills already learned or to identify new skills that could potentially be helpful in awareness of and increasing self-esteem.

## Introduction

What is Self-Esteem:

- “Esteem” is derived from the Latin word “aestimare,” which means to estimate, to value, to evaluate, to judge.
- Your self-esteem is defined by many factors, including: Self-confidence (or feeling of security), Identity, Sense of belonging, and Self-competence
- People sometimes confuse self-confidence with self-esteem. Self-esteem is one's overall belief in their value as an individual, a human being. Thus, self-esteem more so focuses on how we think and influences how you think and the way you behave.
- We often estimate ourselves regarding our worth, actions, skills, abilities, emotions, motives, and many other ways. It can be done either consciously or unconsciously. Our estimation of ourselves can often be true, false, or be partially true.

How does trauma impact our self-esteem?

- We aren't innately born with the ability to assess the world and ourselves accurately, so we develop it gradually over time. Our sense of self-awareness and self-reflection begins developing when we are younger and sets the tone for our self-esteem as we grow older.
- For a child to develop healthy self-esteem and accurate self-perception, they need to be able to receive mirroring, attunement, and validation from their caregiver. If not, the child's ability to self-assess may become stunted or distorted.
- Children are dependent on their caregivers and early environments to help build self-perception. Self-esteem becomes the internalized perception other people give them, such as the primary caregivers and authority figures.
- This means that if we grew up in an environment that held a skewed, inaccurate, or negative perception of us, that could lead to us having low self-esteem.
- The self-perception embedded within us follows us into our adulthood and even our whole life.
- A skewed self-perception can manifest in various forms: intellectual (having false beliefs, magical thinking, or unrealistic standards), emotional (being depressed, having chronic shame and guilt), or behavioral (having an addiction, being self-loathing, or engaging in destructive behavior)

## Unhealthy Self-Esteem Categories

- There are two main types of Self-Esteem issues.
- 1. Self-Underestimation: a person sees themselves as being worse than they actually are— examples: low self-worth, a lack of self-confidence, self-doubt, etc.
- 2. Self-Overestimation: a person’s tendency to see themselves as much better than they actually are. Examples: shallowness, false self-confidence, fakeness, superficiality, being fixated on social status, etc.

## Common Self-Esteem Issues

1. Never Feeling Good Enough
  - Many people grow up feeling that they aren’t good enough because of how they were treated as children. If, as children, they were mistreated, as though they were worthless or not good enough, then they may grow up believing that they will never be enough.
  - This belief stems from being compared to unrealistic standards, being in an environment that strived for perfectionism, or being mistreated.
  - Growing up with a mindset that embeds false thoughts such as inadequacy, resting is wrong, and that they will never be good enough can lead to severe ramifications to a person's self-esteem.

### Strategies for Coping:

Make a list of some of the kind things people have said to you and a list of your achievements, add to the list as you recall more. Try and keep this close by so that you can remind yourself of the good people see in you.

2. Self-Erasure
  - Many people are raised into the caregiver role in which they have to take care of others while undermining their needs, wants desires, and even emotions. Many caregivers consciously or unconsciously expect their children to meet many of their own needs and care for them in return.
  - Being raised with that belief, the person learns how to self-sacrifice and self-erase, which leads to strong people-pleasing tendencies, poor self-care habits,

aimlessness, emotional confusion, the inability to say no, and detachment from self.

Strategies for Coping:

- Take time for yourself to figure out the things you need and want, judgement-free. If you've been in a caregiver role for a very long time, it will take time, but start by asking yourself small questions, like "what do I need today?" Try and start small, schedule manageable pockets of time for yourself in which you think about how you're feeling and what you need and want.

3. Lack of self-love and self-care

- Those who underestimate themselves often usually suffer from poor self-care habits because of the lack of care and love they received growing up. Children who weren't cared for correctly or had good examples of a caregiver who would engage in self-care usually become adults who struggle with taking care of themselves.
- Believing that they are unworthy of love and getting their needs met can be a thought someone who has undergone trauma can have consciously or unconsciously. It can sometimes result from poor self-care skills but often stems from the psychological belief of being unimportant and worthless.
- A person who truly believes that may be more prone to acting in self-negligent ways or become self-destructive and engage in self-sabotage frequently.

Strategies for Coping:

- Try and build a self-care routine. Think about what self-care activities you would enjoy doing. If possible, maybe create a box with items that can be your self-care box, and you can place it in easy access to yourself.
- Put a hand on your heart and repeat affirmations to yourself to self-soothe.

4. Social Anxiety and Psychological Dependency

- As people, we are highly influenced by others, which can lead to many being overly sensitive to other people's perceptions, which can manifest in life as anxious thoughts and doubts later on.
- Many people can become dependent on the validation and opinions of others. Either they are actively seeking positive validation or trying to avoid any disapproval. This psychological dependency on the perceptions of others leads to social anxiety and results in dysfunctional behavior.

#### Strategies for Coping:

- Put a hand on your heart and repeat affirmations to yourself.
- Remind yourself that your worth doesn't come from what you can provide or what people think of you.
- Take the time to reflect on how your worth is innate and that you are valid.
- Validate yourself and your own experiences through journaling and reflect on your experiences.

#### 5. Importance of Self Esteem

- Self-esteem is a very vital element in our mental health and well-being. How we see ourselves is shaped substantially by our early environment and relationships with our primary caregivers. This, later on, begins to involve other authority figures, peers, and similar influencers.
- The more accurately we can see ourselves, our self-esteem becomes more accurate. As children, we begin to internalize how others see us, becoming our self-perception. This self-image is often significantly skewed, which results in various psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems.
- As adults, we can explore our self-perception and evaluate ourselves more accurately. Then accordingly, we can correct the perceptions of ourselves that are untrue and can be problematic to develop a healthier self-esteem.

#### 6. Signs of Low Self-Esteem

- Low Confidence
- Lack of Control/Autonomy
- Lack of Personal Boundaries
- Negative Social Comparison
- Difficulties in asking what you need
- Worry and Self Doubt
- Trouble Accepting Positive Feedback
- Negative Self-Talk
- Fear of Failure
- Self-Sabotage

### 8 Signs of Low Self Esteem

#### 7. The Physiological Impact of Low Self-Esteem

- Anxiety
- Eating disorders
- Emotional distress
- Panic disorder
- Risky behaviors
- Social anxiety disorder
- Substance use
- Stress

#### 8. Strategies for Coping with Low Self-Esteem

- Focus on Hopeful Thoughts
- Take Care of Yourself
- Seek Outside Support

#### 8. How to Build Self-Esteem

- Notice Your Thoughts
  - To begin with, write some good things that you've heard people say about you.
  - Try to have at least five positive things on your list, and put it somewhere where you can see and add to it if need be, as a reminder.
  - It may be so now that you have low confidence because of the past, but the vital thing to remember is that as we grow, we can develop new ways of seeing ourselves at any point in time.
- Forgive Yourself
  - If you have a tendency to ruminate and dwell on your mistakes, forgiving yourself be a big step in building self-esteem

- Practice Self-Acceptance
- Do something that makes you feel good.
- Stay physically active—exercise can help improve mood.
- Think about something you are good at.
  - Discussion Questions:
    - What's a small achievement that you've done that you can celebrate?
- Keep a gratitude journal.
- Challenge a negative thought.
- Spend time with people who make you feel good about yourself.
- Volunteer to help others.
- Remember that everyone makes mistakes.
- Celebrate your accomplishments, both the big and the small achievements.
- Use Affirmations to help reinforce positive thoughts

Strategies for Coping:

- I am at peace with myself.
- I am a valuable human being.
- I appreciate who I am.
- I'm good listener so I can hear myself too.
- I will take care of myself like I take care of others.
- I have innate worth.
- I have a nice smile.
- I deserve to relax.
- I embrace my happiness.
- I enjoy the present moment.
- Bonus: Come up with an affirmation of your own by thinking about what you like about yourself

9. 8 Ways to Fight Low Self-Worth

1. Lessen your time on social media.

- a. Reflect: How often do you check social media? Do you find yourself comparing yourself to what you see online? How does it make you feel?
  - b. According to several studies, increased social media usage has been linked to feelings of decreased self-esteem. We are naturally inclined to compare, and the essence of social media is to present the best versions yourself, which we compare to ourselves when we're at our lowest points.
  - c. To break free, try finding hobbies that you really enjoy doing, like exercising, knitting, writing, dancing, going on trips. Explore new things to find out what you like.
2. Surround yourself with uplifting people.
- a. Reflect: How do you feel about the people around you? Do you feel they uplift you, or do they make you feel bad?
  - b. Being surrounded by negative/toxic people can cause your sense of self to be distorted.
  - c. Try and surround yourself with people that are supportive and open-minded. Being able to feel as though you can trust and speak freely to people without fear of judgment or anger will help you feel validated and improve your self-esteem.
3. Do the things you love.
- a. Reflect: What activities make you feel happy?
  - b. Taking the time out of your day to do the things you truly love can help reduce stress, boost your mood, and even build your friend group.
  - c. Feeling good about yourself by engaging in the activities you love will also help improve your self-worth!
4. Stay away from negative self-talk.
- a. Reflect: How often do you call yourself negative words?
  - b. Research shows that we perceive negative words stronger than positive ones and hold onto them longer. This is why we have to be very careful about the negative comments we use when describing ourselves because they have a more considerable impact.
  - c. Start small; if you notice yourself tending to be self-deprecating, try and actively change it with positive affirmations. By slowly replacing the negative words with positive ones, you'll be able to see a slow improvement in how you feel about yourself.

5. Indulge in self-care.
  - a. How do you take care of yourself? In what ways do you practice self-care? What activities do you do solely to take care of yourself? What does self-care look like for you?
  - b. Research shows that people with high self-esteem value themselves as equals to others.
  - c. Think about what self-care looks like for you. It can look very different from person to person, but the core will always be to do what feels good for you and not compare your self-care routine to others. For some, self-care might look like skincare and clothes. For others, it might be working out and having tea. Experiment guilt-free with what makes you feel cared for!
  
6. Practice saying no.
  - a. Reflect: Do you struggle with saying no?
  - b. Saying no can feel very difficult when you feel like you want to please others and fit in. It's completely normal to feel as though you need to default to saying "yes" to everything in order to feel accepted by others, but remember that it's okay to say "no" to things that you don't want to do.
  - c. Remember that you aren't being selfish for saying "no" but rather taking care of yourself and being self-aware of what works best for you. It can definitely feel like a lot to suddenly start saying no, but next time you're asked to do something, take a moment to pause and ask yourself if you really want to. Saying no reflects where your boundaries are and value yourself and your time. When saying no, remember that it's okay, to be honest, and by being straightforward and respectful, you'll be able to show others what you're okay with doing.
  
7. Know when to take breaks.
  - a. Reflect: Do you focus on your mistakes? When was the last time you felt like you were enough? How do you cope with stress?
  - b. Taking breaks, especially when you're overworking yourself, can be one of the various methods of increasing self-worth. By taking a break, it'll help you decrease stress, maintain your work quality, and reduce burnout by providing you with some time to reset and boost your mood.
  - c. Next time you feel overwhelmed, stressed out, or frustrated with yourself- take a step back and pause. Do some breathing exercises and take some time to collect yourself before going back.

8. Take a challenge.
  - a. Reflect: What scares you?
  - b. Studies show that people with high self-esteem have the confidence to do the things that scare them. They view fear as potentials for growth instead of an opportunity for failure.
  - c. Try picking up a challenge regularly; it can be as big or small as you can manage. It can be anything from talking to a stranger or helping someone. After completing a challenge, the sense of achievement will help boost your self-confidence and self-esteem.

#### 10. Questions for Self-Compassion

1. How would I like to feel today?
2. What do I need right now?
3. What is stopping me from being kind to myself?
4. What are my greatest qualities?

Being compassionate to yourself may feel very unfamiliar. Consider picking a question that feels easy to reflect on. Start there.

Begin with one pebble. Over time, you never know the mountain you may build.

[Guided Meditation for Self-Love](#)

Sources:

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