

I MATTER

DEVELOP A HIGH LEVEL OF SELF-RESPECT ECOURSE

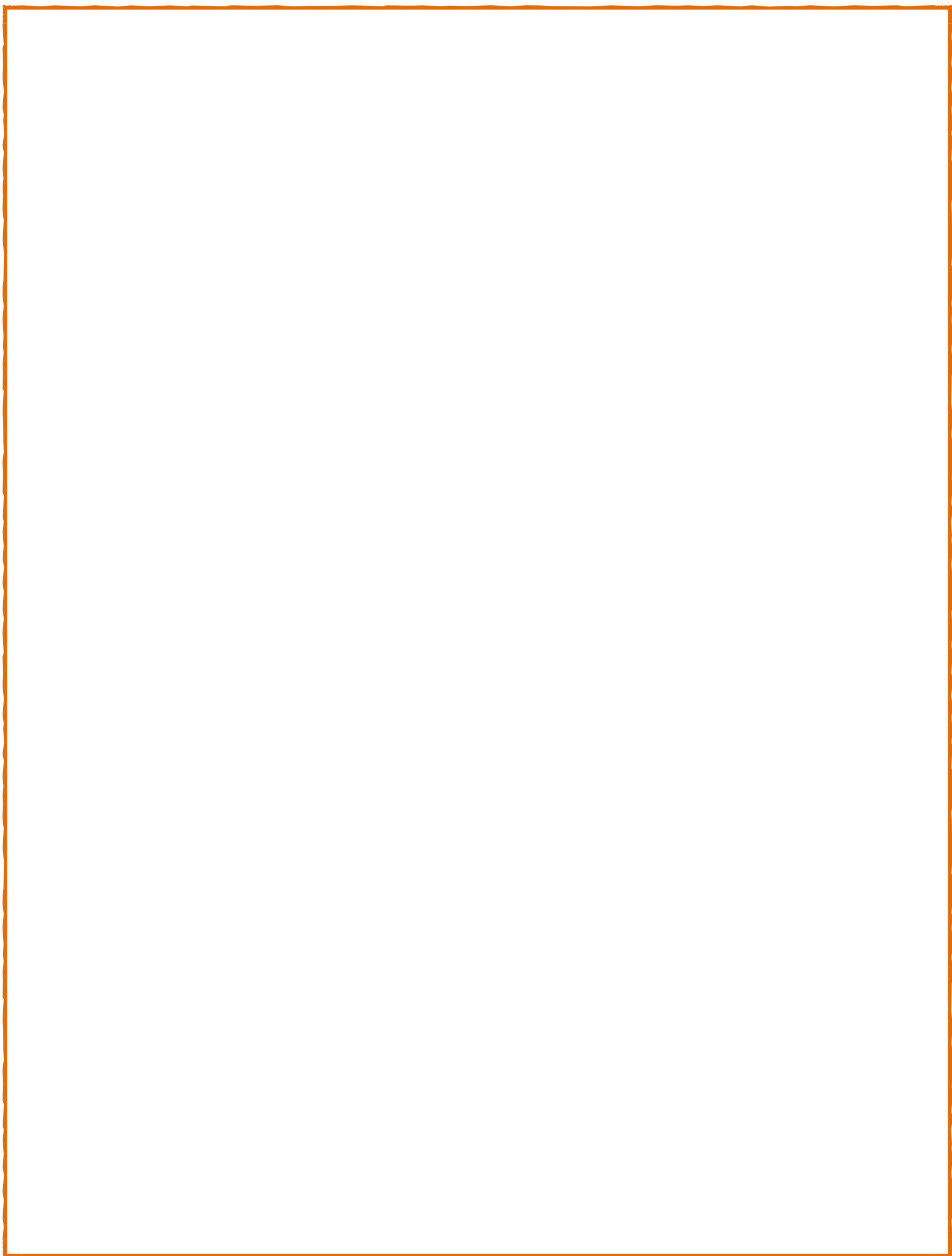


LESSON 2

THE FOUNDATION: SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-LOVE

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What It Means To Have Self Esteem

According to Psychology Today, *"Confidence in one's value as a human being is a precious psychological resource and generally a highly positive factor in life; it is correlated with achievement, good relationships, and satisfaction. Possessing little self-regard can lead people to become depressed, to fall short of their potential, or to tolerate abusive relationships and situations."*

Self-esteem is how you value and perceive yourself. Self-esteem is deeply rooted in your beliefs about yourself and your values; because it is so deeply rooted within yourself, learning how to improve or change your sense of self-esteem can be challenging.

When you have a strong sense of self-esteem, you see yourself as a worthy person with strengths, positive qualities, and desirable traits. You may see yourself as a helpful contributor to the world around you with skills that can be used to do a variety of jobs and tasks.

People with a good sense of self-esteem feel good about themselves. They like themselves, accept themselves exactly as they are, and practice self-love.

What Is Self-Love

According to the Better Health Channel, *"Self-esteem is your opinion of yourself. Everyone lacks confidence occasionally but people with low self-esteem are unhappy or unsatisfied with themselves most of the time. It takes attention and daily practice to boost a low self-esteem."*

Having self-love means you accept yourself for who you are, treat yourself kindly and respectfully, and do what you can to nurture your sense of wellbeing and growth.

Engaging in self-love means you are an active participant in your life – you want to see yourself do well, explore the world around you, and grow as a human being. However, you also accept limitations and listen to your needs so you can respond to them accordingly.

Essentially, self-love means you care about yourself and respect yourself to take good care of your mind, body, and spirit.

How Self-Esteem And Self-Love Connect To Having A Strong Sense Of Self Respect

A person with a strong sense of self-respect tends to have high levels of self-esteem and a strong sense of self-love.

Self-respect means you have pride and confidence in who you are; because you respect yourself, you act accordingly. You want to take good care of yourself because you are proud of the person you are. You have the confidence to make good choices that honor yourself and your needs.

When you have a high sense of self-esteem, it is easier to experience self-respect. Your self-esteem directly connects to your ability to feel good about who you are and accept yourself.

Similarly, when you experience self-love, it's much easier to feel more self-respect. Loving yourself is a sign of great respect – you truly believe you matter enough to take good, thorough care of yourself.

Signs And Symptoms Of Low Self-Esteem

- You are overly sensitive to criticism
- You are social withdrawn
- You may be hostile
- You are overly preoccupied with your problems
- Physical symptoms include anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and unhealthy habits such as excessive drinking and drug use.
- You lack self-confidence
- You make negative social comparisons
- You have trouble with asking others for help
- Excessive self-doubt
- You have a hard time accepting compliments
- You regularly engage in negative self-talk
- You have a chronic fear of failure
- You lack a positive outlook of the future
- You do not have healthy boundaries with yourself or others
- People pleasing
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Attracting abusive people into your life

Sources: <https://www.verywellmind.com/signs-of-low-self-esteem-5185978>;
<https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/signs-low-self-esteem>

All of these things have a great impact on your self-respect as self-respect naturally stems from high levels of self-esteem.

The Dangers Of Having Low Self Esteem And Self Love

“Various studies have confirmed that self-esteem has a direct relationship with our overall wellbeing, and we would do well to keep this fact in mind—both for ourselves and for those around us, particularly the developing children we interact with.” (source: <https://positivepsychology.com/self-esteem>)

There are some dangers associated with having a low sense of self-esteem and self-love. For example...

1. You may struggle to explore or try new things.

When you lack self-esteem and self-love, you may wonder “what’s the point of doing anything?” It’s tough to imagine expanding your horizons when you don’t feel like they deserve to be expanded. Rather than allowing your life to grow and flourish, you may stagnate in a sense of low self-esteem and a lack of self-love.

2. You may not like yourself.

When you struggle with self-esteem and self-love, it can be a real challenge to truly like yourself. Think of this phenomenon as a vicious cycle: when you struggle to like yourself, your self-esteem and self-love are low. When you don't feel good about yourself and have a hard time loving yourself, you probably won't like yourself very much.

3. You may develop issues with anxiety and/or depression.

People who struggle with their self-esteem and ability to self-love often face an increased risk of developing issues with anxiety and/or depression. When you have a difficult time loving yourself and feeling good about who you are, it can create a lot of excess stress and anxiety in your life.

This can cause you to feel incredibly low about yourself and develop an overall negative perspective on life.

4. You can develop strains in your various relationships.

When you struggle with self-love and self-esteem, you can see your various personal relationships suffer. Not feeling good about yourself makes it harder to share yourself with the other people in your life.

For example, struggling to like yourself can make it difficult to feel confident in a romantic relationship. You may lean heavily on your partner for support by seeking their constant validation. Perhaps you fear that they will leave you for someone they think is “better.” Rather than enjoying and nurturing the relationship, your lack of self-esteem and self-love damages it.

Respect Is For Everyone...Even If You Don't Feel Like You Really Deserve It

It is essential to remember that everybody deserves respect. This always includes yourself. When you find yourself struggling with self-esteem and self-love, it can be incredibly challenging to believe that you deserve kindness, respect, and goodness. You may feel low and unworthy, causing you to view yourself as a low priority in your own life as well as the lives of others.

Even when you are in the throes of low self-esteem and a lack of self-love, you still deserve the utmost respect from yourself. Just as you would dole out kindness to your friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and beyond, you also deserve the same amount of kindness in your own life.

If you find yourself feeling like you do not feel like you deserve any respect, remember:

- Everyone has bad days – even you. Going through a rough patch in life doesn't mean you shouldn't respect yourself.
- You can always express respect toward yourself by taking good care of yourself. Take care of your physical, mental, and emotional needs like the priorities they are.
- You can fail at something or make a mistake and still deserve respect. Even after a big mistake, you still deserve respect and kindness from yourself.

Many people who struggle with their sense of self-esteem and their ability to self-love struggle to respect themselves. When you don't feel good about who you are and lack the inclination to love yourself, it is easy to fall into a pattern of disrespectful behavior toward yourself.

Some people find it helpful to break this disrespectful cycle by thinking about how they treat their loved ones. For example, if your loved one made a mistake, would you immediately start berating them for the error? Probably not! Now, think about the way you talk to yourself after

you make a mistake. If you start berating yourself with negative self-talk, you need to examine your perspective on the situation. You deserve the same amount of respect you would show your loved one during a time like this.

Falling into patterns that promote a lack of self-respect can sadly feel very easy and natural to do. Challenge yourself to go against this inclination to disrespect yourself, no matter what you are experiencing in life.

Just like everyone else, you deserve your own sense of kindness and respect. Make an effort to practice treating yourself well by giving yourself this basic sense of respect.

15 Tips To Boost Self-Esteem

Struggling with your self-esteem from time to time is normal. All people go through periods of life where they do not feel good about themselves; these periods of time can be caused by a variety of different factors, from soured relationships, failures at work, and beyond. If you struggle with your sense of self-esteem, consider adopting these strategies to help boost it.

Identify And Use Your Personal Support System

An excellent way to boost your self-esteem is to reach out to people you love and trust when you are going through a difficult time. When you are feeling especially low and struggling with your self-esteem, talking to people you love, and trust deeply is an excellent way to give yourself a supportive boost.

In order for this strategy to work, it is essential to know who is in your support system ahead of time. Identify a few people, ideally the folks you love and trust most, and have a plan to contact them when you are struggling with your self-esteem.

Knowing that you have your personal support system plan in place is an excellent way to support your self-esteem levels when you're going through a tough time.

Swap Out Negative Self-Talk With Something More Positive

Many people engage in the bad habit of talking to themselves negatively. Using negative self-talk is terrible for your self-esteem. Take special note of how you speak to yourself, especially the phrasing and words you use when you address yourself directly. If you are using negative self-talk, you can practice swapping it for something more positive and productive.

For example, if you have a negative thought, such as, “These new people will never want to be friends with me.”

You can challenge that negative self-talk phrase by replacing it with something more positive, such as, “Meeting these new people will be exciting – I may make some new friends.”

In this example, the positive version of the original negative self-talk phrase is also more closely aligned with reality. If you haven't met these new people yet, you don't know how they will react to you. However, you can probably assume that they aren't just going to be outright cruel or mean to you, making the original negative thought improbable.

Start Each Day Off Positively With Affirmations And Mantras

Get into the habit of starting each day off positively with affirmations and mantras. Using positive affirmations and mantras is an excellent way to create a positive Foundation on which the entirety of your day can rest.

You can create your own unique sets of affirmations and mantras to use. You can also borrow these examples to get started:

- I am worthy.
- I can make good choices.
- Today is going to be a good day.
- Nice things are coming my way.
- I have the power to do good things.
- I am a force of positivity.

Repeating mantras and using affirmations with yourself has the power to change your attitude concerning your self-esteem. Over time, constantly hearing yourself repeat these types of

positive mantras and affirmations will begin to root them within your conscious mind as the truth. Even if you struggle to accept them as truthful in the beginning, the longer you practice using these mantras and affirmations, the easier it will be for you to feel a stronger sense of self-esteem.

Take Good Care Of Your Physical And Mental Health

It is always easier to feel a higher sense of self-esteem when you are treating yourself well. Take special care to take good care of your physical and mental health. There are a variety of things you can do to ensure that your physical and mental health are in tip top shape.

For example, you can...

- Listen to your body's various cues and signals. For example, if you feel hungry, feed yourself. If you feel tired, take a rest break.
- Get a good night's sleep every single night. Honor your reasonable bedtime and do everything you can to make going to bed relaxing and pleasant.
- Attend all your medical appointments and check-ups to ensure you're feeling your best.
- Reach out for help when you're struggling with mental health matters. Ask your support system for help or connect with a therapist.

...and many more! There are many things you can do to take good care of your body and mind. Attending to these needs makes it much easier to feel a higher sense of self-esteem because it reinforces the fact that you are important and worthy of care.

Practice Setting And Enforcing Boundaries With The Other People In Your Life

When other people constantly push against your comfort levels and boundaries, it can be extremely challenging to protect your sense of self-esteem. Feeling someone attempt to “steamroll” through one of your boundaries can make you feel disrespected and unimportant. This is why learning how to set and enforce boundaries with other people is essential for keeping yourself esteem high.

A good way to begin setting and enforcing boundaries with other people is saying “no” to requests you can’t reasonably honor. For example, if your coworker begs for your help to finish their project on time (even if it means spending less time on your own project), tell them “no.” Not only will this protect your personal time, but it communicates that you also have projects to complete.

When You Do Something Well, Take Some Time To Congratulate Yourself

Learn how to congratulate yourself when you do something well. Even if what you have done feels small or insignificant, it is important to recognize when you have done something well.

Every time you congratulate yourself and recognize good work, you are reinforcing the idea that you can do good things and produce positive results. The more energy and effort you place in congratulating yourself, the more you will feel your self-esteem levels rise.

Limit The Amount Of Time You Spend Scrolling Through Social Media

Social media has the power to connect us with friends and family all around the world. However, it also has a more insidious side. When you spend time scrolling through social media, it

becomes very tempting and easy to compare the details of your life against the shared details of other people's lives.

It is important to remember that people generally only share happy and exciting news on social media. They drafted their posts and selected the best possible images to share with the world. You are seeing a highly curated version of their lives; comparing your reality against what you are seeing other folks share online isn't fair to yourself at all.

To help boost your self-esteem, limit how often you scroll through social media. You may even choose to remove social media from your life altogether. Whatever your decision, finding a way to limit the amount of time you spend on your social media can work wonders for your self-esteem because it removes the temptation to compare yourself to everyone else's "highlight reels."

Practice Accepting Compliments Rather Than Attempting To Reject Or Negate Them

Think about the last time someone paid you a compliment. Perhaps someone at work told you they liked your outfit, or a distant relative congratulated you on a promotion at the family reunion. Think about the way you responded to your last compliment. Did you accept it graciously, or did you try to find a way to downplay their kindness?

Many people will attempt to negate the compliments they receive. For example, you might tell the coworker who complimented your outfit that the clothes were old. You may tell your distant relative that your promotion "wasn't really that big of a deal."

In these situations, you negate their comments by trying to downplay their kindness. You don't do this because you want to be mean to them; instead, you do it because of low self-esteem.

The next time somebody pays you a nice compliment, practice accepting it by simply saying thank you. Do not try to downplay or negate whatever the person said to you. and said practice accepting the nice compliment by expressing thanks for it and then leaving it alone instead of picking it apart and trying to prove it wrong.

Talk To People You Love And Trust About Why They Like You

When your self-esteem is low, it can be a challenge to understand your true strengths and positive characteristics. If this situation sounds familiar, reach out to people you love and trust and ask them specifically why they like you.

Asking your friends, family, and other folks who are close to you about why they like you is a great way to see an outsider's perspective on your whole self. When you're struggling with your self-esteem, you can feel very insular, as if you are struggling with yourself alone.

You don't have to struggle alone – instead, ask for your loved ones to help you understand your strengths and great qualities for a self-esteem boost.

Get Involved In A Cause That Matters A Lot To You

One of the greatest ways to boost your self-esteem is to get involved in a cause that matters a lot to you. For example, you can choose to volunteer or help out a group that likely needs extra assistance, such as your local food bank, homeless shelter, or animal shelter.

Getting involved with volunteer work and helping others not only provides necessary assistance to various programs and individuals who need it, but it also gives your self-esteem a major boost. It feels good to help others and knowing that you've done something positive for someone else helps you feel better about yourself.

Track Your Progress As You Work Toward Various Goals In Your Life

Make sure you are tracking your progress toward various goals in your life. When you're working toward a big goal – especially one that is long term – it can be tough to really understand the progress you're making.

To boost your self-esteem further, make sure you keep track of your progress. When you're feeling low, you can review the strides you've made on your pathway toward meeting your various goals. Sometimes, progress can feel invisible, but when you have some physical proof of moving closer, you can boost your self-esteem higher.

Avoid Using Negative Outlets To Self Soothe When You're Feeling Low

When you're feeling low, you may feel tempted to access some negative outlets to soothe your battered emotions. Some examples of negative outlets commonly used to self soothe include...

- Excessive drinking
- Drug use
- Overeating
- Impulse spending

Even though these outlets may help you feel better in the moment, they can cause long term negative effects that can totally tank your self-esteem and make you feel even worse than you did before using them to soothe. Instead, look for more positive methods of soothing, such as...

- Reaching out to a loved one for support
- Taking a rest break or a nap
- Attending a counseling or therapy appointment
- Getting in some physical exercise

- Engaging in deep breathing exercises

Challenge Your Negative Assumptions By Measuring Them Against Reality

Often, negative thinking patterns are bred from anxiety and stress. When your thinking patterns are rooted in anxiety and stress, they are rarely aligned with reality!

A good way to boost your self-esteem – especially when you’re going through a particularly challenging time – is to practice measuring your negative thoughts and assumptions against reality.

For example, consider this negative assumption:

“I know I am going to fail my test.”

This kind of thought can do serious damage to your self-esteem. You are telling yourself that you are going to fail even before you get to take the test!

However, practice measuring this negative thought against reality:

- You have a week to study before the test happens
- You have a good set of notes from class to use for review
- You can sign up for a tutoring session before the test date

When you measure your negative assumption against reality, it’s much easier to break it down before it can damage your self-esteem.

Give Yourself One Kind Compliment Each Day

Make an effort to speak to yourself with kindness – doing so can really raise your self-esteem! A great way to do this is to give yourself a compliment each day.

Complimenting yourself can feel a little awkward at first, especially if you're accustomed to using negative self-talk toward yourself. However, the more frequently you do it, the easier it will feel over time.

You can choose to compliment yourself on anything, such as a trait you admire within yourself, something you did well during the day, your outfit, and more. The point of the exercise is to recognize goodness within yourself and speak it aloud.

Think Of Yourself As Your Best And Closest Friend

One of the best things you can do to raise your self-esteem is to treat yourself like your best and closest friend.

Think about the way you interact with your best friend. You speak to them with kindness, listen to them, support them when they're struggling, and use kind words to guide them through their anxieties. You do these things because you feel like your best friend deserves your kindness.

Start extending the same "best friend" treatment toward yourself. You deserve the same kind of goodness from yourself, so practice sharing the love inward as well as outward. For example, use kind words to guide yourself through a difficult situation.

Do things to support yourself when times are tough. Listen to yourself and respond to your body's needs accordingly. The more you treat yourself like a true best friend, the more you'll trust yourself and feel your self-esteem bloom.