



## Self Worth - Depression

### Self Worth- Depression

Low Self Worth can cause the development of serious mental health conditions such as depression.

Depression is a very common problem which affects most people at some time in their lives. Studies have shown that there is normally more than one reason for depression, and they are different for every person. No one has a complete answer as to why some people become depressed and others don't.

Some behaviours that are symptomatic of depression include low self-esteem, a lack of confidence, an inability to control emotions, a lack of motivation, general and constant lethargy, a lessening capacity to experience pleasure, lower tolerance of pain, slow concentration and memory, and changes to sleep and appetite. If you believe you have a problem with depression, get help from your GP and other health professionals as soon as possible.

When clinicians diagnose a depressive disorder they often find that low Self Worth is an underlying symptom. Certainly, if you dislike yourself you're likely to be depressed. Conversely, if you're depressed, you'll more likely feel bad about who you are as a person. Low Self Worth involves thinking about yourself in a consistently negative way. For example; you may think you're useless, that you're not quite good enough and you compare yourself with others frequently. You may think you are inadequate and that other people are better than you.

People with low Self Worth often spend time and energy trying to cover up these feelings, or overcompensate by trying to do things perfectly so that other people won't find out how 'useless' they are. They may also get upset when things don't go perfectly and blame themselves. People with low Self Worth can also internalise their anguish at their lack of perfection.

### Characteristics of low Self Worth and depression

The lower your self-esteem, the more likely it is that you will see events in your life as reinforcing your negative sense of self. For instance, someone may cancel a date with you (for a logical reason such as a relative has been hurt or their car broke down), and you conclude they did so because they don't want to be with you. Your low Self Worth causes you to twist your interpretation of this event in such a way as to confirm your already unfavourable sense of self. A non-depressive interpretation of this event would take into account the many possible reasons that people cancel dates with other people (i.e. something unexpected came up). A non-depressed person would accept the cancellation and go ahead to make another date. A depressed person, in contrast, would figure that the relationship is over and not even try to reschedule. It's possible they may choose to even refuse to talk to that individual again.



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People with low Self Worth often try to verify their negative concept of self. They think about their inadequacies, focus on the negative feedback they receive from others, and as a result, become more entrenched in their depressive pattern of thinking. Their negativity can lead them to be perceived more negatively by others, which in turn leads them to feel hurt and rejected by the feedback they receive. This dejected state can lead to symptoms of depression. Left untreated, this can lead to a lower quality of life.

### The Cognitive Approach

The Cognitive or Thinking Approach offers the most empirically supported method of intervening and involves three basic steps:

1. Learning how to identify problematic habits.
2. Labelling them for what they are in reality.
3. Substituting a more rational or realistic response for each unhelpful thought.

These techniques work on increasing Self Worth in several ways. First, they interrupt the links between thinking, feeling, and acting in negative ways that create and maintain low self-esteem, thereby creating the possibility for something new to happen. Second, being able to demonstrate some control over behaviour allows a person to feel competent which is conducive to healthier self-esteem. Third, with practice, new habits of perceiving, thinking, experiencing and acting also set up a more helpful cycle, and thereby enable a person to feel a greater sense of self-esteem.

Research shows that a person with low Self Worth has an increased risk of developing depression. This is a very important discovery because it demonstrates that raising low Self Worth can not only make us feel better, but possibly avert the onset of depression.

### 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

Self Worth goes back to how you view and think about yourself. Low Self Worth involves having a generally negative overall opinion of yourself and can contribute to the development and the



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maintenance of depression over time. It is possible to learn to change your thinking using the Cognitive Approach and thereby improve your self-esteem. Doing so can help you feel better day-to-day and enable you to better deal with setbacks and difficult times. Just remember to live one day at a time.

### In summary

According to The MindShift Foundation Clinical Psychologist Dr Lars Madsen, low Self Worth is a key factor in both the development and long-term maintenance of depression. Self worth problems take a long time to develop and they usually come from deeply ingrained habits of perception, experience, and behaviour, all of which are well cemented by the time we reach adulthood. These habits shape our world in ways that are both subtle and complex, meaning that change requires considerable unlearning as well as new learning, both of which take time. The best way to protect your positivity and keep depression at bay is to find ways to boost your self-esteem.

### Updates and Further information

For the latest updates and further information please visit [www.mindshift.org.au](http://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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