

Twelve Steps to Increase Your Self-Esteem

By Nisandeh Neta

It all begins one day, with your birth into the world. Showered with love and affection, you are adored, appreciated and enjoyed...

A low self-esteem simply does not exist. Everything around you, indeed the whole universe, is simply an extension of yourself. Although you were cranky when you were hungry, tired or wet, you made no negative judgments about yourself the way adolescents and adults do. You never cried about self-doubt, self-hate, or wanting to be popular.

As an infant, you still hold the idea that you're the center of the universe. When you enter the shopping mall - you don't just want a toy - you want the toy store. And then... 20-30-40 years later (after a few 'failures' and many statements such as "You can't always get what you want..." or "You've been bad this morning, so you can't have it now..." or "If you'll behave yourself, tomorrow you can have one...") ... you visit someone for the first time. They ask you a simple question: "would you like tea or coffee?" And you answer: "oh, it doesn't matter" or "what's easier for you" or "no thanks, I've had coffee in the morning..."

What a long way down the hill, from the once high-point of a healthy self-esteem...

As adults, we can choose the messages we accept or reject. No one can make you feel inferior without your permission. The building of a high self-esteem is a continuing process, not something that can be developed overnight. From my experience of working with thousands of people, every person has the capacity for a high self-esteem. The only question is, are you ready to make the commitment necessary to increase your self-esteem?

If your answer is yes, here are 12 steps to get you started:

STEP 1

Stop comparing yourself with others.

There will always be some people who have more than you and some who have less. You are unique and your purpose is to express your uniqueness. Who can do that better than you?

STEP 2

Stop diminishing yourself with negative judgments.

You can't develop high self-esteem if you repeat negative phrases about yourself and your abilities.

STEP 3

Avoid perfectionism.

Perfectionism paralyzes you and keeps you from accomplishing your goals.

STEP 4

Surround yourself with positive, supportive people.

When you are surrounded by negative people who constantly put you down, your self-esteem is diminished.

STEP 5

Acknowledge yourself.

Get yourself a beautiful booklet, and write in it every night, before going to sleep, 20 things you did well during the day. Big or small, doesn't matter, as long as you allow yourself to feel acknowledged.

STEP 6

Give more of yourself to those around you.

When you do things for others, you are making a positive contribution and subsequently begin to feel more valuable, which, in turn, lifts your spirits and raises your own self-esteem.

STEP 7

Get involved in the work and activities that inspire you.

It's hard to feel good about yourself if your days are spent in work you detest. Even if you cannot leave your present work situation immediately, you can still devote leisure time to hobbies and activities, which you find stimulating and enjoyable.

STEP 8

Be true to yourself.

Live your own life - not the life others have decided is best for you. If you're making decisions based on getting approval from friends and relatives, you aren't being true to yourself and your self-esteem will suffer as a direct consequence.

STEP 9

Solve problems.

Don't avoid problems, and don't complain about them. Treat them as challenges and opportunities for growth.

STEP 10

Respect your own needs.

Recognize and take care of your own needs and wants first. Identify what really fulfills you - not just immediate gratifications. Respecting your deeper needs will increase your sense of worth and well-being.

STEP 11

Free yourself from "shoulds".

Live your life on the basis of what is possible for you and what feels right to you instead of what you or others think you "should" do. Discover what you want and what you are good at and take actions designed to fulfill your potential.

And the most important of them all,

STEP 12

Take action!

You won't develop high self-esteem if you sit on the sidelines and avoid challenges. When you take action, regardless of the result, you feel better about yourself. When you fail to move forward because of fear and anxiety, you create frustration and dissatisfaction within yourself.

The 'real you' is a magnificent, unique being with enormous potential and capacity for experiencing self-love and extending that love to others. As your self-esteem grows, this 'real you' emerges. You begin to take more risks without the fear of failure. You are no longer preoccupied with obtaining the approval of others; your relationships are much more rewarding; you pursue activities that bring you both joy and satisfaction; and you will make a positive contribution to the world.

Most importantly, high self-esteem brings you peace of mind. When you're alone - you truly appreciate the person you're with - yourself.