

Strategies for Building Self-Esteem

Crises of self-esteem are a part of the human experience. When you feel troubled by low self-esteem, review the suggestions below and choose those that are relevant to your situation and work on them. Be patient with yourself: change takes time and steadfast work.

1. **Free yourself from “should”.** Live your life on the basis of what is possible for you and what feels right to you instead of what you or others think you “should” do. “Shoulds” distract us from identifying and fulfilling our own needs, abilities, interests and personal goals. Find out what you want and what you are good at, value those, and take actions designed to fulfill your potential.
2. **Respect your own needs.** Recognize and take care of your own needs and wants first. Identify what really fulfills you—not just immediate gratifications. Respecting your deeper needs will increase your sense of worth and well-being.
3. **Set achievable goals.** Establish goals on the basis of what you can realistically achieve, and then work step-by-step to develop your potential. To strive always for perfectionist, absolute goals—for example, “Anything less than an A in school is always unacceptable”—invites stress and failure.
4. **Talk to yourself positively.** Stop listening to your “cruel inner critic.” When you notice that you are doubting or judging yourself, replace such thoughts with self-accepting thoughts, balanced self-assessment and self-supportive direction.
5. **Test your reality.** Separate your emotional reactions—your fears and bad feelings—from the reality of your current situation. For example, you may feel stupid, anxious and hopeless about a project, but if you think about it, you may still have the ability and opportunity to accomplish something in it.
6. **Experience success.** Seek out and put yourself in situations in which the probability of success is high. Look for projects which stretch—but don’t overwhelm—your abilities. “Image” yourself succeeding. Whatever you accomplish, let yourself acknowledge and experience success and good feelings about it.
7. **Take chances.** New experiences are learning experiences which can build self-confidence. Expect to make mistakes as part of the process; don’t be disappointed if you don’t do it perfectly. Feel good about trying something new, making progress and increasing your competence.
8. **Solve problems.** Don’t avoid problems, and don’t moil about them. Face them, and identify ways to solve them or cope with them. If you run away from problems you can solve, you threaten your self-confidence.
9. **Make decisions.** Practice making and implementing positive decisions flexibly but firmly, and trust yourself to deal with the consequences. When you assert yourself, you enhance your sense of yourself, learn more, and increase your self-confidence.
10. **Develop your skills.** Know what you can and can’t do. Assess the skills you need; learn and practice those.
11. **Emphasize your strengths.** Focus on what you can do rather than what you cannot. Accept current limitations and live comfortably within them, even as you consider what strengths you might want or need to develop next.

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12. **Rely on your own opinion of yourself.** Entertain feedback from others, but don't rely on their opinions. Depend on your own values in making decisions and deciding how you feel about yourself and what is right for you to do.