

COMPANION GUIDE TO  
“SELF-ESTEEM”  
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# THE SELF-ESTEEM WORKBOOK

A SIMPLE, EFFECTIVE PROGRAM FOR MASTERY OF

LIKING YOURSELF • CONQUERING SELF-DOUBT

SEEING YOUR CORE WORTH • RATIONAL THINKING

BODY APPRECIATION • AFFIRMING THOUGHTS

ENLARGING POSSIBILITIES • FLOP INOCULATION

FORGIVING YOURSELF • LOVING MEDITATION

LIKING THE FACE IN THE MIRROR

GLENN R. SCHIRALDI, PH.D.

FOREWORD BY MATTHEW MCKAY, PH.D., AND PATRICK FANNING,  
AUTHORS OF BEST-SELLING “SELF-ESTEEM”

"What a wonderful workbook! Even for those of us who feel we have a high level of self-esteem, this book provides insight and techniques for improving those areas that sometimes make us question ourselves and our self-worth. With some of my more difficult physical therapy patients, I often employ the cognitive rehearsal technique of acknowledging what is 'right' about themselves to break their negative views of themselves or their situation. This in itself often leads to an acceleration in the healing process."

—Linda C. Harvey, M.A., P.T., Physical Therapy Role Extender for Rehabilitation Coordinator, Visiting Nurses Association of Maryland

"Every page is full of profound ideas to clarify the value of positive self-esteem. The easy exercises promote deep contemplation of how we paint a picture of our current selves and then give solid directions on improving that perception. It is impossible to read this book without feeling better about oneself and others. It should be required reading for every living soul."

—Robert L. Bunnell, M.S., PA-C, marketing coordinator, University of Utah Physician Assistant Program Executive Director, Utah Academy of Physician Assistants

"The book is excellent. We are already using it in our self-esteem presentations! Well done and many thanks . . . It's one of the first and finest self-esteem resource guide books that offers in-depth information in a grounded, useful way."

—Jacqueline Miller, Maryland Governor's Task Force on Self-Esteem

"As a former legislative aide to John Vasconcellos and the Self-Esteem effort, I found the book to be practical and impactful in its suggested activities. It can enlighten the thinking and enrich a person's experience of their own self-esteem."

—Andy Michael, Aide to Assemblyman John Vasconcellos, California Task Force on Self-Esteem

"I was first introduced to these mental health principles and skills as a student in Schiraldi's *Stress and the Healthy Mind* course. Not only have they proven useful for helping certain friends and family members, but I have also taken every opportunity to teach them to my students and the student teachers I supervise. Of the many self-esteem books on the market, this is the only one I know that actually equips readers with the skills necessary to effect changes in their own lives."

—Stephen L. Brown, Ph.D., Southern Illinois University

"Glenn Schiraldi has created a hands-on program that can be used as a complete program or for counselors wishing to add specific exercises to treatment. This book is certainly appropriate for continuing education of counselors as well as an office manual. The material is current and well organized."

—Thomas W. Clawson, Executive Director, National Board of Certified Counselors

"Glenn Schiraldi challenges our previous understanding of self-esteem as a somewhat esoteric concept through a unique and refreshing approach that is brilliant in its simplicity. The approach unfolds logically, beginning with a definition and supporting model, followed by a holistic, realistic skill-building approach to nurturing self-esteem . . . simply brilliant. As evidence of the book's versatility and richness and the best endorsement that I could give a book, I have used it extensively as a mental health resource, as an invaluable teaching tool for courses with college students, and as a gift to close friends."

—Melissa Hallmark Kerr, M.A., Ph.D., college instructor, health consultant

"I began reading *The Self-Esteem Workbook* largely to help others, and I was surprised to find it was a great help to me too. We all need a boost in our self-esteem. I have given the book to others."

—Tracey A. Shoopack, M.B.A., contracts manager

"Glenn Schiraldi's methods are grounded in research and real-life application. Being able to work directly with him changed the way that I view stress management. In lieu of working with Glenn daily, being able to read, and reread, his book has enhanced my life in countless ways."

—S. Kathleen Jennings, former student of Glenn Schiraldi

"It's obvious that this book is a labor of love that was many years in the making. It shows that self-esteem can be increased, regardless of one's upbringing, past environment, and experiences. The readings and exercises provide concrete steps to establish unconditional self-worth and cultivate the skill of love. I particularly enjoyed the inspirational quotes from men and women who have realized their self-worth and thus been able to reach out beyond themselves. This book is a great personal investment!"

—Pamela G. Barainca, R.D., L.D., clinical dietitian

"Even successful people have self-defeating ideas that impair self-esteem. At least one idea from every page has affected myself, my life, and every single person that I have spoken to in my professional life."

—Mohammad Beiraghdar, medical student

"I found *The Self-Esteem Workbook* to be an infinitely deep wellspring in my work as a volunteer facilitator for groups of victims of abuse. It is clear and easy to understand and its step-by-step program is perfect for those struggling with self-worth issues. Its timeless content applies to anyone suffering with low self-esteem. I have used it over and over and will continue to do so. Thank you Glenn Schiraldi!"

—Janet Harkness, homemaker, mother

THE

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SELF-ESTEEM

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WORKBOOK

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GLENN R. SHIRALDI, PH.D

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When we plant a rose seed in the earth, we notice that it is small, but we do not criticize it as "rootless and stemless." We treat it as a seed, giving it the water and nourishment required of a seed. When it first shoots up out of the earth, we don't condemn it as immature and underdeveloped, nor do we criticize the buds for not being open when they appear. We stand in wonder at the process taking place and give the plant the care it needs at each stage of its development. The rose is a rose from the time it is a seed to the time it dies. Within it, at all times, it contains its whole potential. It seems to be constantly in the process of change; yet at each state, at each moment, it is [whole] as it is (Gallwey 1974).



*I dedicate this work to my angel mother, who—like so many mothers throughout history—has quietly modeled so many of the principles described herein.*



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# Introduction

*We need to see ourselves as basic miracles.*

—Virginia Satir

Self-esteem is not the only determinant of happiness. Certainly it is one of the most important.

The beloved late comedian George Burns (1984) observed that most of the things that make people happy—health, marriage, raising a family, self-respect, etc.—do not fall into our laps. We “have to work at them a little.”

And so it is with self-esteem. Like cultivating a garden, building self-esteem involves consistent effort. The program described in this book takes approximately a half hour a day, more or less, over a 125-day period. Is this investment worth it? When we consider how great the effect of self-esteem is on mental and physical well-being, in both the short and long term, few efforts seem more worthwhile.

The program you are about to start is the central component of “Stress and the Healthy Mind,” a course that I developed and taught at the University of Maryland. The course has been found to raise self-esteem while reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and hostility among adults eighteen to sixty-eight years of age (Schiraldi and Brown 2001; Brown and Schiraldi 2000). Although intended for adults, the principles and skills in this book are equally applicable to adolescents and, when slightly simplified, children.



PART I

# UNDERSTANDING SELF-ESTEEM



## Chapter 1

# Why Self-Esteem?

How fortunate is the person with self-esteem. There is general agreement that self-esteem is central to good mental and physical health, while self-dislike degrades health and performance. Self-dislike appears to contribute to:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress symptoms
- Psychosomatic illness, like headaches, insomnia, fatigue, and digestive tract upset
- Hostility, excessive or deep-seated anger, dislike and distrust of others, competitiveness
- Spouse and child abuse
- Entering into abusive/unhappy relationships
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Eating disorders and unhealthy dieting
- Poor communication (e.g., non-assertive, aggressive, defensive, critical, or sarcastic styles)

- Promiscuity
- Dependency
- Sensitivity to criticism
- Tendency to put on a false front to impress others
- Social difficulties—withdrawal, loneliness
- Poor performance/classroom achievement
- Preoccupation with problems
- Status concern

No wonder self-dislike is called the invisible handicap. Conversely, self-esteem is highly correlated to overall life satisfaction. In a 1992 Gallup survey, 89 percent of respondents said that self-esteem is very important in motivating a person to work hard and succeed. Self-esteem was ranked higher as a motivator than any other variable. It is not surprising, therefore, that those with self-esteem are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors. Those with self-esteem tend to be friendlier, more expressive, more active, more self-trusting and trusting of others, and less troubled by inner problems and criticism (Coopersmith 1967). When mental disorders do strike, those with self-esteem tend to respond better to professional help, while recovering alcoholics with self-esteem are less likely to relapse (Mecca, Smelser, and Vasconcellos 1989). (See Appendix I: Model for Helping the Person in Distress). Indeed, one searches the literature in vain to find a disadvantage of having self-esteem. Thus, an assumption of this book is that self-esteem not only helps reduce undesired stress and illness symptoms, but also is an essential foundation for human growth.

Despite the importance of self-esteem, surprisingly little attention has been focused on building it directly rather than indirectly. For example, an oft-stated aim of psychotherapy is to build self-esteem. However, the assumption that reducing illness symptoms will indirectly build self-esteem is unsupported. Lacking a comprehensive approach, some well-intending individuals have prescribed quick fixes based on unsound principles, which can actually damage self-esteem in the long run.

This book provides a step-by-step plan based on sound principles to help you build a healthy, realistic, and generally stable self-esteem. The approach requires that the skills herein be applied and practiced. Merely having knowledge is not enough. Each self-esteem skill is based on mastery of the skills that precede it. As Abraham Maslow noted, developing self-esteem requires many and major impacts (Lowry 1973). Therefore, resist the tendency to read through this book quickly. Instead, commit now to applying and mastering each skill before moving on to try the next one.

## To Begin

The following Self-Esteem Checkup will provide you with a starting point from which to measure your progress as you read through this book. Taking the checkup will also begin to reinforce some of the goals of this book. It is comforting to realize that each person already possesses some measure of self-esteem to build on. There is nothing tricky about this checkup, nor is it important how your scores compare with the scores of others. So just relax and be as completely honest as you can.

## The Self-Esteem Checkup

First, rate from 0 to 10 how much you believe each of the following statements. 0 means you completely disbelieve it. 10 means you think it is completely true.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Rating</b>
1. I am a worthwhile person.	_____
2. I am as valuable as a person as anyone else.	_____
3. I have the qualities I need to live well.	_____
4. When I look into my eyes in the mirror I have a pleasant feeling.	_____
5. I don't feel like an overall failure.	_____
6. I can laugh at myself.	_____
7. I am happy to be me.	_____
8. I like myself, even when others reject me.	_____
9. I love and support myself, regardless of what happens.	_____
10. I am generally satisfied with the way I am developing as a person.	_____
11. I respect myself.	_____
12. I'd rather be me than someone else.	_____

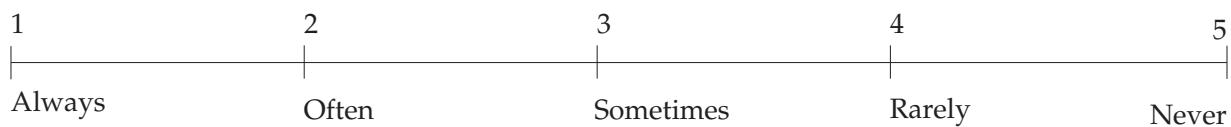
**Total Score** \_\_\_\_\_

Next, rate your self-esteem on the following scales (Gauthier, Pellerin, and Renaud 1983):



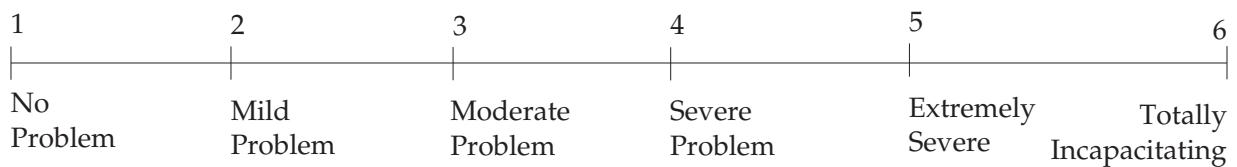
**Your Response** \_\_\_\_\_

How often do you feel restricted in your daily activities because of difficulties with self-esteem?



**Your Response** \_\_\_\_\_

How serious is your problem with self-esteem?



**Your Response** \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 2

# Getting Ready: The Physical Preparation

The mind and body are connected. If you want to feel your best mentally, take good care of your body. This only stands to reason. So often people who feel stressed, fatigued, and mentally “down” are under-exercised, undernourished, and under-rested. Often, they assume that tending the body takes too much time or is too difficult. So they hope for a quick fix that allows them to ignore their basic physical needs, while their mental health and performance suffer. The point is important enough to restate: You can’t ignore your body and expect to feel good. Time invested in physical health is a wise investment indeed. It saves time by sharpening your performance. More importantly, it improves mental health.

The object of this chapter is to help you set up and execute a simple, written plan for optimal physical health in three areas: aerobic exercise, sleep hygiene, and eating practices.

### Aerobic Exercise

Exercise improves self-esteem (Sonstroem 1984) and general mental health (Morgan 1984). Exercise is also the treatment of choice for weight control and sleep improvement. The goal here is at least twenty minutes of aerobic exercise most days. Strength and flexibility training are very

useful, and confer additional benefits. If time permits, you can add these to your program. If not, or if adding these appears overwhelming, then be content with aerobic exercise. Aerobic exercise is continuous, rhythmic exercise that keeps the heart rate gently elevated. Aerobic exercise includes walking, biking, rowing, swimming, and jogging. The best exercise choice is probably the one you enjoy doing most. Moderate, regular exercise is the goal.

Walking daily for thirty minutes can be quite effective for losing weight and for stress management. Adding strength training also helps lose fat because muscles burn energy rapidly. However, don't be overwhelmed. Any amount of exercise is better than none. Even a ten-minute "energy walk," an exercise break from sitting at the desk, has been found to increase energy and lift the mood (Thayer 1989).

Start your exercise gently, and build up gradually. You are not in a competition with anyone. Exercise should leave you feeling refreshed and energized. It should not hurt or exhaust you beyond a pleasant fatigue. If you can eventually work up to twenty minutes or more on most days, great. If not, do what you can to start. Do make a plan for regular, moderate exercise. If you have trouble falling asleep, try exercising before dinner, or earlier. Consult your physician if you are over forty years old, if you have any known risk factors for cardiovascular disease, and/or if you have any concerns about starting an exercise program.

## Sleep Hygiene

Poor sleep has been associated with unhappiness in many studies (Diener 1984). Much has been learned in recent years about sleep hygiene and the treatment of sleep disorders. Two considerations are crucial: the amount and regularity.

### *An Appropriate Amount of Sleep*

Most adults require at least eight hours of sleep. Preliminary research indicates that adults who average near that amount, but then get an additional hour or hour and a half, feel better and perform better. However, today's lifestyle nibbles away at sleep, so that many adults are chronically sleep deprived.

### *Regularity of Sleep*

Regular sleep and wake-up times are needed to keep the body's sleep cycle consistent. Retiring at irregular hours (e.g., getting to bed much later on Friday and Saturday nights than on the weekdays) can lead to exhaustion and even sleep disorders.

So the idea is to get a little more sleep than you think you need, and to keep sleep and wake-up times as consistent throughout the week as possible, varying no more than one hour from night to night.

## Eating Practices

If you visualize a plate where meat is the small side serving, and plant foods fill the rest of the plate, then you have a pretty good idea of eating goals, which include:

- Consume most of your calories from complex carbohydrates, which come from plant foods (fruits, vegetables, breads, rice, pasta, cereals, etc.). Foods that are fresh, frozen, or

minimally processed are better choices than processed food because they tend to have more fiber and less added sugar, salt, and fat.

- Reduce consumption of meat, which contains saturated fats and cholesterol, to about six ounces daily. Use mainly lean meats, poultry without skin, fish, or meat alternatives, like dry beans and peas, or nuts.
- Reduce fats, sugar, salt, caffeine, processed foods, and alcohol. If sleep is troubled, avoid caffeine altogether for at least seven hours before bedtime.
- Ingest adequate calcium. Adults nineteen to fifty years of age need at least 1,000 mg of calcium. A glass of skim milk provides 300 mg. If you drink three glasses of skim milk (or eat yogurt or cheese equivalents), then additional calcium is still needed from sources like spinach, broccoli, fortified orange juice, or tofu.

Additional guidelines that can generally improve health, help control weight, and help elevate the mood include:

- Keep blood sugar steady throughout the day. This can be done by eating breakfast, not skipping meals, and eating smaller, more frequent meals. There is evidence that eating five to six smaller meals reduces fatigue and mood swings, while facilitating weight loss. "Meals" can include healthy midmorning and midafternoon snacks of a half sandwich, yogurt, a fruit, etc. Avoid concentrated sweets, which cause blood sugar fluctuations.
- Shift food, so that some of the calories that would normally be eaten at a big dinner are eaten at breakfast, lunch, or snacks.
- Choose foods often that are less than 30 percent fat. To quickly estimate, multiply the grams of fat by ten and divide by the total calories. The result should be less than 33 percent. For example, a candy bar contains 250 calories and 14 grams of fat. Thus:

$$\frac{14 \text{ grams fat} \times 10}{250 \text{ calories}} = 56 \text{ percent}$$

This example is quite high in fat. The sugar would also tend to give a momentary energy lift, but would make people more tired and tense an hour later (a brisk walk would give a similar energy lift that would be sustained). Similar calculations for bread, potatoes, or almost all other plant products (before adding butter or oil) would show these to be healthy choices. Although meat can exceed the 30 percent fat goal, meats can be mixed with vegetables to reduce overall fat (e.g., meat stir-fried in a little oil).

## Take Care of Your Body: A Written Plan

There is power in making a written plan and committing to stick to it. Please make a plan that you can follow, and begin to practice it for the next fourteen days. You'll actually stay with this plan throughout the entire course of this book and beyond, so make a realistic plan that you can comfortably keep. It is perfectly all right to give yourself several days to "work up" to the goals in your plan.

1. **Exercise.** At least four to five times per week; at least twenty minutes of aerobic exercise. Describe your plan below:

2. **Sleep.** \_\_\_\_\_ hours/night (a little more than you think you need) from \_\_\_\_\_ (time you'll retire) to \_\_\_\_\_ (time you'll wake up).

3. **Eating.** At least three times a day, using healthy choices. Make a written week's menu using the worksheet on the next page and check it against the eating goals and dietary guidelines that follow.

## **Sample Menu: A Week of Meals**

Write down what you plan to eat and drink each day, and the amounts of food/liquid.

Mon            Tue            Wed            Thu            Fri            Sat            Sun

Breakfast

Snack

Lunch

Snack

Dinner

Snack