

Self-Esteem—The Power

Our Most Important Psychological Resource

A Lack of Self-Esteem

Those who suffer from poor self-esteem realize they feel some kind of a deficit as a person. They often have difficulty describing the feeling or putting their finger right on the problem, but they know they suffer from some sense of not being “enough”. Perhaps it’s a haunting emotion of shame or guilt, or a general feeling of distrust or unworthiness. They sense the lack but do not know how to change or nurture themselves.

Those with poor self-esteem need to develop a genuine feeling of self-worth that will develop into a full experience of self-esteem. Self-esteem is being appropriate to life and the requirements that life presents us with. Specifically:

Confidence in our ability to think and to cope with the challenges of life.

Confidence in our right to be happy, the feeling of being worthy, deserving, entitled to assert our needs and wants and to enjoy the fruits of our efforts.

A Powerful Human Need

Self-esteem is a need by virtue of the fact that its (relative) absence impairs our ability to function. This is why it has “survival value”.

When we lack positive self-esteem, our psychological growth is stunted. Good self-esteem acts as the *immune system of consciousness*, giving us resistance, strength, and a capacity for regeneration. When our self-esteem is low, our resilience in the face of life’s adversities is diminished. We crumble before situations or problems that a healthier sense of self could vanquish. * We tend to be more influenced by the desire to *avoid pain* than to experience joy. Negatives have more power over us than positives.*

Valuing Ourselves is Empowering

When we have realistic confidence in our minds and in our own value, we feel secure within ourselves, and tend to experience the world as open to us and to respond appropriately to challenges and opportunities. Self-esteem empowers, energizes and motivates. It inspires us to achieve and allows us to take pleasure and pride in our achievements. It allows us to experience satisfaction.

Intelligent Choices Require Self-Esteem

Our world has more choices and options now than ever before. The possibilities are limitless and they face us at every direction. Because of this we require a higher level of personal autonomy, in order to exercise independent judgment and cultivate our own resources, while taking

responsibility for the choices, values and behaviors that mold our lives. Life requires a greater need for a *reality-based belief* in ourselves, more *self-trust and self-reliance*.

The greater the number of choices and decisions we need to make at a conscious level, the more urgent our need for self-esteem.

Self-Efficacy and Self-Respect

Self-esteem has two interrelated aspects:

a sense of personal efficacy (self-efficacy)

a sense of personal worth (self-respect)

Self-efficacy is confidence in the functioning of my mind, my ability to think, in the processes by which I judge, choose, decide: confidence in my ability to understand the facts of reality that fall within the sphere of my interests and needs; cognitive self-trust; cognitive self-reliance. Self-efficacy generates the sense of control over one's life that we associate with psychological well being. I am at the center of my existence, instead of being a passive spectator or the victim of life events.

Self-respect means being assured of my own value; an affirmative attitude toward my right to live and to be happy; comfort in appropriately asserting my thoughts, wants and needs. Having the feeling that joy is my natural birthright. Experiencing self-respect makes possible a benevolent, non-neurotic sense of community with others—the fellowship of independence and mutual regard. I am neither alienated and a stranger nor overly dependent, submerging my sense of self to the will of others.

Definitions:

“Self-esteem is the disposition to experience oneself as competent to cope with the challenges of life and as deserving of happiness.”

“In short, self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward him/herself.”

Branden, Nathaniel, (1992). *The power of self-esteem*. Florida: Health Communications, Inc.