Self-Esteem
By Kelly Machan, M.A.
Karin S. Ryan, M.A.

1. Self-Esteem: What is it?

   a. There are two interrelated aspects:

      i. A sense of personal efficacy (self-efficacy) or confidence in a person's ability to think and act

      ii. A sense of personal worth (self-respect) or an affirmative attitude towards a person's right to live and to be happy

1. In the most succinct terms, self-esteem is the disposition to experience oneself as competent to cope with the challenges of life and to be deserving of happiness. (Branden, 1990)

   iii. From an intuitive sense we know that high self-esteem means that we appreciate ourselves and our inherent worth

   iv. More specifically, it means we have a positive attitude, we evaluate ourselves highly, we are convinced of our own abilities and we see ourselves as competent and powerful; in control of our own lives and able to do what we want. In addition, we compare ourselves favorably with others

   v. We also know what it means to experience diminished self-esteem—self-depreciation, helplessness, powerlessness and depression (Mecca, Smelser & Vasconcellos, 1989)

2. Self-Esteem: Why is it important?

   a. A strong self-esteem can help a person become what they are
b. When people are at their "peak performance," they believe in themselves (have high self-efficacy) and believe they can accomplish almost anything, thus, they are expressing a self-esteem which motivates, excites and empowers them.

c. A high self-esteem protects against the downturns in the roller coaster of life.

i. Rejections, disappointments and failure are a part of daily life. High esteem can assist a person in "weathering the storm," to look beyond immediate downward dips.

d. People need to believe that they have the capacity to achieve what they need and want to.

e. Individuals need to believe that they are deserving of happiness and joy in life.

f. When people lack self-esteem they are probably less effective and creative than they would be if they possessed high self-esteem.

g. Self-esteem impacts career planning, goal setting, and decision making.

3. Self-Esteem: What does it look like?

a. Positive/High Self-Esteem

i. Tries new things, confident, assertive, mistakes not personal or global, optimistic

b. Negative/Low Self-Esteem

i. Self critical, socially uncomfortable, underestimates abilities, gives up, avoids new experiences, sees mistakes as failure, taken advantage of, “negative Nelly”

4. Barriers to positive self-esteem

a. Unhealthy environments

b. Challenges to our identity or values

c. Unrealistic expectations

d. Negative and self-critical thinking
5. Ways to enhance self-esteem

a. Participate in activities you enjoy & feel skilled at

b. Set realistic expectations

c. Surround yourself with positive, supportive people

d. Challenge negative thoughts with reality/facts

e. Remember your successes

f. Get support through resources!!!

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