

## BUILDING SELF ESTEEM

### Things You Can Do Right Away—Every Day—to Raise Your Self-esteem

- Pay attention to your own needs and wants.
- Take time to do things you enjoy.
- Get something done that you have been putting off.
- Do things that make use of your own special talents and abilities.
- Dress in clothes that make you feel good about yourself.
- Give yourself rewards
- Spend time with people who make you feel good about yourself— people who treat you well. Avoid people who treat you badly.
- Make your living space a place that honors the person you are.
- Begin doing those things that you know will make you feel better about yourself—like eating healthy, beginning an exercise program or keeping your living space clean.
- Do something nice for another person.
- Make it a point to treat yourself well every day.

### Get rid of negative self-talk

You may think these thoughts or give yourself these negative messages so often that you are hardly aware of them. Pay attention to them. Carry a small pad with you as you go about your daily routine for several days and jot down negative thoughts about yourself whenever you notice them.

Ask yourself the following questions about each negative thought you have noticed:

- Is this message really true?
- Would I say this to another person? If not, why am I saying it to myself?
- What do I get out of thinking this thought? If it makes me feel badly about myself, why not stop thinking it?

You can work on changing your negative thoughts to positive ones by —

- Replacing the negative thought with the positive one every time you realize you are thinking the negative thought.
- Repeating your positive thought over and over to yourself, out loud whenever you get a chance and even sharing them with another person if possible.
- Writing them over and over.
- Making signs that say the positive thought, hanging them in places where you would see them often-like on your refrigerator door or on the mirror in your bathroom-and repeating the thought to yourself several times when you see it.
- Also try thinking of where that negative voice comes from, who use to say those things to you and when you first hear that voice. Name them out loud. Now when you hear that voice in your head you tell yourself : "That's not me!" "I choose not to listen to them any more."

You can also fold a piece of paper in half to make two columns, use one side to write negative thoughts and the other side to write the corresponding positive thought. For example:

<u>Negative Thought</u>	<u>Positive Thought</u>
I am not worth anything.	I am a valuable person.
I have never accomplished anything.	I have accomplished many things.
I always make mistakes.	I do many things well.
I am a jerk.	I am a great person.
I don't deserve a good life.	I deserve to be happy and healthy.
I am stupid.	I am smart.

Now try to write two positive thoughts for each negative thought!

It helps to reinforce the positive thought if you repeat it over and over to yourself when you are deeply relaxed, like when you are doing a deep-breathing or relaxation exercise, or when you are just falling asleep or waking up.

Changing the negative thoughts you have about yourself to positive ones takes time and persistence. If you use the following techniques consistently for four to six weeks, you will notice that you don't think these negative thoughts about yourself as much. If they recur at some other time, you can repeat these activities. Don't give up. You deserve to think good thoughts about yourself.

### **Make affirming lists**

Making lists, rereading them often, and rewriting them from time to time will help you to feel better about yourself. If you have a journal, you can write your lists there. If you don't, any piece of paper will do.

Make a list of —

- At least five of your strengths, for example, persistence, courage, friendliness, creativity
- At least five things you admire about yourself, for example the way you have raised your children, your good relationship with your brother, or your spirituality
- The five greatest achievements in your life so far, like recovering from a serious illness, graduating from high school, or learning to use a computer
- At least 20 accomplishments - they can be as simple as learning to tie your shoes, to getting an advanced college degree
- 10 ways you can "treat" or reward yourself that don't include food and that don't cost anything, such as walking in woods, window-shopping, watching children playing on a playground, gazing at a baby's face or at a beautiful flower, or chatting with a friend
- 10 things you can do to make yourself laugh
- Advice or words of wisdom you would give to a friend.
- Things you are grateful for -- in fact, you can create a whole separate gratitude journal!