



## Self-Worth – Summary

### Self-worth

Self-worth is a term that is used to define a person's overall emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. Self-worth encompasses beliefs such as 'I am lovable', '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, regardless of how they evaluate their abilities. They know that they are loveable, valuable and necessary.

While everyone can have moments where they don't like themselves, those with low self-worth feel unhappy or unsatisfied with themselves most of the time. They may believe that they don't matter, that no one cares about them, and that they're not good enough for anything or anyone.

### Self-worth or self-esteem?

Reframing conversations about self-esteem into conversations about self-worth look to combine the effect of a confident and socially capable exterior with a self-perceptive interior. We have healthy self-esteem when we view ourselves and our abilities through a realistic lense, but we have healthy self-worth when we value ourselves regardless of that evaluation.

Self-esteem is often formed by the feedback we get from others when they judge our abilities for better or worse, but self-worth can only come from within. For instance, other people might not think much of our cooking abilities, damaging our self-esteem, but our self-worth remains healthy when we know that we are valuable and necessary person regardless of that fact.

Strong characteristics that demonstrate self-worth, like resilience, courage and fortitude, can help a person deal with setbacks and criticism. Someone with healthy self-worth can handle events that diminish self-esteem.

### Low self-worth and quality of life

Low self-worth can reduce the quality of a person's life in different ways. People with low self-worth can often put themselves down and may express an opinion that they are not good enough. They can hesitate to take on new endeavours due to a fear of failure, and may 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 often attribute their successes to luck, even when there is evidence to the contrary.



## Self-Worth – Summary

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 their partner.

Low self-worth can create an excessive mental preoccupation with the negative side of a situation, which can lead to diminished expectations for their general quality of life.

### 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 self-worth.

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 self-worth.

### Building self-worth

You can build 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 later a physical disability (deafness) to create musical masterpieces.

There are things you can do to better support yourself. Here are 7 suggestions.

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. 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.



## Self-Worth – Summary

5. Concentrate on living in the 'here and now' rather than reviving old hurts and disappointments.
6. Exercise has been shown to be helpful in dealing with mood disorders. Health targets need to be step-by-step, such as starting with a walk around the block once a day, enrolling at a local gym class or going for a swim.
7. Be assertive and communicate your needs, wants, feelings, beliefs and opinions. Talk to others in a direct and honest manner.

### Seek out support to build self-worth

Chronic problems can be demoralising. It takes effort and vigilance to replace unhelpful thoughts and behaviours with healthier alternatives. Give yourself time to establish the new habits. 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 professional advice for problems such as a relationship breakdown, feelings of anxiety 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 healthy self-worth.

### In summary

Low self-worth can have an impact on the quality of your life and wellbeing. 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.



## Self-Worth – Summary

Low self-worth can also result in difficult relationships, higher levels of conflict amongst partners 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-worth.

Having healthy self-worth can assist in minimising the trauma of life's challenges. Confiding in loved ones, taking more exercise and living life in the now can help focus the approach to strengthening self-worth. Also, talk to your healthcare professional if you require help. Your GP is the best place to start, as they can help you eliminate any physical problems and refer you to psychological services should you require them.

### 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 worth, to have a positive sense of self and to find meaning in life.

### Disclaimer

Content is provided for education and information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not imply endorsement and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. Content was accurate at the time of publication. Readers should note that, over time, currency and completeness of the information may change. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions.

Copyright © The MindShift Foundation  
A not-for-profit Australian organisation.

Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.