

SELF-ESTEEM

Low self-esteem seems to exist in epidemic proportions throughout our society. If you have any negative perceptions of yourself, it has an impact on every aspect of your life. It doesn't matter where you got them – messages from peers, siblings, friends, school, church, the media, parents or other adults (when you were a child) – raising your self-esteem will improve the quality of your life. In your action planning process, you may want to work on raising your self-esteem. Try some of the responses listed here. You will think of other ways to raise your self-esteem as you work on developing your plans.

Surround yourself with people who are positive, affirming and loving.

Sometimes you may forget that you have control over who you spend time with. Think about how the people in your life make you feel about yourself. If you don't feel good when you are around them, spend less time with them. Spend more time with people who do make you feel good. Avoid people who abuse you in any way.

Wear something that makes you feel good.

Everybody has certain things that they enjoy wearing, clothes or jewelry that they enjoy wearing. These are the things to wear when you are having a hard time, when your indications are more severe, when you have to keep a dreaded appointment or when you have to have an uncomfortable treatment or procedure. If you don't have a supply of clothes that make you feel good or that fit well, buy yourself some. If your financial resources are limited, check out thrift stores. They often have very good buys. If you can't go shopping yourself, ask a trusted friend to do this for you with the understanding that you can return those clothes that you don't like or that don't fit.

Look through old pictures, scrapbooks and photo albums.

Many of us neglect to look at reminders of our past that make us feel good. An hour or two involved in this pleasurable activity could help you feel a lot better.

Make a collage of your life.

Pretend you are a small child. Get a supply of old colorful magazines, some scissors, glue, magic markers, glitter, a big piece of heavy paper and anything else that you can think of that would enhance your enjoyment of this project. Then create a colorful celebration of you, your life, an event, a series of events or a

major accomplishment. Cut, paste and draw until you have a creation you feel good about.

Make a list of your accomplishments.

Get a big sheet of paper and a pen you feel comfortable with. Set the timer for twenty minutes (or as long as you'd like). Write your accomplishments. You could never have a paper long enough or enough time to write them all. This list can include things like:

- learning to talk
- learning to walk
- learning to read
- climbing a tree
- making a good friend
- taking care of a younger sibling
- getting a C in algebra (for some people sitting through the course was an accomplishment)
- keeping a houseplant alive for a year
- reading a book
- doing the dishes
- making the bed
- getting a job
- raising children
- taking care of yourself

Spend ten minutes writing down everything good you can think of about yourself.

Begin with a piece of paper you like and a pen that feels good to you. Set a timer for 10 minutes, if you have one. If not, just keep track of the time. Write down all the good things you can think of about yourself. If you can't think of different things, write the same things over and over again. Don't worry about spelling or grammar. When you are finished, reread it. Then put it in a safe place. Read it again before you go to bed at night, after you get up in the morning, and any time you have free time during the day. Read it to yourself or read it aloud. Read it to someone who loves you. Have them read it back to you.

Do something that makes you laugh.

What makes you laugh? Are there certain comics, jokes, movies, DVDs, or people? The old television show "Candid Camera" helped Norman Cousins laugh his way out of a terrible illness. Use your ingenuity to put things that make you laugh within easy reach when you need them – things like copies of television shows, comic books, and DVDs.

Pretend you are your own best friend.

When I make decisions about taking care of myself, sometimes my priorities may not be in my best interest. I find it helpful to decide what to do based on what I presume my best friend would tell me to do.

Get some little things done.

It always helps you feel better about yourself if you accomplish something, even if it is a very small thing. Think of some easy things to do that don't take much time. Then do them. Some ideas include:

- clean out one drawer
- put five pictures in a photo album
- dust a book case
- weed one small section of your garden
- read a page in a favorite book
- make the bed
- do a load of laundry
- cook something healthy for yourself
- pay one bill
- hang a picture

Do something special for someone else.

Have you ever noticed the good feeling that washes over you when you do something nice for someone else? If so, take advantage of that good feeling that comes from helping someone else to keep yourself feeling well. This could include:

- sending someone special a greeting card
- calling a friend to wish them well
- visiting someone at a nursing home or hospital or doing an errand for someone who can't get out
- playing ball with a child
- reading stories to a group of children
- pushing a child on the swing at a park
- taking someone who is having a hard time to the movies
- baking a casserole or a loaf of bread for a family member
- raking your neighbor's leaves

Repeating positive affirmations.

Repeat the following affirmations over and over to yourself:

- I am a wonderful and very special person.
- I have many unique qualities.
- I deserve the best that life has to offer.

Then create your own affirmations:
