

## Self-esteem—What is It?

- Self-esteem results from our ability to make judgments about ourselves. When we make a judgment about what color we like, or what kind of music we prefer, these choices do not effect us negatively. However, when we judge negatively, parts of our body, personality, abilities etc., we can cause ourselves great distress.  
Rejecting ourselves causes great pain.
- To avoid this pain, we limit ourselves as a means of protection—no risk, no pain. We are not as open with others, do not express what we really think or need, fear being the center of attention, are slow to ask for help or ask for assistance in solving problems.
- Studies show that our self-esteem is greatly affected by our parents in the early years of our life, birth through perhaps 4 or 5. After that it is the “chicken or the egg” dilemma, which comes first? Does doing well in school foster good self-esteem or does good self-esteem result in doing well in school? Do alcoholics drink because they hate themselves, or do alcoholics hate themselves because they drink? Circumstances do factor in when measuring self-esteem.
- There is another factor that affects your self-esteem 100% of the time—it is our **thoughts**. We can choose to listen to, entertain, or obey our negative thoughts and feelings. A voice inside of us wants to criticize and judge us constantly. It is our very own “critic”.-and it is pathological and seems to be with us at all times.
- The Pathological Critic. Name it and see it as something outside of you, externalize it. See it as the Intruder that it is, not part of your normal thought flow.

## The Critic

The Critic is the inner voice we hear and pay attention to that attacks and judges us. If your self-esteem is low, your critic is more vicious and vocal and you give it more credence than if your self-esteem were at a normal level. The critic blames you when things go wrong and compares you to others always tells you that you don't measure up.

**The critic keeps track of all your failures and reminds you often of them.**  
**The critic sets impossible standards for you to meet and beats you up for your mistakes.**  
**The critic is full of “shoulds and oughts”. It has strict rules for you to follow.**  
**The critic calls you many names—like stupid, ugly, selfish, weak, incompetent.**  
**The critic reads minds—and tells you that your friends are bored with you, your boss is disappointed in you.**  
**The critic exaggerates your weaknesses and makes generalizations like: always and never.**  
**To you, your critic always seems reasonable and justified.**  
**Even if you know the attacks by your critic are distorted, you almost always believe him.**

Write down the ways your critic judges and attacks you in your everyday life.

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The pain of most serious traumas washes away with time, but the critic is enormously toxic to your psyche. It is so powerful because you believe it. See if you can “catch” your critic in action. Listen to what it is saying and ask yourself, “Is what my critic is saying, the truth about me?”