

## Self-esteem

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/self-esteem/art-20045374>

self-esteem: take steps to feel better about yourself

harness the power of your thoughts and beliefs to raise your self-esteem. start with these steps.

low self-esteem can affect nearly every aspect of life. it can impact your relationships, job and health. but you can boost your self-esteem by taking cues from mental health counseling.

consider these steps, based on cognitive behavioral therapy.

1. recognize situations that affect self-esteem

think about the situations that seem to deflate your self-esteem. common triggers might include:

- a work or school presentation
- a crisis at work or home
- a challenge with a spouse, loved one, co-worker or other close contact
- a change in roles or life events, such as a job loss or a child leaving home

2. become aware of thoughts and beliefs

once you've learned which situations affect your self-esteem, notice your thoughts about them. this includes what you tell yourself (self-talk) and how you view the situations.

your thoughts and beliefs might be positive, negative or neutral. they might be rational, based on reason or facts. or they may be irrational, based on false ideas.

ask yourself if these beliefs are true. would you say them to a friend? if you wouldn't say them to someone else, don't say them to yourself.

3. challenge negative thinking

your initial thoughts might not be the only way to view a situation. ask yourself whether your view is in line with facts and logic. or is there another explanation?

be aware that it can be hard to see flaws in your logic. long-held thoughts and beliefs can feel factual even if they're opinions.

also notice if you're having these thought patterns that erode self-esteem:

- all-or-nothing thinking: this involves seeing things as either all good or all bad. for example, you may think, "if i don't succeed in this task, i'm a total failure."

- mental filtering: this means you focus and dwell on the negatives. it can distort your view of a person or situation. for example, "i made a mistake on that report and now everyone will realize i'm not up to the job."
  - converting positives into negatives: this may involve rejecting your achievements and other positive experiences by insisting that they don't count. for example, "i only did well on that test because it was so easy."
  - jumping to negative conclusions: you may tend to reach a negative conclusion with little or no evidence. for example, "my friend hasn't replied to my text, so i must have done something to make her angry."
  - mistaking feelings for facts: you may confuse feelings or beliefs with facts. for example, "i feel like a failure, so i must be a failure."
  - negative self-talk: you undervalue yourself. you may put yourself down or joke about your faults. for example, you may say, "i don't deserve anything better."
4. adjust your thoughts and beliefs  
now replace negative or untrue thoughts with positive, accurate thoughts. try these strategies:
- use hopeful statements: be kind and encouraging to yourself. instead of thinking a situation won't go well, focus on the positive. tell yourself, "even though it's tough, i can handle this."
  - forgive yourself: everyone makes mistakes. but mistakes aren't permanent reflections on you as a person. they're moments in time. tell yourself, "i made a mistake, but that doesn't make me a bad person."
  - avoid 'should' and 'must' statements: if you find that your thoughts are full of these words, you might be putting too many demands on yourself. try to remove these words from your thoughts. it may lead to a healthier view of what to expect from yourself.
  - focus on the positive: think about the parts of your life that work well. remember the skills you've used to cope with challenges.
  - consider what you've learned: if it was a negative experience, what changes can you make next time to create a more positive outcome?
  - relabel upsetting thoughts: think of negative thoughts as signals to try new, healthy patterns. ask yourself, "what can i think and do to make this less stressful?"
  - encourage yourself: give yourself credit for making positive changes. for example, "my presentation might not have been perfect, but my colleagues asked questions and remained engaged. that means i met my goal."

you might also try these steps, based on acceptance and commitment therapy.

1. spot troubling conditions or situations  
again, think about the conditions or situations that seem to deflate your self-esteem. then pay attention to your thoughts about them.
2. step back from your thoughts  
repeat your negative thoughts many times. the goal is to take a step back from automatic thoughts and beliefs and observe them. Instead of trying to change your thoughts, distance yourself from them. Realize that they are nothing more than words.
3. accept your thoughts  
instead of resisting or being overwhelmed by negative thoughts or feelings, accept them. you don't have to like them. Just allow yourself to feel them.

negative thoughts don't need to be controlled, changed or acted upon. aim to lessen their power on your behavior.

These steps might seem awkward at first. but they'll get easier with practice. Recognizing the thoughts and beliefs that affect low self-esteem allows you to change the way you think about them. This will help you accept your value as a person. as your self-esteem increases, your confidence and sense of well-being are likely to soar.

In addition to these suggestions, remember that you're worth special care. be sure to:

- take care of yourself. follow good health guidelines. try to exercise at least 30 minutes a day most days of the week. eat lots of fruits and vegetables. limit sweets, junk food and saturated fats.
- do things you enjoy. start by making a list of things you like to do. try to do something from that list every day.
- spend time with people who make you happy. don't waste time on people who don't treat you well.