



Self Worth - Introduction

Self-Worth Introduction

Self Worth is a term that is used to define a person's overall emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgement of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self.

Self Worth encompasses beliefs such as 'I am competent', 'I am worthy' and emotions like triumph, despair, pride and shame. People with healthy Self Worth like themselves and value their achievements.

While everyone lacks confidence on occasion, people with low Self Worth feel unhappy or unsatisfied with themselves most of the time.

In essence, how you see your Self Worth is your opinion of yourself.

Characteristics of low self-esteem

Common characteristics of people with low Self Worth include high levels of anxiety, problems with social interaction and a preoccupation with others perceived opinions. Sometimes, this can lead to high-risk behaviours such as substance abuse or eating disorders.

Low Self Worth and quality of life

Low Self Worth can reduce the quality of a person's life in many different ways.

People with low Self Worth can often put themselves down and express an opinion that they are not good enough. They can hesitate to take on new endeavours due to fear of failure, and they can experience difficulty expressing their thoughts or beliefs with confidence.

Many people with persistent Self Worth problems will dismiss or minimise any positive feedback they receive and they often attribute their successes mainly to luck, even when there is evidence to the contrary.

The impact of low Self Worth on relationships can also be especially troubling. It is not uncommon for people with low Self Worth to have difficulty getting along with co-workers, or to experience conflict with spouses or significant others.

Low Self Worth can create an excessive mental preoccupation with the negative side of a situation. This can lead a person to have diminished expectations for their general quality of life.



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Causes of low Self Worth

The causes of low Self Worth are frequently traced back to abusive or dysfunctional early years, with the resulting emotional conditions persisting well into adulthood.

Ongoing stressful life events such as a relationship breakdown or financial trouble, poor treatment from a partner, parent or carer, or being in an abusive relationship can also have an effect on one's self-esteem.

Medical problems such as chronic pain, serious illness or physical disability, and mental illnesses such as an anxiety disorder or depression can also negatively influence one's self-esteem.

Research shows that despite a stressful early life, you can still build a robust sense of Self Worth by challenging yourself and observing your accomplishments with the goal to eventually transcend early deficits. Beethoven, for example, had an abusive and alcoholic father, yet he went on to rise above his early trauma and deafness to create musical masterpieces.

Self Worth building

Self Worth is strongly related to how you view and react to the things that happen in your life.

1. Treat yourself as you would your best friend. Be supportive, kind and understanding. Don't be hard on yourself when you make a mistake. Every time you criticise yourself, stop, and look for objective evidence that the criticism is true. (If you feel you can't be objective, ask a trusted friend for their opinion.) You'll realise that most of your negative self-talk is unfounded.
2. Don't compare yourself to others. Recognise that everyone is different. Every human life has value in its own right. Make an effort to accept yourself — warts and all.
3. Acknowledge the positive and appreciate your special qualities. Remind yourself of your good points every day.
4. Write a list of your good points and refer to it often. (If you feel you can't think of anything good about yourself, ask a trusted friend to help you write the list.)
5. Concentrate on living in the 'here and now' rather than reviving old hurts and disappointments.
6. Exercise is a good boost to the brain for all kinds of things, but especially in dealing with depression and helping you to feel good. Health targets need to be step-by-step such as starting with a walk



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around the block once a day, enrolling at a local gym class or going for a swim. In fact, exercise has been shown to be as effective as anti-depressant medication, psychotherapy, and/or both combined in the alleviation of mild and moderate depression.

7. Be assertive and communicate your needs, wants, feelings, beliefs and opinions. Talk to others in a direct and honest manner.

It takes effort and vigilance to replace unhelpful thoughts and behaviours with healthier alternatives. Give yourself time to establish the new habits. Keep a diary or journal to chart your progress.

Seek out support to build self-esteem

Further ways to build Self Worth include talking to a trusted friend or loved one about your Self Worth issues, reading books on self-development, taking a course in personal development and discussing your issues with a trained therapist.

Seek help for underlying Self Worth problems

Chronic problems can be demoralising. Seek professional advice for problems such as a relationship breakdown, anxiety disorder or financial worries.

Where to get help

Always remember you are not alone. Your doctor or registered health professionals are there to help you.

Our online resource page also has a full list of organisations where you can get further information. <http://mindshift.org.au/suggested-links/>.

Things to remember

How you see your Self Worth is your opinion of yourself. Everyone lacks confidence occasionally, but people with low Self Worth are unhappy or unsatisfied with themselves most of the time.

With the right tools and support you can turn low Self Worth into a positive self-image of yourself.



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In summary

The MindShift Foundation Clinical Psychologist [Dr Lars Madsen](#) confirms that low Self Worth can have an impact on the quality of your life and well-being. People with low Self Worth often feel unhappy with themselves, and as a consequence may suffer higher levels of anxiety, inadequacy in social situations, and dysfunctional bonds with illicit substances and/or food.

Low Self Worth can also result in difficult relationships, higher levels of conflict amongst spouses or co-workers, and consequently, a diminished quality of life. While the causes can be linked back to childhood, ongoing adult situations such as medical and financial issues can also damage self-esteem. Taking the time to build Self Worth can lead to transcending the problem. Confiding in loved ones, taking more exercise and living life in the now can help focus a person's approach to strengthening their self-esteem.

Updates and Further information

For the latest updates and further information please visit www.mindshift.org.au

Our Mission

It is our mission to ensure that every person has access to the resources available to build healthy self-esteem, to have a positive sense of self and to find meaning in life.

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