

**IMPROVE YOUR
SELF-ESTEEM
IN JUST ONE
WEEKED!**

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INTRODUCTION

Esteem is a simple word. It is worth and value that we apply to people, places, and situations. It is the amount of respect we assess. We have esteem for our world leaders. We have esteem for places like church and synagogue. We have esteem for an exemplary performance whether it is in sports, acting, or simply doing the right thing.

But the most important place we need to apply esteem is within ourselves. We must maintain our self-esteem in order to place value on ourselves as a worthy individual in the world. Self-esteem can affect every single part of our lives. If that esteem is low, our lives will be dull and gray. Elevating esteem for ourselves could very well be the key to happiness in life.

Most people's feelings and thoughts about themselves fluctuate somewhat based on their daily experiences. The grade you get on an exam, how your friends treat you, ups and downs in a romantic relationship-all can have a temporary impact on your wellbeing.

Your own self-esteem, however, is something more fundamental than the normal "ups and downs" associated with situational changes. For people with good basic self-esteem, normal "ups and downs" may lead to temporary fluctuations in how they feel about themselves, but only to a limited extent. In contrast, for people with poor basic self-esteem, these "ups and downs" may make all the difference in the world.

People with poor self-esteem often rely on how they are doing in the present to determine how they feel about themselves. They need positive external experiences to counteract the negative feelings and thoughts that

constantly plague them. Even then, the good feeling (from a good grade, etc.) can be temporary.

Healthy self-esteem is based on our ability to assess ourselves accurately (know ourselves) and still be able to accept and to value ourselves unconditionally. This means being able to realistically acknowledge our strengths and limitations (which is part of being human) and at the same time accepting ourselves as worthy and worthwhile without conditions or reservations.

What we want to do is help you raise your self-esteem to levels that will enhance your life and the way you view life. It can make a tremendous difference in your quality of life. Learning techniques to raise self-esteem can be taught and put into practice in just a few days. However, it will take practice to keep your self-worth at the forefront.

We can show you how to improve your self-esteem in just one weekend! Three short days where you will apply what this book will show you and that will stay with you as your life becomes the bright place it should be.

WHERE DOES OUR SELF-ESTEEM COME FROM?

Our self-esteem develops and evolves throughout our lives as we build an image of ourselves through our experiences with different people and activities. Experiences during our childhood play a particularly large role in the shaping of our basic self-esteem.

When we were growing up, our successes (and failures) and how we were treated by the members of our immediate family, by our teachers, coaches, religious authorities, and by our peers, all contributed to the creation of our basic self-

esteem.

An adult who has healthy self-esteem was given this gift in childhood. This could have been done in many ways. Probably one of the most important is being praised for accomplishments. Children who are talked to respectfully and listened to also contributed to healthy self-esteem in adulthood. These children were hugged often and given attention and experienced some type of success in school or sporting activities.

On the other side of the spectrum, we have to identify the childhood for those adults who have poor self-esteem. These children were often criticized harshly, were yelled at or beaten, and were given little attention by those they were closest to. They were ridiculed and even teased as they experienced failures in their young lives. They were made to feel they had to be perfect in order to be valued and associated failure in situations as a failure of their whole selves.

It's sad, isn't it? To think of a child treated that way. What's even sadder is the effect that treatment has on their lives as adults. We are shaped and molded by our experiences. Do you recognize yourself?

How we feel about ourselves can influence how we live our lives. People who feel that they are likable and lovable (in other words people with good self-esteem) have better relationships. They are more likely to ask for help and support from friends and family when they need it. People who believe they can accomplish goals and solve problems are more likely to do well in school. Having good self-esteem allows you to accept yourself and live life to the fullest.

Self-esteem plays a role in almost everything we do. People with high self-esteem do better in school and find it easier to make friends. They tend to have better relationships with peers and adults, feel happier, find it easier to deal with mistakes, disappointments, and failures, and are more likely to stick with something until they succeed. It takes some work, but it's a skill you'll have for life.

This book is about how to raise your self-esteem, so we will focus on the low self-esteem that many people have these days. You can overcome issues with low self-esteem. It's not as difficult as you might think. In fact, all you have to do is recognize, understand, and use the techniques we will give you.

One of the initial questions we feel compelled to address is what exactly self-esteem is.

WHAT IS SELF-ESTEEM?

Some people think that self-esteem means confidence - and of course confidence comes into it - but it's rather more than that.

The fact is that there are any number of apparently confident people who can do marvelous things but who have poor self-esteem. Many people in the public eye fall into this category. Actors and comedians and singers in particular can seem to glow with assurance 'on stage', and yet off-stage many of them feel desperately insecure.

Indeed, individuals can be stunningly attractive and world-famous, and seem poised and perfect - yet still, deep down, find it hard to value themselves. Think of the late Princess of Wales and Marilyn Monroe and you'll accept, I think, that public adulation is no guarantee of self-belief.

So, if self-esteem isn't quite the same thing as confidence, what is it?

Well, the word 'esteem' comes from a Latin word which means 'to estimate'. So, self-esteem is how you estimate yourself.

To do that you need to ask yourself certain questions:

- Do I like myself?
- Do I think I'm a good human being?
- Am I someone deserving of love?
- Do I deserve happiness?
- Do I really feel - both in my mind and deep in my guts - that I'm an OK person?

People with low self-esteem find it hard to answer 'yes' to these questions. Perhaps you are one of them. If you're reading this book, we think you are. Don't despair. Just read on!

The concept of self-esteem can be summed up as: Confidence in our ability to think and in our ability to cope with the basic challenges of life and confidence in our right to be successful and happy, the feelings of being worthy, deserving, entitled to assert our needs and wants, achieve our values and enjoy the fruits of our efforts.

We also commonly think that self-esteem is merely about how we feel about ourselves at any particular moment. While seemingly existing in degrees, we tend to believe that we have positive or negative self-esteem and

that we make that determination simply by how we feel about ourselves.

However, our feelings or emotions do not exist alone or have an independent existence. We do not just simply feel. Rather, for every feeling or emotion that we have, either positive or negative, there is a corresponding thought that we have about ourselves that generates the experience of self-esteem.

Whether positive or negative, self-esteem is merely how our psyche experiences the thoughts that we have about ourselves. If a person has positive thoughts about himself he will experience positive or good self-esteem. On the other hand, if the individual has negative thoughts about whom he thinks he is then he will experience poor or negative self-esteem.

Therefore, to truly understand what self-esteem is all about and more importantly to be able to alter it when necessary for ones wellness or healing, we must first get it that self-esteem is really about our thinking, and more specifically about the thoughts that we develop or create about ourselves. The thoughts or beliefs that we have about ourselves are crucial in that they determine or create the structure of our experience of self-esteem and the various emotions associated with it.

We also tend to think of our self-esteem as being something that is shaped by the events that take place in our life, particularly those from our past. We tend to believe that who we think we are and how we feel about ourselves is merely the product, effect or caused by the experiences that we have had in the past – it says that we are who we are by virtue of what has happened to us as human beings.

More specifically, we tend to think that the cause in the matter of whom we think we are and our self-esteem is due

to circumstance, situation or others, people, places and things. We do not tend to think that our self-esteem is something we actually developed or created. Our personal self-esteem is shaped by our past and the experiences we have had in our lives.

We created our thoughts and with it our emotions from the meaning that we gave to the events that took place in our life, especially at an early age. We give meaning to everything in our life including and most importantly to ourselves. At an early age the meaning that we give an event tends to be made out to be all about us. While events do happen it is not the events that are important but rather the meaning that we give them and especially how we made it out to be about our identity.

Living in a state of low self esteem can be very damaging to the quality of life you lead on a daily basis. Your self esteem is YOUR opinion of yourself, but far too many people allow others to influence or even make up their opinion for them. It sounds so very silly, but if you think on this you will realize how certain events, comments and encounters helped to "make or break" your self esteem.

Let's look at some indicators that you might have low self-esteem.

DO I HAVE LOW SELF-ESTEEM?

While you might already have a good indication that you are suffering from low self-esteem, it might be a good idea to explore this a little further.

Take this simple quiz.

Self-Esteem Assessment

Directions: Answer T if the statement is true for you.
Answer F if the statement is false for you.

- T F** I am able to discuss my good points, skills, abilities, achievements, and successes with others.
- T F** I assert myself with someone whom I believe is violating or ignoring my rights.
- T F** I am content with who I am, how I act, and what I do in life.
- T F** I am not bothered by feelings of insecurity or anxiety when I meet people for the first time.
- T F** My life is balanced between work, family life, social life, recreation/leisure, and spiritual life.
- T F** I am aware of the roles I played in my family of origin and have usually been able to make these behavior patterns work for me in my current life.
- T F** I am bonded with the significant others in my environment at home, work, school, at play, or in the community.
- T F** I am able to perform the developmental tasks necessary to ensure my ongoing healthy self-esteem.
- T F** I am satisfied with my level of achievement at school, work, home, and in the community.
- T F** I am a good problem solver; my thinking is not clouded by irrational beliefs or fears.
- T F** I am willing to experience conflict, if necessary to protect my rights.

If you selected F for three or more of the preceding questions, you probably need to work at increasing your self-esteem. That's what we're here for! But that comes a little later!

There are many, many indicators that a person has low self-esteem. Consider this list.

People with low self-esteem:

- Consider themselves lost, unworthy of being cared for
- Are poor risk takers
- Operate out of a fear of rejection
- Are typically unassertive in their behavior with others
- Are fearful of conflict with others
- Are hungry for the approval of others
- Are poor problem solvers
- Are fraught with irrational beliefs and have a tendency to think irrationally
- Are susceptible to all kinds of fears
- Have a tendency to become emotionally stuck and immobilized
- Have a poor "track record" in school or on the job; conversely, they sometimes over compensate and become over-achievers
- Are unable to affirm or to reinforce themselves positively
- Are unable to make an honest assessment of their strengths, qualities, and good points; they find it difficult to accept compliments or recognition from others
- Have poorly defined self-identities with a tendency to be chameleons in order to fit in with others
- Are insecure, anxious, and nervous when they are with others

- Often become overcome with anger about their status in life and are likely to have chronic hostility or chronic depression
- Are easily overcome with despair and depression when they experience a setback or loss in their lives
- Have a tendency to overreact and become de-energized by resentment, anger, and the desire for revenge against those whom they believe have not fully accepted them
- Fulfill roles in their families of origin that are counter-productive and maladaptive. These roles carry over into their adult lives
- Are vulnerable to mental health problems and have a propensity to use addictive behavior to medicate their hurt and pain. Such addictive behavior can include alcohol, drugs, food, gambling, sex, shopping, smoking, working too much, or the search for excitement, truth, wisdom, and a guru with an easy guide to the achievement of happiness

Kind of overwhelming, isn't it? Do you recognize yourself in any of these statements? Don't feel alone. Actually, low self-esteem is actually quite a widespread problem. And if you suffer from this problem, it can cause some more – even serious – problems.

Low self-esteem can have devastating consequences.

- It can create anxiety, stress, loneliness and increased likelihood for depression.
- It can cause problems with friendships and relationships.
- It can seriously impair academic and job performance.
- It can lead to underachievement and increased vulnerability to drug and alcohol abuse.

Worst of all, these negative consequences themselves reinforce the negative self-image and can take a person into a downward spiral of lower and lower self-esteem and increasingly non-productive or even actively self-destructive behavior.

There are actually three "faces" that people with low self-esteem wear. See if you see yourself in any of these personalities.

The Impostor: acts happy and successful, but is really terrified of failure. The impostor lives with the constant fear that she or he will be "found out." They need continuous successes to maintain the mask of positive self-esteem, which may lead to problems with perfectionism, procrastination, competition, and burn-out.

The Rebel: acts like the opinions or good will of others - especially people who are important or powerful - don't matter. The rebel lives with constant anger about not feeling "good enough." They continuously need to prove that others' judgments and criticisms don't hurt, which may lead to problems like blaming others excessively, breaking rules or laws, or fighting authority.

The Loser: acts helpless and unable to cope with the world and waits for someone to come to the rescue. The loser uses self-pity or indifference as a shield against fear of taking responsibility for changing his or her life. They look constantly to others for guidance, which can lead to such problems as lacking assertiveness skills, under-achievement, and excessive reliance on others in relationships.

So what does a person with healthy self-esteem look like? These people exhibit the following qualities.

- Hold themselves as worthy to be loved and to love others, worthy to be cared for and to care for others, worthy to be nurtured and to nurture others, worthy to be touched and supported and to touch and support

others, worthy to be listened to and to listen to others, worthy to be recognized and to recognize others, worthy to be encouraged and to encourage others, worthy to be reinforced as "good" people and to recognize others as "good" people.

- Have a productive personality; they have achieved success to the best of their ability in school, work, and society.
- Are capable of being creative, imaginative problem solvers; of being risk takers, optimistic in their approach to life and in the attainment of their personal goals.
- Are leaders and are skillful in dealing with people. They are neither too independent nor too dependent on others. They have the ability to size up a relationship and adjust to the demands of the interaction.
- Have a healthy self-concept. Their perception of themselves is in synchrony with the picture of themselves they project to others.
- Are able to state clearly who they are, what their future potential is, and to what they are committed in life. They are able to declare what they deserve to receive in their lifetime.
- Are able to accept the responsibility for and consequences of their actions. They do not resort to shifting the blame or using others as scapegoats for actions that have resulted in a negative outcome.
- Are altruistic. They have a legitimate concern for the welfare of others. They are not self-centered or egotistical in their outlook on life. They do not take on the responsibility for others in an over-responsible way. They help others accept the responsibility for their own actions. They are; however, always ready to help anyone who legitimately needs assistance or guidance.

- Have healthy coping skills. They are able to handle the stresses in their lives in a productive way. They are able to put the problems, concerns, issues, and conflicts that come their way into perspective. They are able to keep their lives in perspective without becoming too idealistic or too morose. They are survivors in the healthiest sense of the word. They have a good sense of humor and are able to keep a balance of work and fun in their lives.
- Look to the future with excitement, a sense of adventure and optimism. They recognize their potential for success and visualize their success in the future. They have dreams, aspirations, and hopes for the future.
- They are goal-oriented with a sense of balance in working toward their goals. They know from where they have come, where they are now, and where they are going.

Does this sound like someone you want to be like? Well, it can be! There are so many steps you can take to raise your self-worth and stop suffering from low self-esteem. You will be a much better person for it and enjoy a wonderfully fulfilling life.

The first point we need to address is your inner voice.

THE INNER VOICE

Our past experiences, even the things we don't usually think about, are all alive and active in our daily life in the form of an inner voice. Although most people do not "hear" this voice in the same way they would a spoken one, in many ways it acts in a similar way, constantly repeating those original messages to us.

For people with healthy self-esteem the messages of the inner voice are positive and reassuring. For people with low self-esteem, the inner voice becomes a harsh inner critic, constantly criticizing, punishing, and belittling their accomplishments.

Do you ever find yourself berating yourself for something that you've done? Have you ever found yourself struggling with something that you know you should do but keep talking yourself out of? That's your inner voice.

Your inner voice will say things like, "You can't do this", "There's no way you can succeed", and "Why bother trying, you'll just fail". Your inner voice is your harshest critic and the one who will lower your self-esteem the quickest. You need to change that inner voice from a negative influence to a positive one.

We all have an inner voice. You should talk back to it. Combat it. Let it know that YOU are the one in control, not it! Let's look at some of the dialogue the inner voice will tell you and healthy ways to rebut what it is saying.

When the inner voice is unfairly harsh:

"People said they liked my presentation, but it was nowhere near as good as it should have been. I can't believe no-one noticed all the places I messed up. I'm such an impostor."

Counteract by being reassuring yourself:

"Wow, they really liked it! Maybe it wasn't perfect, but I worked hard on that presentation and did a good job. I'm proud of myself. This was a great success."

If the inner voice is unrealistically generalizing as in:

"I got an F on the test. I don't understand anything in this class. I'm such an idiot. Who am I fooling? I shouldn't be taking this class. I'm stupid and I don't belong in college."

Tell that inner voice something specific:

"I did poorly on this one test, but I've done O.K. on all the homework. There are some things here that I don't understand as well as I thought I did, but I can do the material-I've done fine in other classes that were just as tough."

The inner voice might also be extremely illogical.

"He is frowning. He didn't say anything, but I know it means that he doesn't like me!"

Tell that voice something that is purely logical.

"O.K., he's frowning, but I don't know why. It could have nothing to do with me. Maybe I should ask."

Finally, the inner voice will take things to extremes.

"She turned me down for a date! I'm so embarrassed and humiliated. No one likes or cares about me. I'll never find a girlfriend. I'll always be alone."

It's time to tell that inner voice things aren't nearly as bad as they make them out to be.

"Ouch! That hurt. Well, she doesn't want to go out with me. That doesn't mean no one does. I know I'm an attractive and nice person. I'll find someone."

In general, when that inner voice begins putting you down, counteract with a positive statement. Don't let that voice overtake you and talk you into something that just isn't true. You are in control – not the inner critic. Take charge and begin the journey toward more positive thinking!

One way to do this is through positive affirmations. This isn't new-age anything, it's simply a way for you to infuse positive self-talk into your life and calm that negative inner voice.

Utilizing positive affirmations can be a very powerful tool for transforming what a person thinks about himself and

as a result improve the individual's self-esteem. Consistent use of positive affirmations will transform the negative beliefs about who a person thinks he is into positive ones, will begin to alter the basis and structure of his self talk or inner voice and produce a transformation from poor self-esteem to positive self-esteem.

While utilized in a various ways, working with positive affirmations will be more effective when delivered through or combined with therapeutic relaxation music. What therapeutic relaxation music does to enhance the effect of positive affirmations is to create a very relaxed audio environment for the individual to become even more open or suggestive to the language of positive affirmations.

When you use music while telling yourself positive affirmations, you will be more relaxed and more open to accepting the positive comments you are telling yourself.

We found a wonderful music CD at Wal-Mart that helps to calm the soul and transform negative thoughts into positive thoughts. These music CD's are available everywhere, however. Just look for something that has calming music along with some soothing background noise like waves crashing on a shore or water that is flowing.

The key to the effective use of positive affirmation in this or any other type of intervention is consistency. The self-image and the negative thoughts about who a person thinks he is that generates his experience of poor or negative self-esteem is well established in the his belief system. In many cases the development of a negative self-image took years to create and has been reinforced through repetitive behavioral validation.

Because positive self-affirmations are key in developing healthy self-esteem, let's look at these a bit more closely.

POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

Positive self-affirmations are healing, positive scripts you give to yourself to counter your negative inner voice. They can help you free yourself from the over-dependence you have on other people's opinions, attitudes, or feelings about you and help you feel good about yourself.

When you visualize a new order and sense in your life, you can work toward a more positive attitude and take responsibility for your own health and emotional stability. You will let go of negative emotional baggage and be able to deal with your life in a realistic and positive manner.

Positive self-affirmation will help you resolve negative feelings from the past so you can face the present with a less obstructed view. In doing this, you will give yourself permission to grow, to change, to take risks, and to create a better life for yourself.

You will take a healthy self-oriented route in your life so that you can let go of the people and thoughts that drain your emotional resources and keep you from experiencing full personal health. When you recognize that you have a right to be a healthy and happy human being, you will have a fighting chance at achieving your full potential.

Success prophecies, when visualized, imagined, or believed in, do come true. It's time for you to believe that fully. This is how positive affirmations can affect you and your inner being. The biggest plus is that the negative inner voice will be quieted allowing you to find the positive inner voice that will help you become a fully happy individual.

There are three areas of self-affirmations. Try using any of these statements the next time you are feeling that negativity come over you.

I am: A statement of who you are

This is a positive affirmation of a real state of being that exists in you. You can achieve a full list of I am statements by taking a personal positive inventory of your attributes, strengths, talents, and competencies. Examples include:

I am competent	I am energetic
I am strong	I am enthusiastic
I am intelligent	I am relaxed
I am beautiful	I am joyful
I am a good person	I am trusting
I am caring	I am generous
I am loving	I am courageous
I am smart	I am forgiving
I am creative	I am open
I am talented	I am sharing

I can: A statement of your potential

This is a positive affirmation of your ability to accomplish goals. It is a statement of your belief in your power to grow, to change, and to help yourself. Examples include:

I can lose weight	I can grow
I can stop smoking	I can heal
I can handle my children	I can let go of guilt
I can gain self-confidence	I can let go of fear
I can take risks	I can change
I can be a winner	I can be positive
I can be strong	I can be a problem solver
I can pass calculus	I can handle my own problems
I can laugh and have fun	I can be honest with my feelings

I can be assertive

I can let go of being
compulsive

I can control my temper

I can succeed

I will: A statement of positive change in your life

This is a positive affirmation of a change you want to achieve. It is a positive statement of what you want to happen. It is a success prophecy. Examples include:

I will like myself better each day.

I will gain emotional strength each day.

I will control my temper today.

I will give others responsibility for their lives today.

I will grow emotionally stronger each day.

I will smile more today.

I will praise my children today.

I will feel good things about me today.

I will sleep easily tonight.

I will feel less guilt each day.

I will face my fears courageously today.

I will take on only what I can handle today.

I will take care of me today.

I will challenge myself to change today.

I will manage my time better today.

I will handle my finances wisely today.

I will take a risk to grow today.

The daily use of these "I" statements is another form of self-affirmation designed to counter negative self-concept. It can result in a positive attitude, optimism, and can motivate you toward emotional growth and progress.

Another good way to focus on the positive in your life is to make up some affirmation cards and place them in places where you will see them often.

These forms of affirmation are words, phrases, or statements written on 3 x 5 index cards and placed where you can see them daily and be reminded of positive aspects about you. Every time you see these affirmation cards they will remind you to affirm yourself about these positive qualities or attributes. State all affirmations in a positive way.

Here are some places to put your affirmation cards:

mirror in bathroom	dashboard of car
mirror on dresser	desk at office
closet door	desk at home
refrigerator door	in your wallet
front door	in your brief case
bedroom door	in books you use at work
or school	
at your telephone	

Try some of these words to put on your affirmation cards:

bright	capable
creative	strong
intelligent	beautiful
smart	giving
quick	peaceful
loving	hopeful
caring	responsible
successful	problem solver
calm	quiet
pretty	handsome
relaxed	enjoyable

Consider some of these phrases as well:

think happy	take it easy
be calm	think wisely

take action	work smart
do it	take the time
do it now	have fun
be a winner	relax and enjoy
take a risk	sit back
dare to be different	step back
seize the blessing	take the lead
get in control	give them space
let go	believe in me
let them be	trust in me
let it be	enjoy good health

Affirmation statements can also be used to remind yourself that you are worthy and that you need to remain positive in all situations.

I can be a winner.
I am the best friend I have.
I have solved problems like this before.
I have the ability to handle this.
I am a capable human being.
I deserve to love and to be loved.
I am a skillful and artistic person.
I can show others a good example.
Letting go is best for them and for me.
They will thank me in the future.
Nothing is worth losing my sanity over.
I am responsible only for my own feelings.
I owe no one explanations for my behavior, which is legally, morally, and ethically correct.
I deserve to have my rights recognized.
I am a deserving human being.
I deserve to enjoy the fruits of my labor.
I deserve to be rewarded for what I do.
I love myself for who I am.
It is OK to be selfish if I don't hurt anyone.
I like the way I handle problems.
I am able to handle any problem I face.

I have the right to feel the way I do.
My children will benefit from my healthy changes.
My children will survive my healthy changes.
My family will benefit from my relaxing more.
I deserve to relax more and take it easy.
There are beautiful things happening in my life
daily.
I experience the excitement of growth daily.
Change is a blessing I am working toward.
Taking risks is the path to growth.
I grow in love daily.
I face each new day as a race to be won.
I am winning in the race of life.
I am a rich treasure ready to be found.
Let others know who I am.
Say hello to a new person today.
Open up to be loved today.
Be responsible. Relax!
Letting go is loving
You will be free of guilt today.
To be loved I must love.
God does not make junk.
There are opportunities in life to be tried.
My possibilities are endless.
Success is to be enjoyed.
Open myself up with one new person today.
Belief in self is a step toward personal growth.
I can handle all changes that come my way.
There is nothing I cannot handle.
Smile and let others in on the secret.

When you make a conscious effort to put these positive affirmations into your daily routine, you will be well on the way toward lifting your self-esteem and realizing your full potential as a meaningful and wonderful person!

There are so many other steps you can to raise your self-esteem and become everything you were meant to be. Let's move on!

SELF-NURTURING

Rebutting your critical inner voice is an important step, but it is not enough. Since our self-esteem is in part due to how others have treated us in the past, the second step to more healthy self-esteem is to begin to treat yourself as a worthwhile person.

Start to challenge past negative experiences or messages by nurturing and caring for yourself in ways that show that you are valuable, competent, deserving and lovable. There are several components to self-nurturing:

First and foremost, practice basic self-care. Get enough sleep, eat in a healthy fashion, get regular exercise, practice good hygiene, and so forth. A healthy mind is dependent on a healthy body. When you take care of the outside, it is natural that taking care of the inside will follow.

You should plan fun and relaxing things for yourself. You could go to a movie, take a nap, get a massage, plant a garden, buy a pet, or learn to meditate-whatever you enjoy. Try new things to help you pamper yourself. This author has delved into self-hypnosis through online, downloadable sessions at selfhypnosis.com. They work wonders for me! You may want to look at it yourself!

Reward yourself for your accomplishments – big and small! You could take the night off to celebrate good grades, spend time with a friend, or compliment yourself for making that hard phone call. It doesn't matter how small the accomplishment might seem, you deserve to celebrate every single little step. Try a little chocolate ice cream, or

allowing yourself to relax and just do nothing. It doesn't matter as long as it's a reward for YOU!

You should always remind yourself of your strengths and achievements. This may seem daunting – especially when you have a low self-image. How do you find those strengths?

One way is to make a list of things you like about yourself. Or keep a 'success' file of awards, certificates and positive letters or citations. Keep mementos of accomplishments you are proud of where you can see them. Focus on anything and everything. No matter how small it may seem, if you succeeded and are proud of it, focus on it and celebrate!

A huge step you can take is to forgive yourself when you don't do all that you hoped to do. Self-nurturing can be surprisingly hard if you are not used to doing it. Don't be critical of yourself-remember that inner voice -when you don't do it just right. Reward yourself for trying in the first place. That's a huge step towards the positive YOU that you want to be!

There will be times when you don't feel you deserve to nurture yourself. This is when you need it the most! "Fake it" until you can "make it." When you treat yourself like you deserve to feel good and be nurtured, slowly you'll come to believe it. You'll be amazed at how you'll feel when you let go of the trash and embrace the jewels.

You may find yourself a bit lost during this process. It is also important to enlist the help of others in this process.

CALLING OUT “THE TROOPS”

Getting help from others is often the most important step a person can take to improve his or her self-esteem,

but it can also be the most difficult. People with low self-esteem often don't ask for help because they feel they don't deserve it.

But since low self-esteem is often caused by how other people treated you in the past, you may need the help of other people in the present to challenge the critical messages that come from negative past experiences.

Ask for support from your friends. Have them tell you what they like about you and what they think you do well. Have someone around just to vent to when you are feeling low. This person is your sounding board. He or she should allow you to express yourself without trying to fix things.

You may also ask for a hug when you need one. Dr. Leo Buscaglia, also known as "The Hug Doctor" advocates hugging as a therapeutic measure in all situations. Sometimes the physical contact can fix anything by making you feel worthy of that hug. It may sound silly, but try it – it really does work!

There are plenty of other people who can help you with your self-esteem. If you are having trouble in school, go to professors or advisors and ask for help in classes. These people are here to help you learn, and they will! Once you start to realize success in your classes, your self-esteem will rise!

If there is something at work that you feel you are lacking in, ask your supervisor for help or advice. Ask for new projects or challenges to help foster your successes. You can also ask your co-workers to help you along by being supportive of each other.

Consider taking classes or trying out new activities to increase your sense of competence. You could take extra classes, join an exercise group, or find community classes in something that interests you such as scrap booking or karate. You can Get Help from Teachers & Other Helpers

If the problem really is too over-whelming for you to deal with on your own, you may want to talk to a therapist or counselor. Sometimes low self-esteem can feel so painful or difficult to overcome that the professional help of a therapist or counselor is needed. Talking to a counselor is a good way to learn more about your self-esteem issues and begin to improve your self-esteem.

Besides the inner voice, you need to begin telling yourself certain things to recognize in yourself.

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

A critical first step is to realize and accept that you are not alone in this. Many, many people suffer from low self-esteem. They range from high-ranking government officials to celebrities to the postman or the lady down the road. They are all in this with you whether they make it publicly known or not.

You need to realize that you are a wonderful, individual and special person - and there is no one quite like you. Your fingerprints and your DNA are totally different from everybody else's - unless you happen to have an identical twin.

And your mind - and how it thinks and operates - is absolutely your own. This means that out of six billion people in the world, you are a one-of-a-kind. So if nature has bothered to make you utterly unique, don't you feel that you should accept that you're important, and that you have as much right as anyone else to be on this planet?

You have other rights too. One of them is the right to make mistakes. Don't forget that 'to err is human' and most of us do much of our learning through getting things wrong before we get them right.

Furthermore, we have the right to respect ourselves - and to be respected: this is very important. And finally - and perhaps most vitally of all - we have the right to say 'yes' or 'no' for ourselves.

Many people with poor self-esteem think that they're not very important and that their views carry no weight. Is this you? If so, try to stop these destructive thoughts; because if you go around believing them, you'll encourage other people to believe them too.

Instead, start thinking of yourself - with your individual DNA, fingerprints and mind - as someone who has rights and opinions and ideas that are just as valid as anyone else's. This will help you to improve your 'self-estimation'.

The key to positive self-esteem is to remember that you have control over your situation: When feeling glum about a character flaw, remind yourself that you can take action to change yourself and shape your future.

This is a good time to start journaling - if you haven't already. Journaling can be an amazingly therapeutic tool in raising not only your self-esteem, but also discovering new and exciting things about yourself that you might not have known.

Begin with a big project. In your journal, list 25 good things about you. This may seem like a daunting task, but we're willing to bet that you can come up with them if you really try. Anytime a negative thought pops into your head, push it out and write down what you were going to do in the first place.

You need to take stock of your positive qualities and your strengths. You have them, just look inside yourself. Can you whip up a mean batch of brownies? That's something! Maybe you're a whiz at surfing the net. Not

everyone is adept at that – write it down! Every little thing counts, so take note and be proud!

The next thing we want you to write in your journal is 10 things you want to improve in yourself. Don't look at these as your shortcomings or weaknesses. They are simply things you need or want to change. Next to each entry, write a way that you can change that aspect of yourself.

For example, if you feel you're lazy, go ahead and write that down, but also write down ways you could be less lazy. Find something that will motivate you - perhaps a reward system. It works in the schools; it could work with you too!

Don't concentrate on this list too much. The idea here is to acknowledge that there are parts of you that you want to work on and then set about doing just that!

Finally, take a moment to dream in your journal. Find something, or several things, which you would like to do. Maybe you want to learn to scuba dive. Write it down and make an action plan. You'll need to find a place that teaches scuba diving, and then enroll in the class!

Maybe you want to know more about Greek mythology. Call a community college and see if they offer a class and then sign up for it. Maybe you could find the class online. Just look and then go for it!

Now that you have a base journal, you need to accentuate the positive aspects of your life. Find a moment at the end of each day and write down at least one good thing that you did that day. Write down something that happened that you're proud of.

Maybe you stood up to a co-worker who's been giving you trouble. Perhaps you befriended that new person in the office. There is nothing too small to write here. Everything counts. We're focusing on the positive things in your life.

When you have them down in black and white (or red or blue – whatever ink color you prefer), they become real and true. That’s what you should focus on – every day!

You will also need to daily give yourself a little pep talk. Don’t base your perception of yourself on what others think of you. This is destructive. No one else knows you better than YOU! Look in the mirror every morning and say something positive.

“Your hair looks great”

“You can do anything you want to do”

“You are a worthy person and people should listen to you”

Etc.

It can be anything at all – as long as it’s something positive about you. Remember that everyone feels this way sometimes. Don’t compare yourself to others. Even the popular girl thinks nobody likes her. You are a unique individual with great qualities that you can share. Stand up and be heard!

Often we make ourselves unhappy because we go over and over mistakes that we have made. But we can feel happier, and improve our self-esteem, if we re-think those things we believe we have done wrong or badly.

When you have a bad day, or something goes wrong in your relationship or at work, write in your journal an account of what went right with that episode, not what went wrong. The results will surprise you - and improve how you see yourself.

Your environment can play a huge role in developing and nurturing healthy self-esteem.

YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Healthy self-esteem originates in the environment found in the: family, school, peer group, work place, and community. There are certain characteristics of your environment that need to be present in order for self-esteem to be fostered and grow.

The main component of a healthy environment is that it needs to be nurturing. It should provide unconditional warmth, love, and caring. It needs to provide the realization that other people are recognized as deserving to be nurtured, reinforced, rewarded, and bonded to.

The environment transmits messages of warmth, loving, and caring by physical touch, meeting the survival needs of food, clothing and shelter, and providing a sense of stability and order in life.

A healthy environment should provide acceptance. It will recognize that other people see each other as worthy individuals who have a unique set of personality characteristics, skills, abilities, and competencies making them special.

Acceptance helps individuals recognize that differences among and between people are OK, and this encourages the development of a sense of personal mastery and autonomy. Acceptance enables people to develop relationships with others, yet maintain healthy boundaries of individuality within themselves.

There should be good communication, everyone should be heard and responded to in a healthy way so that healthy problem solving is possible. Appropriate giving and receiving of feedback is encouraged and rewarded. Communicating at a "feelings" level is a mode of operation for these people, allowing them to be in touch with their emotions in a productive manner.

For the environment to support the development of healthy self-esteem it must contain recognition and acceptance of people for who they are. That recognition and acceptance should not be based on the condition that they must first conform to a prescribed standard of behavior or conduct. This is unhealthy. Unconditional recognition and acceptance given in the form of support allows individuals to reach their ultimate potential.

There should be clearly defined and enforced limits known to individuals with no hidden tricks or manipulation. Limits set the structure for the lives of individuals, allowing clear benchmarks of appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Limits enable individuals to recognize their responsibilities and to chart their course of behavior in a rational way.

Respect and latitude for individual action within the defined limits of the environment should be present as well. This encourages individuals to use their creativity, ingenuity, and imagination to be productive within the established structure. Restrictions that suppress individuality can lead to a narrow focus, with people becoming stunted and handicapped in the use of their personal skills, abilities, and resources.

There should also be established freedom within the structure. This enables individuals to develop a sense of personal autonomy. If they are too tied down and inhibited they could become resentful and eventually rebellious against the prescribed structures in their environment.

Being given the freedom of self-expression within the established rules and norms allows individuals to explore their potential to its fullest; thus there is a greater possibility of becoming successful, healthy achievers.

Finally, there should be bonding, which is the physical/emotional phenomenon between individuals and the others in their environment. This is necessary for the development of healthy self-esteem.

Bonding is forming a mutual emotional attachment between an individual and a "significant other" (parent, child, friend, lover, etc.). This involves the significant other giving unconditional love and support as well as developing an emotional link between each other.

Bonding provides a sense of emotional security and stability. It allows you to be free to explore all that is wonderful about you and the people around you without fear of reproach or ridicule. This will develop a healthy self-image and sense of identity. Bonding also will give all involved a sense of belonging and mattering in the "big picture"

Bonding can be achieved in many ways. You allow the other person to enter a strange environment while providing support and "cheerleading" the entire way. It encourages the other person to be self-confident and offers up help with individual problems while being encouraging that any problem can be overcome.

If you want to bond effectively with those around you, there are some things you can do.

- Talk face to face with people
- Use physical touch when interacting
- Work at meeting the "match" of the person by encouraging him to do things for which he is ready and capable.
- Speak in a loving, caring manner
- Show respect
- Listen carefully; offer empathy and understanding
- Be honest when describing or dealing with problems
- Be supportive as they face the harsh realities of life and become fearful, scared, or concerned about the future

- Let the person grow to be his own person by encouraging the development of independent and autonomous thinking
- Assist in becoming a good problem solver by encouraging open exploration and discussion of options and alternatives when facing problems at home, school, work, or in the community.

If you feel you aren't bonding with the people around you, show them this list. Ask them to help you on your journey towards healthy self-esteem. Our guess is they'll be happy to help!

In general, you need to make the environment conducive to the positive aspects of you and your inner voice. Surround yourself with people who are loving, caring, and supportive. Stay away from those people who are fountains of negativity. They'll only bring you down.

Look at your surroundings. At work, do you have a work space that fosters positive emotions? Place pictures of your loved ones around you. Add a pretty flowering plant. Post motivational sayings where you can always see them.

You should be happy in your own home and happy to arrive there at the end of the day. Personalize your house, hang pictures you love, drawings from kids, motivational quotes, posters, arts, crafts. Use anything that makes you feel good. So what if you don't have perfect décor. Make yourself happy and serene. Surround yourself with what you think of as beauty.

If you are in a negative environment, the logical answer is to change it. But what if you can't? Not everyone can just up and quit a job that is an unhealthy environment. The thing is that it isn't always easy to change that which is negative.

There are, however, things you can do to minimize the negativity. There are certain people and situations that will threaten your self-esteem. You need to stay away from these in order to maintain the positive thinking you are trying hard to cultivate.

- At work: Beware of “dog eat dog” theory where everyone else is fighting just to get ahead. This is where non-appreciative people usually thrive. No one will be grateful for your contributions even if you miss lunch and dinner, and stay up late. Most of the time you work too much without getting help from people concerned. Stay out of this; it will ruin your self esteem. Competition is at stake anywhere. Be healthy enough to compete, but in a healthy competition that is.
- With people: Bulldozers, brown nosers, gossipmongers, whiners, backstabbers, snipers, people walking wounded, controllers, naggers, complainers, exploders, patronizers, sluffers... all these kinds of people will pose bad vibes for your self esteem, as well as to your self improvement scheme.
- Change: Changes challenge our paradigms. It tests our flexibility, adaptability and alters the way we think. Changes will make life difficult for awhile, it may cause stress but it will help us find ways to improve our selves. Change will be there forever, we must be susceptible to it. Focus on the positive parts of the change. It will take some getting used to, but remember the old adage “Change is good.”
- Past Experiences: It’s okay to cry and say “ouch!” when we experience pain. But don’t let pain transform itself into fear. It might grab you by the tail and swing you around. Treat each failure and mistake as a lesson. Acknowledge it, get past it, and don’t dwell on it. Letting go of the past is so important in a healthy

lifestyle. We can't change what has happened to us in the past. It's important to focus on the future.

- **The World:** There are so many awful things that happen in this world. It can bring most people down. Don't wrap yourself up with all the negativities of the world. In building self esteem, we must learn how to make the best out of worst situations.
- **Genetics:** The way you are and your behavioral traits is said to be a mixed end product of your inherited traits (genetics), your upbringing (psychic), and your environmental surroundings such as your spouse, the company, the economy or your circle of friends. You have your own identity. If your father is a failure, it doesn't mean you have to be a failure too. Learn from other people's experience, so you'll never have to encounter the same mistakes.

Before we move on to our "quick start" guide to elevating your self-esteem, we want to include what we feel is an extremely important section: how to improve and foster healthy self-esteem in children

KIDS AND SELF-ESTEEM

None of us were born with low self-worth or low self-esteem. It developed through the years by what we were told and how we were made to feel by the people in our lives. Whether you have children or not, you can make a difference in a child's view of themselves and stop the cycle of low self-esteem problems.

The obvious first step toward fostering a good self-image in children is to provide them with unconditional love and caring. Don't criticize or berate them. Always focus on the positives and provide encouragement in everything they do.

More specifically, however, there are many, many other things you can do. First, you should model good self-esteem. Express through your actions and words that you respect yourself. Children are wonderful at imitating what they see and hear. Be a good role model.

Create positive routines. Young children need routines to help them to feel secure and competent. Try to set a good schedule for bedtime, rest/naps, meals, etc. Try to keep exceptions to the routine to a minimum and explain any necessary changes if/when they occur.

Allow many opportunities for children to contribute to the family. Give the child a job/chore that only he/she does for the family. Even a small job can have a positive lasting impact on a child's self esteem.

Talk about the world in positive terms. Even though there is negativity in the world, don't dwell on it with a child. Be sure to point out the many positive things in the world to children.

Give them the gift of your time. Remember quality is more important than quantity. Even if you spend just 30 minutes with a child one on one -- playing games, taking walks, having long bedtime chats, or just snuggling in front of the TV, spending time with a child shows them that you value their company.

Give them choices. By giving a child choices between a reasonable set of options that are already predetermined, you will make them feel empowered. But be cautious here.

Too much control sends the message that your children can't adequately handle their lives. Too little control sends the message you don't care, so you must strike a balance between these two extremes and give them more freedom as they grow older.

Acknowledge and listen to their thoughts and emotions since they are so much a part of who they are.

Listening to your offspring with empathy says you care about what they think and feel. Plus it will create an atmosphere in which they will be more willing to listen to you.

You don't always have to agree with your kids when you listen to them, nor let them do whatever they want. You can have a different view on a situation and still understand their perspective. And you may still have to discipline them even if you better understand why they misbehaved.

You should structure situations so your children experience more success than failure. Don't expect standards of performance which they cannot achieve. You want them to grow up with far more praise than criticism, more accomplishments than failures.

Let your children know they are lovable and capable. Again, this is a self-evident principle. You should give your children daily expressions of affection - hugs, kisses, words of love, praise and appreciation. Think of them as cups of love which you want to fill with as much caring as you can.

Provide security for them. Children need to feel secure. Few feel secure when there are conflicts occurring around them. Few can relax inwardly when others around them are shouting, accusing, criticizing and hating each other. To a small child, tension between parents, or between parents and the child or other children, constitute a deep chasm of insecurity. Plus, they may end up blaming themselves for the conflicts around them.

Avoid arguing around them as much as possible. If they do see conflict, make sure they also see resolution of the conflict. Not everything in life is peaches and cream and problems do arise. People will argue - it's a fact of life. The important part here is that the child sees a peaceful resolution in the end. This will teach them problem solving skills and help them realize that even though there is conflict

in the world, there is also a way to resolve it in ways that everyone benefits from.

Our children need to know that we accept and love them regardless of what they may do, but also that certain forms of behavior are not acceptable to us. We should, however, investigate for ourselves why this behavior is not acceptable.

Is it because it will be potentially harmful to the child, to someone else, or to us? Or is it simply because we are programmed that it should not be done? Or does the behavior conflict with our expectations based on our personal needs and dreams for the child? Or are we afraid of what the others will think about our child and subsequently about us?

We must be very clear about why we are rejecting a certain behavior. Our rejection can come out of a place of real love and concern for the child, if, in fact, we are not simply protecting our own interests. As long as a certain behavior does no real harm to anyone, it is best to allow the child to pursue it. Something within them, some need is guiding them to explore that kind of activity. They have something to learn through doing that.

This does not mean that there are not moments where control or even natural or logical consequences may be necessary. But we need to be sure that the reasons are valid and have to do with real issues of safety or morality and not because we are disappointed with their grades or selection of hobbies, interests or friends.

In order to love our children unconditionally, we will need to start loving ourselves unconditionally. We will have to let go of all the prerequisites we have put on our own self-love. We will need to love ourselves even though we are not perfect, even though we make mistakes, even when others do not love and accept us. The more we free our self-

love from the various prerequisites, the more our love for our children and others will become unconditional.

Finally, we must provide positive reinforcement for our children. Everyone likes a pat on the back, recognition, strokes, praise or affirmation of his or her ability, goodness and worthiness. Our children have not yet formed images of themselves and need these positive inputs even more than adults. Children are not sure if they are able or not. They are small in such a large world. They are learning and thus making many mistakes as they try to learn how to do things correctly.

In our attempt to help our children we often tend to point out their mistakes more frequently than their successes. The mistakes are what are more obvious and thus we feel the need to point them out. The successes are taken for granted. We over-emphasize what our children do wrong. This undermines their sense of ability, and they start to doubt whether they can really succeed.

Thus they become preoccupied, worrying about whether they will be able to do it, and whether they will be criticized. Thus little energy is left for focusing on what they are actually doing so that they can do it correctly and succeed. Then, if our children's performance suffers, we become even more critical. This creates a vicious circle in which our children's sense of ability, success and worthiness is completely undermined.

So, the easy thing to say is just "Don't do this". If you find yourself overly criticizing a child or yelling berating comments at them, take a moment, count to 10 and think of a healthier way to address the situation. They will be better for it – and so will you!

What about that huge area that is especially difficult to deal with? It's bound to happen, but don't let it swallow

you! Criticism can be given and accepted graciously without affecting your self-esteem.

COPING WITH CRITICISM

One of the areas that people with low self-esteem have greatest difficulty with is criticism - giving as well as receiving it. Both can be extraordinarily difficult. In fact some individuals are absolutely demolished by criticism, but it's something we cannot avoid.

Now, criticism is often unfair - and when it is we need to counter it by putting our own case succinctly and calmly. But some criticism is justified - and when we're sensible we can learn from it.

Often when we're criticized, we're so hurt that we start excusing ourselves and rebutting what's being said without really listening to it.

A mature, self-possessed person listens to criticism without interrupting. If there are aspects to the criticism that are valid, just begins by agreeing with those points. If you're unsure what's being said, ask for clarification. If indeed you are wrong, say so and apologize. But if you disagree with the criticism, smile and says: 'I'm afraid I don't agree with you.'

Now, it takes quite a lot of practice to feel and act this cool. So let's go through it again. When someone criticizes you:

- listen - don't interrupt or start excusing yourself
- agree - where possible
- ask for clarification

- when you're wrong, admit it and apologize
- if criticism is wrong or unfair say: 'I'm afraid that I don't agree with you'

Now, let's look at giving criticism, because people with poor-self esteem often find it harder to dish out criticism than receive it. In fact many adults actually avoid promotion because they can't face the prospect of being in authority and having to criticize others.

So, how can you learn to criticize when you have to?

First of all, keep calm. Second, try to make your criticism at an appropriate time, rather than waiting till you're so fed up that you're furiously angry - when you'll be bound to make a mess of it.

Take some deep breaths when you know you've got to criticize someone. Then try a technique called the 'criticism sandwich'. This means that you say something nice to the person you're criticizing, then you insert the criticism, then you end with something else that nice or positive or flatter.

You might notice that people, who are good and fair when they criticize, tend to use the word 'I' rather than the word 'you'. This is because the word 'I' shows you're in control and that you've thought about what you're saying.

All too frequently when we're out of control we don't say anything initially, which is when we should address the problem. Instead we bottle it up till we explode. Then we use the words 'you', 'you're' and 'your' all the time. We say: 'You're lazy.' Or 'You make me sick.'

These kinds of phrases sound very angry and accusatory. They also show that we're not in control. And after uttering them we generally feel worse about ourselves

and our self-esteem plummets even more.

So just to recap, when criticizing:

- use the word 'I', not the word 'you'
- keep calm and do some deep breathing
- use the 'criticism sandwich' technique
- always try to criticize a person's behavior rather than the person

These tips are just as handy when it comes to standing up for yourself in other situations. And they're very useful when you want to be able to say 'no' without feeling guilty. Just keep calm and use the word 'I'.

Say: 'I won't be coming to that party with you.' Or: Or; 'I can't work late tonight, I'm sorry. But if necessary I'll happily stay tomorrow.' And never, ever apologize for saying no. It's your right – exercise it.

People with poor self-esteem are always getting talked into doing things that they don't want to do. Does this sound like you? If so, it must stop if you want to value yourself more. So learning how to stay calm and just say 'no' is very important.

Now that we've looked at different ways you can combat low self-esteem, our next section is the quick start guide. It's packed with tips on how to start raising your self-esteem – right now!

QUICK START GUIDE

We promised that you would be able to start raising your self-esteem in just one weekend. Here are several tips on how to start.

1. Try to stop thinking negative thoughts about yourself. If you're used to focusing on your shortcomings, start thinking about positive aspects of yourself that outweigh them. When you catch yourself being too critical, counter it by saying something positive about yourself. Each day, write down three things about yourself that make you happy.
2. Aim for accomplishments rather than perfection. Some people become paralyzed by perfection. Instead of holding yourself back with thoughts like, "I won't audition for the play until I lose 10 pounds," think about what you're good at and what you enjoy, and go for it.
3. View mistakes as learning opportunities. Accept that you will make mistakes because everyone does. Mistakes are part of learning. Remind yourself that a person's talents are constantly developing, and everyone excels at different things — it's what makes people interesting.
4. Try new things. Try experimenting with different activities that will help you get in touch with your talents. Then take pride in new skills you develop.
5. Recognize what you can change and what you can't. If you realize that you're unhappy with something about yourself that you can change, and then start today. If

- it's something you can't change (like your height), then start to work toward loving yourself the way you are.
6. Set goals. Think about what you'd like to accomplish, and then make a plan for how to do it. Stick with your plan and keep track of your progress.
 7. Exercise! You'll relieve stress, and be healthier and happier.
 8. Have fun. Ever found yourself thinking stuff like "I'd have more friends if I were thinner"? Enjoy spending time with the people you care about and doing the things you love. Relax and have a good time — and avoid putting your life on hold.
 9. Use the 10 minute technique. People with poor self-esteem often fail to give themselves enough time and space. So find 10 minutes every day to be alone and to just sit and do nothing. Some people find it helpful to close their eyes and imagine a country scene or the sight and sound of waves gently lapping against the seashore. During these 10 minutes, allow yourself to feel peaceful and happy. Enjoy this time. It is yours - and yours alone. And you deserve it. Finding 10 minutes for you is a caring thing to do and you will feel better for doing it.
 10. Act confidently. People will sense your self-confidence and respond positively to you, strengthening your image and self-image all at once.
 11. Practice breathing easily, freely and deeply and then think of it. It implicitly says you should believe in

yourself and do it without any help from others, this in turn enhances your self-esteem.

12. Think back to when you did something new for the first time. Learning something new is often accompanied by feelings of nervousness, lack of self belief and high stress levels, all of which are necessary parts of the learning process. The next time you feel under-confident, remembering this will remind you that it's perfectly normal - you're just learning!
13. Do something you're good at. How about swimming, running, dancing, cooking, gardening, climbing, painting, writing... If possible, it should be something that holds your attention and requires enough focus to get you into that state of 'flow' where you forget about everything else. You will feel more competent, accomplished and capable afterwards, great antidotes to low self esteem! And while you're at it, seriously consider doing something like this at least once a week. People who experience 'flow' regularly seem to be happier and healthier.
14. Stop thinking about yourself. This may sound strange, but low self esteem is often accompanied by too much focus on the self. Doing something that absorbs you and holds your attention can quickly make you feel better.
15. Remember everything you have achieved. This is where your journal can come in handy. This can be difficult at first, but after a while, you'll develop a handy mental and written list of self-esteem boosting memories that you can refer to often. And if you're thinking "But I've never achieved anything", I'm not talking about climbing Everest here. They can be

- things like passing your driving test (despite being nervous), passing exams (despite doubting that you would), playing team sport, getting fit (even if you let it slip later), saving money for something, trying to help someone (even if it didn't work) and so on.
16. Choose something that brings about a good thought and focus on it when you are feeling blue. Country singer Clint Black wrote a song that included the lyric "Ain't it funny how a melody can bring back a memory." It doesn't have to be a song, though, it could be the smell of a certain perfume that reminds you of a special person or even a piece of clothing that you were wearing during an especially wonderful time. Use this stimulus and focus on it. Let those good feelings wash over you and chase away those "I'm no good" blues.
 17. Clear out the junk: This means anything hurtful and unconstructive that you've been told by someone you care or cared about (or even some you didn't) is to be taken with a grain of salt. It is one thing to be given constructive criticism in life, but quite another when people are downright mean about it. Remember it's the offending party's issue. NOT yours.
 18. List first why you believe the negativity you tell yourself (i.e., I'm too old. I'm too fat. Nobody loves me. I'm never good enough. etc.); laugh at that piece of paper you just wrote on; THEN tear it up and move on to the next strategy.
 19. Count your blessings, which can include things people actually take for granted, such as food and shelter, access to a computer, etc.

20. Make a list of what you love to do, starting from childhood until now and try to find time to do it at least once a week, even if it's just for a few minutes.
21. List at least three things that you would love to have the courage to do. Then formulate a plan to actually do them. You may not be able to at first, but know that if there are other people out there who can and do, you can too.
22. Realize once and for all that your self-worth and self-esteem is defined by you and only you. You cannot rely on someone else for your happiness. Another person's view of you is immaterial. Where happiness and self-esteem comes from is inside of you. Once you embrace that fully, the transformation will begin!
23. Choose to be happy. Happiness is a state of mind. The Dalai Lama says that the very purpose of life is to seek happiness. He believes that if you train the mind to be happy, you will be. Likewise, you can train yourself for higher self-esteem.
24. Be passionate about something. This can be anything. Be passionate about yourself. Be passionate about your hobbies. Be passionate about raising your self-esteem. Passion takes hold of you and feels like "fire in the belly." It is a source of power that enables you to get fired about life and make a difference. The more passion and zest you feel the more alive and brightly lit you are.
25. Reward your successes. Set yourself up for success by breaking big goals into daily action steps and take time to acknowledge and celebrate the small

successes. This will feed your need for recognition and provides the extra push to keep you moving forward. Rewards could be as simple as that delectable piece of turtle cheesecake you saw in the bakery or as huge as a dream vacation. Either way, you deserve to celebrate your successes. When you do, you'll be rewarded in many more ways than just materially!

CONCLUSION

Your self-esteem is like a star at night that shines brightest when it is the darkest. It is your inner light that burns brightly and freely no matter what is happening around you. A Zen saying reminds us: "What was your original face before you were born?"

Self-esteem is perfectly intact when we are born, in fact, it is inherent to us; however, it often diminishes over the course of our childhood. We lose a little of it whenever we fail, make mistakes, misbehave, feel guilty, refuse to forgive, neglect ourselves, and/or do things we are ashamed of. As an adult, we sometimes feel as if our "self" is in pieces--- that we are somehow not whole and complete.

This is not true. We are whole and complete even with our missing pieces and broken parts. We just need to decide to gather up ourselves up and become whole again. I am willing to bet that when you look back over your life, the first thing that comes to mind are the regrets, the sad times in your past.

Do you see the pieces of yourself lying along the path of your life? The ones where you didn't feel good enough, or where you were criticized or blamed by someone else? But have you ever stopped to look at the memories of when you won the prize, felt really great, on top of the world----those

moments that prove what a wonderfully amazing human being you are?

It is your birthright to love and honor yourself. The good news is that you can reclaim that which is yours. That is your self-esteem.

There is absolutely no reason at all why people should "suffer" from low self esteem. Your self esteem is something over which you have absolute and immediate control. Think of self esteem as a muscle; it never stays the same for any period of time.

Like any muscle it either weakens or gets stronger. Self esteem improvement is like exercising a muscle. It relies on small incremental improvement on a daily basis. You won't run out to the gym and have perfect muscles for life in an hour. Consistent self esteem improvement is the only way to lasting success and an increase in the quality of your life everyday you live it.

Your self-esteem contributes to your vitality, energy level, persistence, and personal magnetism. Self-esteem is about what is on the inside, a belief in yourself and your abilities. Positive esteem focuses on acceptance of self and others. It remains constant despite the storm. This fosters cooperation and wholeness.

Building self esteem will eventually lead to self improvement if we start to become responsible for who we are, what we have and what we do. It's like a flame that should gradually spread like a brush fire from inside and out. When we develop self esteem, we take control of our mission, values and discipline. Self esteem brings about self improvement, true assessment, and determination.

Be positive. Be contented and happy. Be appreciative. Never miss an opportunity to compliment. A positive way of living will help you build self esteem, your starter guide to self improvement.

It is never too late to build your self-esteem. You can start RIGHT NOW! Self-esteem has a big impact on how we enjoy life. Respect others, yourself, and life in general. Practice the techniques we have given you every single day. Watch them work wonders in your life.

Become the person you can be and treat yourself well. You deserve it!

The following websites were referenced in researching this book:

www.utexas.edu
www.netdoctor.co.uk
www.ehow.com
www.coping.org
www.self-confidence.co.uk