



Developing and Maintaining Healthy Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to a person's evaluation of his or her own self worth. Self-esteem involves beliefs and emotions about the self. This may encompass one's sense of one's character, history, values, and individuality. This feature is seen as an enduring and stable personality characteristic or trait, with some small variations; in other words, this is often a constant character trait over time.

Why Self-Esteem is Important

Self-worth is often tied to individual's ideas of what they're capable of doing (self-efficacy) and their ambitions for the future. This sense of personal competence helps students take the risks necessary to learn new things and to experiment with their interests. Without this sense of confidence, it would be harder to take on new endeavors. It is harder to have the persistence to stick with long-term goals and ambitions. However, research suggests that inflated self-esteem has no positive effects on grade achievements and may

actually decrease grades (and even lower risk-taking).

Some also suggest that self-esteem or self-respect is tied to how people treat others. Those with a strong sense of dignity will regard others well; they will be more forgiving in relationships. They will have a sense of humility in approaching the world because they understand the limits to their abilities and are accepting of realities.

Self-esteem also has been linked to a sense of overall happiness and contentment. People who value themselves have a greater sense of satisfaction with their lives.

Where Self-Esteem Comes From

There are two types of self-esteem. Explicit self-esteem is a conscious and reflective evaluation of one's self-worth. Implicit self-esteem is a person's general disposition in how he or she evaluates himself or herself unconsciously.

Some theorists consider self-esteem a basic human need; it is an intrinsic motivating factor for self-actualization and achievements. Others see self-esteem forming as a function of respect and acceptance from others and is a function of acceptance into a social group. For some, their sense of self-esteem comes from particular conditions, such as friendships or personal relationships or workplace achievements.

People's senses of self-esteem then come from their own intrinsic tendencies. It also comes from their satisfaction with the work they do; their sense of professional success or failure; their self image; the comparison of themselves with others; their social relationships; their

social status, and their freedom of decision-making.

The Challenges of Low Self-Esteem

People with a sense of low self-esteem or inflated high self-esteem may lash out at others if they perceive “ego threats”—such as when they are seen as less capable than they see themselves. The most hostile ones are those with “high but unstable (fragile) self-esteem” and may react in defensive ways (with “hostility, anger, and aggression”) to perceived ego-threats.

People with low self-esteem may try to build up their sense of self with hurtful attacks on others and with social image-building to prop up their sense of themselves.

Building Healthy Self-Esteem

It is important to build a healthy sense of self-esteem and to regulate understandings so as not to push it to the point of narcissism (or extreme self-importance). This requires an accurate assessment of the self and of others. This also requires avoiding negative actions like self-blame, perfectionism, and harsh self-judgments that may be hurtful to a sense of self-identity.

Working with a counseling professional may help individuals work on self-esteem issues.

All people are VIPs...very important persons, within reasonable limits.



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