

Overcoming Low Self-Esteem

Possessing little self-regard can lead people to become depressed, to fall short of their potential, or to tolerate abusive situations and relationships. Too much self-love, on the other hand, results in a disconcerting sense of entitlement and an inability to learn from other people or reflecting on your own failures. Dr. Nathaniel Branden, author of, "How to Raise Your Self-Esteem", calls self-esteem, 'the single most powerful force in our existence'. Overcoming low self-esteem is also fundamentals for happiness and success. Many people around the world are stuck in unhappy relationships, dead end frustrating and unfulfilling jobs, or unwilling to engage risk and adventure to rise to their full potential. Many sit at home fuelling their bodies and minds with cheap junk food, or quick solution articles on the internet, thereby becoming fat and bored, yet lacking the confidence to engage life. And by denying themselves the opportunities available they decrease still further their chances of building high self-esteem. **So, how is your self-esteem?** When you picture yourself in your mind's-eye, do you see a successful person full of hope and confidence, or do you find that you tend to compare yourself with someone else who you consider to be more popular, more successful or more attractive? If you think any of those thoughts, you need to read further.

What is Self-Esteem:

Self Esteem can be described as having a sense of Self-Confidence, or Being Confident enough to express your authentic self, your ideas, opinions and desires; to believe in your own Self-Importance, Uniqueness and Significance; to feel approved of, accepted; and to feel acknowledged (recognized) for your value and contribution to life, a relationship, work environment etc. By living a life depending on external feedback as point of reference leaves on with a sense of inadequacy and make you feel incompetent to meet social norms and demands. The 1990 California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility, defined self-esteem as appreciating my own self-importance and having the character to be accountable for myself and to act responsibly toward others. Self-esteem has three elements: appreciation, accountability, and responsibility. We will discuss this further below. When we are asked what we use to determine our own value, or how we will estimate our place and contribution to life, that perception will include two main components:

1. Self-Appreciation: Those aspects which I can appreciate about myself and so also about others. It is that with which I would like to identify with, to aspire to be, and to demonstrate (experience) and appropriate as part of me. Appreciation depends largely on your paradigms, or frames of perception (perspectives), and is formed throughout childhood. It also depends heavily on social comparison, peer pressure and cultural demands. Yet, often we take another opinion of higher value and forget that they may underrate you, for the sake of their own self-estimate.
2. Accountability to yourself, instead of self-criticism. This is the kind of accountability that pep-talk your greater potential instead of exposing and amplifying lack. It is also the ability to make decisions and respond on them, without gaining the approval of others, support of peers, and may lead to being so dependent on external feedback (which never really arrive), that we never take the risk to embark on finding our own power - which is to trust your own inner guidance.

When both these components are present, we become ...

3. Responsible to others in what we think and do. Thoughts create and ultimately reflect the behaviours of people around me, and the events that transcends into my experiences. When we create a useful existence, take uplifting actions and behave in an attitude or manner that is respectful, it also uphold your own dignity (not playing the victim game) = a purposeful life.

Why do we choose to remain in hiding ...

1. It is safer, it avoids rejection and accusations for not living up to other's standards and social expectations – and the pain inflicted by people's words and actions to show you don't fit.
2. We are relieved from the responsibility to make decisions. So you arrange your life around other people, pleasing them and allowing them to abuse your free will in making decisions for you – even in determining who you should be, what you must do to benefit them, and what possibilities is within your reach ... careful you may get a slap on the hand again.

"Success or failure does not depend on what we lack, but rather upon the use we make of what we have." (ER. Carlson, 1952).

"Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome." (Booker T. Washington).

The Tyranny of Conditioned Perceptions.

In order for us to experience the full essence of who we are, we need to explore different actions, different beliefs, and different experiences. Remember, we want to know who “I am”. Soon however we encounter obstacles in the form of disagreement from others towards our opinions and actions. So, in order to fulfil my inner needs of *Belongingness*, *Worthiness* and to find a safe place for *Self-Expression*, I realise - I need to conform to society’s expectations and demands. And sometimes we need to endure the ridicule and criticism of other people towards our actions and beliefs, to the point of rejection and denial. And once you’ve been hurt in life, the mind tends to cast an unconscious automotive protective layer over the conscious mind, like a veil, that prevents you from seeing and therefore experiencing reality as it is. It is the mind’s solution to avoid further pain and discomfort at the price of shutting down to real time - “Living in the Now”. So we start to live in the past, lingering over the wounds, and create masks behind which we can hide from ourselves and from life, and from further pain. Yet, it also blocks awareness of feelings and the joy of experiencing present sensations. It is like a rabbit that hides in tunnels in a hole in the ground. Every time the rabbit peeps out of the whole, just to explore a bit more of life, it gets hit on the head from behind and shrinks back into hiding. So the rabbit gets the message to stay in the closet and not to find his own power, abilities and greatness. For that may prevent others from finding their power and then our ideal stereotype culture will be threatened. So the rabbit learns to act in habitual ways as demanded by culture and society, just to avoid unwanted pain. This behaviour is expressed as the outer protective reaction to compensate for unwanted stimulus, and is controlled by a guardian of the mind ... called the EGO. Self-esteem therefore is based on the interaction of these basic needs and the collaboration of these major influences in our lives. So; **How do we develop a healthy Self-Esteem?**

1. Learn to Appreciate Ourselves

Too often we focus only on our failures instead of recognizing and acknowledging our successes. A common symptom is the Fraud Syndrome where we feel inadequate or incompetent and FEAR that someone will discover the pretences. However, when we realise that there is no such thing as failure and that we already have all the internal resources we need to be competent in what we really are, we already are successful. With this as presuppositions, it becomes a matter of discovering the right way to achieve what we want to achieve. Two important internal resources are within - our ability to learn and our ability to adapt, to be flexible. Adaptability helps us cope with changes that we cannot control and helps us to focus on what we really want instead of what we don't want. When we learn to appreciate ourselves, our importance, and our self-worth – then whatever feedback is received and been communicated to you either in words or actions – it is only information. Remember, we all respond according to our map of reality, not reality itself. Other people will respond to you in the same way and does not represent the “truth”. Feedback is but a map, a symbolic representation of the territory. The words used and actions demonstrated by others do not comprise actual reality exactly as it exist out there. Our perceived experiences and understanding is only an internal picture (in the rabbit whole) of the so called events (out there). You can choose what you do with people’s opinions, its just information. Remember choosing to choose is also a choice, a choice to give away your power and being accountable to yourself. Every person operates from their unique perception of the world. When we recognise that people will map their reality out in different ways, we respect (appreciate) their model of the world, and respect them, as much as ourselves, as unique persons and that enables you to trust whatever assistance and value you can offer to the world.

2. Accountability to Self.

The second element of self-esteem is accountability. People with high self-esteem take responsibility for their lives and for the situations they find themselves in. People with low self-esteem become victims of circumstances. Accountability is a critical element in personal empowerment. People make the best choices available to them at any given time, when they take action. The more choices, the less chance you will get stuck. If what we are doing isn't working, do something else and look for possibilities, or opportunities available, or find alternative perspectives. When something doesn't work in our society, we typically try to correct the situation by doing more of it, or doing it faster, or doing it harder. The real issue however is that we need to do something different. Change is possible and that change can occur quickly. If we don't like the situation we are in, we have the responsibility to do something to change that situation. That is also the choice to continue believing feedback and living a life that does not support your higher potential and aspirations.

“The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind. (William James).

3. Acting Responsibly Toward Others

The third element of self-esteem is acting responsibly toward others. This is a critical element because this distinguishes self-esteem from either an inflated ego trip, or devaluation of our own worth and the contribution we can make to society. People with high self-esteem treat others with respect and dignity, and finds ways in which they can contribute value to life. People with low self-esteem often treat others poorly and need to build their confidence by diminishing others to a lower standard so that no effort is required on their part to improve themselves, or being useful. When a person doubts their own ability to participate towards progress, they will have reservation about other people as well, leading them to retreat in suspicion of others and scepticism to life in general. When we have high self-esteem, we do not need to put others down to feel important - a key principle to understand and respect positive intentions of the other people. This does not mean that the outcome of every thought and behaviour is positive. It means we intend and therefore append our actions to get us something we perceive as a positive benefit for all involve. Although we may dislike what the other person does, we can appreciate their positive intention. This single premise has the power to transform relationships and allows us to separate the value of a person from their behaviour. We can approve of the person though we disapprove of their behaviour. Acting responsibly then, is to model and example for excellence. When we live the change we want to see in the world, I value my own example important enough to find opportunities by which I can influence others to do the same. And when I doubt my own ability, then find someone you can model your life to and reach towards the excellence that you alone can be. When you live up to the failure others project on you in their diminishing feedback (rejection and disapproval), you actually made a choice to devalue their potential for excellence as well. By doing what successful people do, we also will be successful. First, we model the behaviour we want to have. Next, we break-down complex behaviours and winning processes - into bite-size pieces so we can learn and apply that pattern. This allows us to break down self-esteem into components and specific behaviours that are learnable and do-able. Can you role play this new position and attitude to discover the right way to achieve what you need. So instead of doubting in your own value, rather ask how would you like to see yourself instead. Chunking, breaking down the pattern, gives us the option of improving self-esteem into small elements that will add value to my own personal Development and Growth.

Self-Esteem and the Power of Presuppositions.

Presuppositions are the underlying premise, assumption and beliefs that influence our thinking patterns and consequent feelings and perceptions. James Allen in his book, "As a Man Thinketh" (2001, p5)", describes the aphorism of ; "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he". Not only does it embrace the whole of man's being, but it is so comprehensive as to reach out to every condition and circumstance of his life. "A man is literally what he thinks, his character being the complete sum of his thoughts". Bad behaviour expressed by others has then nothing to do with you, do not take anything personal. It is only their stuff projected, it is only information and can be reframed, shifted to a different and more meaningful perspective. How do you know it is time to feel doubtful about yourself – when you decide that another person's opinion is more important or valid than yours. I am not speaking of when you consult an expert on a subject you know little about, rather we are considering the value you ascribe unto yourself. There's got to be more to your life than this ... there's got to be more than this misery and unhappiness. Find it, Live it.

To esteem anything is to evaluate it positively and hold it in high regard. To respect something is to accept it. The person with self-respect simply likes her- or himself. This self-respect is not dependent on success for it is context dependent and relevant to the best you can do within given circumstances. Neither is value and approval a result of comparing ourselves with others, for the ego to continue to find someone better. With self-respect, we like ourselves because of who we are and not because of what we can or cannot do. The CEO of a Fortune 500 company once said; success is having achieved that which you determine you will do! YOU determine what success – your value, is for you. It's not based on any judgment other than your own. And, for some, success is the journey, itself.

During the Personal Mastery and Spiritual Development Programme, Alter Point, presented by Meta-Life Coaching; we discuss the traps of Addictions to others opinions and Co-dependent behaviour. In order to empower ourselves with emotional and behavioural skills, we need to re-define our own abilities with constant self-examination, exploration of old beliefs and ideals, and reconstruct what you regard as the reality of your truth. Through this process, you will learn how to take responsibility for what is yours, and how NOT to take responsibility for what is not yours. The training involves a holistic healing approach to Spiritual and Personal Life-Enrichment in the formulation and development of wholesome objectives and outcomes that assist a deeper awakening to your Life-purpose. For more information, visit <http://www.meta-lifecoaching.yolasite.com/workshops.php>

Resources and References.

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