



Self Worth - Depression

Self-worth and 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. If you believe you have a problem with depression, then please get help from your GP and other healthcare professionals as soon as possible.

Types of depression

Depression conditions come in varying types, such as:

- Major depression (which also comprises)
 - Melancholia
 - Psychotic depression
 - Antenatal and postnatal depression
- Bipolar disorder (once known as 'manic depression')
- Cyclothymic disorder
- Dysthmic disorder
- Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)

How low self-worth interacts with depression

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.

Someone with low self-worth places little value on themselves and might think about themselves in a consistently negative way. They can often spend time and energy trying to cover up these thoughts and feelings, or overcompensate by trying to do things perfectly so that other people won't find out how 'useless' they are. 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 patterns of thinking.



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Characteristics of low self-worth and depression

Depression combined with low self-worth can be seen and felt as a numbness or low mood that just doesn't go away. It's not more than just the 'blues', it's pervasive. Feelings can be attributed to this state, such as:

- Sadness, feeling down or empty on an ongoing basis
- Worthlessness
- Guilt or shame
- Misery
- Overwhelm

Depression may also produce other symptoms, such as:

- Lethargy or low energy
- Loss of appetite or weight
- Withdrawal from social life
- Loss of interest in normal activities
- Increased sleep or appetite
- Trouble concentrating
- Skewed thinking or speech
- Diminished energy for life, love and sex
- Back pain or headache
- Feeling run down
- Digestive issues
- Suicidal thoughts

Some of these physical symptoms are also indicative of varying medical conditions, so please consult your GP to rule out any physical issues.

Faulty thinking and depression

Depression can amplify low self-worth and lead to faulty thinking. In this case, it's thinking that our emotional state is a true reflection of reality. This is generally not the case, but trying to break those thought patterns can be difficult without help. Some thoughts that show low self-worth compounding depression might be:



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- 'Life is too hard.'
- 'I'm worthless.'
- 'It's all my fault.'
- 'I'm a failure.'
- 'The world would be better off without me.'

The lower your self-worth, the more likely it is that you will see events in your life as reinforcing your negative sense of self. This dejected state encourages faulty thinking and can lead to symptoms of depression.

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-worth, 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-worth. 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-worth.

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 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/>.



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Things to remember

Your self-worth is impacted by how you view and think about yourself. People with low self-worth let their negative opinion of themselves contribute to the development and the maintenance of depression over time. It is possible to change your thinking using the Cognitive Approach to improve your self-worth. Doing so can enable you to better deal with setbacks and difficult times.

In summary

According to Dr Lars Madsen, clinical advisor to The MindShift Foundation, 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-worth.

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

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