



Self-Worth – Talking to Family and Friends

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Working on self-worth doesn't have to be a journey that a person takes alone. Talking to someone trusted and asking for help is a vital aspect of working on self-worth. While The MindShift Foundation advocates that a person should talk to their GP for professional assistance, not everyone wants or needs the help of a healthcare professional. Talking to family or friends might be a great way to start a conversation about self-worth, especially if they can offer a friendly ear and the love and support that a healthcare professional can't.

How to get your message across

While sitting down and blurting out your self-worth concerns to the nearest family member or friend might seem straightforward, consider taking some of these points into account.

Choose the right person

Think carefully about who you want to talk to. The right person will be a good listener, have good feedback to offer, and may even be a role model who's been on their own self-worth journey. The wrong person is not a good listener, doesn't take you seriously and will brush away your concerns. This can do more damage to your self-worth.

Choose the right time

This probably isn't a conversation you want to rush, so don't call your friend if you know they have to do the school run in 10 minutes. Give yourself enough time to have a decent face-to-face conversation. Be aware of their personal situation too. You don't necessarily want to have this type of conversation if the other person is unwell or preoccupied, as their focus is likely to be inward.

Be concise

You can choose the right person and still lose their attention with rambling stories. When you're concise and explain your problem as simply as you can, you give your listener the best opportunity to really listen to what you have to say, comprehend the issue and offer appropriate consolation or advice.

Avoid blame, self or external

If you choose to talk to family members or a partner about your doubts, it may be a double-edged sword as they may have had a hand in enabling or causing some of the issues with your self-worth. If you've chosen to talk to your family or partner, try to avoid any blaming or shaming. This won't inspire them to listen to you and may add to your low feelings.



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Try not to catastrophise

It's so easy to turn to drama in order to get heard or seen. Try to keep things in perspective and not let fear or anxiety lead you to exaggerate the facts for dramatic impact. Stay calm and don't get carried away. Be mindful with the words you use and take a deep breath if you feel as if your mind or heart is racing. Because you're talking about self-worth and other serious issues, it's best to keep it simple and reasonable. Your message will come across more clearly without catastrophising what you have to say. Keep it simple.

Ask for feedback

It can be really hard to ask people what they think of you or your problems, but if you're at the point where you want to talk to someone close about your problems, then you probably would like their feedback. Another point of view can add to your awareness and might even give you a new point of action.

Try not to get defensive

Listen to the advice on offer, even if it's hard to hear. When you get honest feedback from someone, even if it's delivered in a kind or authentic way, it still might be something that you don't really want to hear. You may even get unwelcome advice. Getting defensive or biting back isn't fair on the person you chose to confide in. Think about what you've been told and if it works for you then take it on board; if not, discard it. Not everything other people tell you has to become your reality. Only you can choose what to let affect you.

Support the person who listens

If someone's taken the time to listen to you, thank them, and listen if they in turn want to confide in you. This can often happen with friends. You might ask them out for a coffee and the conversation may start with you sharing your issues then turns into a two-way sharing session. If you've chosen the right person to talk to, they'll probably keep the focus on you at this important time.

Include others in your plans

When you set your plans for actioning change in your life you may like to involve others along the way. If you're going to see a therapist, consider sharing how the session went later with your partner or family. If you're undertaking a dietary change and implementing exercise, consider asking family members and partners to join in and try it altogether. If you want a more relaxed lifestyle, include your partner and both take 'time out' days when you can relax together.



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Unexpected reactions to a conversation

The important thing to remember about the reactions of other people is that you're not getting an objective opinion, but a subjective one. Their reaction is based on their opinions and feelings, so in a sense, it's not necessarily *your* truth. This is one of the reasons why it's important to talk to the right person. If you know you're at the point where you want to change, then the reactions of people when you tell them may be challenging, especially if it involves them. Here are a few typical negative reactions that you might come across.

Disappointment

If you're in a relationship where your self-worth can no longer take the stress and dysfunction and you choose to leave to spare yourself continual low feelings, sharing your decision will no doubt cause disappointment. The same goes for other relationships, such as work or friendships.

Not taken seriously

You might have done a lot of research and work to understand more about self-worth, but when you share your needs with others, there may be some who don't take your concerns seriously. They might not have listened to your concerns properly or they dismiss self-worth as 'not a real issue' because they don't understand it. This can be painful when you're already struggling. Try to emphasise that you want to take better care of yourself. You may need to turn to others for the support you need.

Interrogation

While you may just need someone to listen, there are those who can turn into interrogators while trying to understand your concerns. If you don't quite know how to articulate where you're at, this can feel overwhelming. You might not want to share everything or you may not even know yourself what the problem is, just that something needs to change. You may need to set some boundaries to ensure that you don't feel the symptoms of anxiety at their probing.

Anger

This can be a frightening situation. If you're trying to talk to someone who has had a hand in causing some of the difficulties you experience with your self-worth, then you need to go in understanding that they may react angrily. If you know that you have to speak up regardless, then take adequate precautions to ensure your safety. Consider a discussion in a public place or with another person to unofficially mediate the conversation or provide you with support. If you're trying to talk to an abuser, consider talking to a healthcare professional first for the best advice on how to approach this situation. It may not be safe to do so, and if that's the case then please, seriously consider if this is your best course of action.



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Solutions

If you're talking to the right person, there's a good chance that they might offer solutions. This type of reaction is great as it shows a proactive listening approach and care that everyone deserves from someone. However, if you're talking to the wrong person, their advice might be irrelevant, uncaring or inappropriate. Take every conversation and every piece of advice offered to you under advisement.

When someone with low self-worth approaches you

If someone with low self-worth approaches you for help, there are a few things you can say to help them to make them feel at ease. If you've suffered from low self-worth or a more serious mental health condition, then you know how lonely that can feel. You might consider saying:

- What can I do to help?
- I'm here for you.
- This conversation is private.
- Have you seen a doctor?
- Have you done any research into this? We could do it together.
- Do you want to do something to take your mind off it for a while?
- Things can get better.

Take the time to listen and be supportive, even if words feel empty when you see the depth of another's pain. Ask questions or comment where appropriate to show that their issues are a priority for you in that moment. Being heart is important and in fulfilling that function, you may just be saving their life.

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

Having a conversation about self-worth can start with family and friends. Choose the right person, but take their words under advisement, as only you can determine what advice works best for you.

In Summary

While having a conversation with family and friends about self-worth can be beneficial, be mindful that a person can only respond subjectively and based on their own experience. Not all people are great listeners, and some can be preoccupied with their own issues, which can lead to disappointment if you don't feel supported. Be concise and support those who support you with your time and attention.

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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