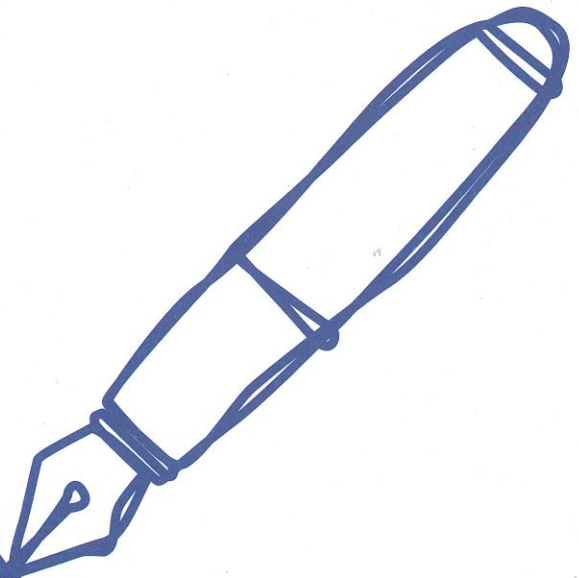


Self-esteem

A short guide



Includes writing exercise

About this guide


This leaflet is a short version of our information on self-esteem.

Self-esteem is how we value and perceive ourselves. It's based on our opinions and beliefs about ourselves, which can sometimes feel really difficult to change.

Whatever has affected your self-esteem, it's important to remember that **you have the right to feel good about who you are.** It might feel as if changing things will be difficult, but there are lots of things you can try to improve things bit by bit.

This guide has some tips and suggestions for improving your self-esteem. Some people find these ideas useful, but remember that different things work for different people at different times. Only try what you feel comfortable with, and try not to put too much pressure on yourself. If something isn't working for you (or doesn't feel possible just now), you can try something else, or come back to it another time.

For more detailed information on self-esteem, please see our website at mind.org.uk/self-esteem



Tips and ideas to try

Be kind to yourself

- **Get to know yourself.** Try to learn more about yourself – for example what makes you happy and what you value in life. Some people say they find it helpful to write in a journal.
- **Let yourself have feelings.** It's important to remember that you're a human being who can experience a wide range of emotions.
- **Consider what self-esteem means to you.** You might realise you're basing your sense of self-worth on things that aren't useful or helpful for you.
- **Try to challenge unkind thoughts about yourself.** You might automatically put yourself down. If you find yourself doing this, it can help to ask: "Would I talk to, or think about, a friend in this way?"
- **Avoid comparing yourself to others.** Try to remember that what other people choose to share about their lives isn't the full picture and comparing ourselves isn't realistic.
- **Say positive things to yourself.** It might feel really strange at first, but you'll feel more comfortable the more you do it.

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I had always just presumed [my dislike of myself] was a part of who I was ... It was only when I realised that my self-esteem didn't have to be negative that I started challenging my own ideas about myself.

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Look after yourself

- ◆ **Try to get enough sleep.** Getting too little or too much sleep can have a big impact on how you feel.
- ◆ **Think about your diet.** Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can make a difference to your mood and energy levels.
- ◆ **Try to do some physical activity.** Exercise can be really helpful for your mental wellbeing and some people find it helps improve their self-esteem.
- ◆ **Spend time outside.** Spending time in green space can help your wellbeing.
- ◆ **Try to avoid recreational drugs and alcohol.** While you might want to use recreational drugs or alcohol to cope with difficult feelings about yourself, in the long run they can make you feel worse and can prevent you from dealing with underlying problems.

Try to notice the good things

- ◆ **Celebrate your successes.** No matter how small they may seem, take time to praise yourself and notice what you did well. It could also help to remember past successes.
- ◆ **Accept compliments.** You could make a note of them to look over when you're feeling low or doubting yourself.
- ◆ **Ask people what they like about you.** It's likely that they see you differently to how you see yourself.
- ◆ **Don't put too much weight on negatives.** If someone says something unhelpful or unkind, you might find you focus on that and ignore anything positive.
- ◆ **Write a list of things you like about yourself.** For example, you could include character traits, skills or experience, beliefs or causes that matter to you or things you enjoy doing. You could ask other people for suggestions too. We have included some space for you to write on the last page of this leaflet.

Build a support network

- **Talk to someone.** For example you can contact **Samaritans** 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call 116 123 to talk about anything that is upsetting you.
- **Try peer support.** Making connections with people who have similar or shared experiences can be really helpful. For example, online communities like Mind's Elefriends can be a good source of support (visit elefriends.org.uk).
- **Contact your local Mind.** Mind's Infoline can also help you explore options for support. See the back of this leaflet for more details.
- **Talking and arts therapies.** Talking therapies can sometimes be helpful for building your self-esteem, or finding ways to cope with experiences that have affected how you feel about yourself. You may also find arts therapies helpful for your self-esteem.

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I've come to realise that people get to choose what they present about themselves online ... In reality, no one's life is perfect and everyone has insecurities, and it's important to remember this in order to not feel bad about yourself every time you see somebody post the 'perfect' selfie.


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Learn to be assertive

- ◆ **Practise saying no.** It could help to pause, take a breath and consider how you feel before agreeing to do something you don't want to.
- ◆ **Don't take too much on.** It's ok to set boundaries around how much you do for other people. Over-stretching yourself to please others can drain your energy and affect your wellbeing.
- ◆ **Give it time.** Being assertive can feel difficult if you're not used to it, but it can feel liberating - and it gets easier the more you do it.

Set yourself a challenge

- ◆ **Do things you enjoy.** You could take up a hobby, learn something new, do a creative activity or simply take the time to read a book or go for a walk.
 - ◆ **Try volunteering.** You might decide to volunteer your time for something you feel passionate about.
 - ◆ **Set small goals,** such as trying a recipe, learning the days of the week in a new language or simply looking for information on something you'd like to do.
 - ◆ **Do something for yourself every day.** Try to get into the habit of doing something to be kind to yourself or look after yourself.
 - ◆ **Let yourself have fun.** Remember you don't have to be perfect at something to enjoy doing it.
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Writing exercise

You might find it helpful to write a list of things you like about yourself, what makes you happy or what you value in life.

A series of 18 horizontal yellow lines, evenly spaced, intended for writing a list of things you like about yourself, what makes you happy, or what you value in life.



We're Mind, the mental health charity for England and Wales. We believe no one should have to face a mental health problem alone.

We're here for you. Today. Now. We're on your doorstep, on the end of a phone or online. Whether you're stressed, depressed or in crisis. We'll listen, give you advice, support and fight your corner. And we'll push for a better deal and respect for everyone experiencing a mental health problem.

Contact our Infoline

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