

How To Increase Your Self-Esteem

by Virginia A. Crandall

There's no limit to what you can do — as long as you believe in yourself.

My daughter's high school teacher invited her students to participate in a class talent show. My daughter volunteered to be in it. She played an instrument and sang a song she composed for the occasion. When she came home from school that day, she proudly showed me the note her teacher gave her. It said, "Some people couldn't do what you did today, and then there are those that could and would not. Congratulations to you!"

The people who couldn't do what my daughter did were those without self-esteem. Self-esteem sets the

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boundaries of our accomplishments. It tells us how much or how little we are capable of accomplishing. If we do too well, our internal self-esteem "thermostat" makes us slow down to fit our self-esteem. If we don't do well enough, our thermostat makes us speed up.

Self-esteem is a combination of self-confidence (I can do it) and self-worth (I am worthy of it). Self-confident people are active, discriminating and goalseeking. They rely on themselves, their own thoughts and feelings, not on the thoughts and feelings of others. They know that their intellect and emotions may conflict, but they carefully weigh their knowledge against their feelings and make the most rational choice, taking full responsibility for it. For example, self-confident people may fear public speaking, but they join and participate

in Toastmasters anyway. They know that if even they falter in their speech-improvement efforts, they still made the right choice, and they continue undaunted.

But self-confidence must be accompanied by self-worth. This means a person must consider himself or herself worthy of success and the good things of life. Singer Janice Joplin is said to have lacked self-worth. She could not live with success because she didn't consider herself worthy of success.

Weighing the Payoffs

Why don't we have enough self-esteem? Some of us find that having low self-esteem has payoffs. We don't have to be responsible. We don't have to risk failure. We can be lazy.

Many of us, however, have low self-esteem but would like to increase it. Take heart. Low self-esteem can be overcome. Psychiatrist Dr. Nathaniel Branden, author of *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, says the first step in increasing self-esteem is to "realize from the core that we alone are responsible for what happens to us." As soon as we recognize this, we can begin to change.

Robert E. Griswold, president of Effective Learning Systems in Edina, Minnesota, says we can change our self-image by recognizing our good points and acknowledging that we are doing the best we can.

Leonard Orr has a solution which involves writing self-affirmations. For example, I would write over and over, "I, Virginia Crandall, am highly pleasing to myself. You, Virginia Crandall, are highly pleasing to yourself. She, Virginia Crandall, is highly pleasing to herself." Although the wording can vary, all should be written in first person, second person and third person because we think about ourselves in all three ways. These written self-affirmations work to build our self-esteem.

Napoleon Hill suggests we spend 30

minutes daily concentrating upon the self-confident, self-worthy person we intend to become. Creating a clear mental picture of our goal helps us in our struggle to achieve it.

Ten Tips

Motivational expert Dr. Denis Waitley offers these suggestions:

- Dress and look your best at all times.
- Volunteer your own name first in every telephone call and whenever you meet someone new.
- Each day write down what you are thankful for.

People must consider themselves as worthy of good things.

- When someone pays you a compliment, accept it with a simple, courteous "thank you."
- At meetings, sit up front and exchange questions and answers with the speakers.
- Make a conscious effort to walk erectly and briskly.
- Set your own standards.
- When you talk to others about yourself, use encouraging, affirmative language.
- Write out a self-development plan.
- Smile.

By following these suggestions, we can increase our self-esteem and, in turn, our accomplishments. After all, there is no end to what we can do if we have the self-confidence and self-worth necessary to spur us on. ♣