

Adult Low Self-Esteem

Because a person's self worth is developed during childhood, there may be several factors that contribute to low self esteem:

- Every child needs attention and love. If you grew up in an environment where there was childhood abuse and/or neglect, chances are you struggled with a good self-image. You may have learned that you didn't deserve more than you got.
- "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me" may have been a common phrase you heard as a child. It's a lie. Criticism (by family, peers, teachers, etc.) plays a big part in low self-worth. Being bullied and peer pressure interfere with healthy child development.
- Being compared to others leads to a feeling of not being good enough and contributes to our self-image.

This may lead to the following characteristics when a person becomes an adult:

- A high sensitivity to criticism, possibly leading to perfectionism.
- Being overly defensive possibly with an inability to accept responsibility.
- Developing the habit of over-analyzing and over-thinking everything.
- Negative thought patterns and judgements of self and others.
- A tendency to try and please people.
- A failure to recognize one's own potential and good qualities.

Self-awareness and self-worth are life-long pursuits and can be improved. Understanding how and when low self-esteem developed allows us to:

- Build on our "good" qualities
- Transform negative thoughts
- Accept ourselves and develop resiliency (not being happy all the time, but rather learning to go with the flow and adapt to life's challenges & having the confidence to do that).

I encourage you to go on a journey of increasing your self-esteem. As you are learning and growing, please remember a few important things:

- Your past does not define you.
- Your emotions are not you.
- You are an adult, you do not need approval from anyone.

A Personal Bill of Rights

By: Charles Whitfield

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1. I have numerous choices in my life beyond mere survival.
2. I have the right to discover and know my Child Within.
3. I have the right to grieve over what I didn't get that I needed or what I got that I didn't need or want.
4. I have the right to follow my own values and standards.
5. I have the right to recognize and accept my own value system as appropriate.
6. I have the right to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready, it is unsafe or it violates my values.
7. I have the right to dignity and respect.
8. I have the right to make decisions.
9. I have the right to determine and honor my own priorities.
10. I have the right to have my needs and wants respected by others.
11. I have the right to terminate conversations with people who make me feel put down and humiliated.
12. I have the right not to be responsible for others behavior, actions, feelings or problems.
13. I have the right to make mistakes and not have to be perfect.
14. I have the right to expect honesty from others.
15. I have the right to all of my feelings.
16. I have the right to be angry at someone I love.
17. I have the right to be uniquely me, without feeling that I'm not good enough.
18. I have the right to feel scared and to say, "I'm afraid."
19. I have the right to experience and then let go of fear, guilt and shame.
20. I have the right to make decisions based on my feelings, my judgement or any reason that I choose.
21. I have the right to change my mind at any time.
22. I have the right to be happy.
23. I have the right to stability, i.e., "roots" and stable healthy relationships of my choice.
24. I have the right to my own personal space and time needs.
25. I have the right to be relaxed, playful and frivolous.
26. I have the right to be flexible and be comfortable with doing so.
27. I have the right to change and grow.
28. I have the right to be open to improve my communication skills so that I may be understood.
29. I have the right to make friends and be comfortable around people.
30. I have the right to be in a non-abusive environment.
31. I have the right to be healthier than those around me.
32. I have the right to take care of myself, no matter what.
33. I have the right to grieve over actual or threatened losses.
34. I have the right to trust others who earn my trust.

References:

www.growing-self-esteem.com, www.self-esteem-experts.com, www.actualization.org

HOW TO RAISE YOUR SELF-ESTEEM, the proven, action-oriented approach to greater self-respect and self-confidence. Author: Nathaniel Branden.

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