WHAT IS SELF-ESTEEM?
Self-esteem is simply how you see yourself. Are you valuable, likable, and important? Or do you consider yourself to be inferior and inadequate? Healthy self-esteem is feeling positive about yourself, being appropriately assertive, and acting with confidence. It includes being resilient and having an overall sense of well-being.

Self-esteem is not:
- Being perfect
- Never making a mistake
- Always winning or being first
- Having more than others
- Being an ideal weight
- Always being happy
- Having everyone’s approval
- Always being noticed
- Never being noticed
- Being good at everything
- Always being calm
- Looking good
- Being better than others

UNDERSTANDING SELF-WORTH
Low self-esteem will keep you from valuing your own ideas and opinions. Poor regard for your worth may make it difficult to receive compliments for a job well done. Weaknesses and faults can be blown out of proportion, while skills and abilities are underestimated. It is easy to view others as more successful. Some people are so self-conscious that simple pleasures are overshadowed by worrying what others think. When this happens, there is little room to admire the beauty and charms of life or appreciate the present moment. Substance use and mental health disorders may have added to a sense of loss, defeat, failure, and discouragement.

INFLUENTIAL FACTORS THAT SHAPE SELF-ESTEEM
Many factors shape and influence your self-esteem and its development, beginning in early childhood. These can include:
- Your own thoughts and perceptions
- How others respond and react to you
- Experiences at school or work
- Being compared unfavorably to others
- Religious views of family or community
- Traumatic experiences such as physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse
- Cultural view toward you
RAISING YOUR SELF-ESTEEM - WORKSHEET 1

- Community attitudes toward you
- Having a chronic illness
- Having an injury or disability

WRITING YOUR STORY

Healthy self-esteem means feeling positive about yourself. Most people do not act very differently than how they see themselves. Spend a few moments reflecting on your self-perception. Have you had hardships, abuse, or traumatic experiences that have negatively impacted your self-esteem? If so, indicate how these experiences affected you. How have people negatively added to your view of yourself? Also, indicate how a substance use disorder has also damaged your self-esteem.

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HEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM

Those with healthy self-esteem tend to be:

- Appropriately assertive in expressing needs and opinions
- Confident in their ability to make decisions
- Able to build secure and honest relationships and are less likely to stay in unhealthy ones
- Less prone to feeling hopeless, worthless, or full of guilt and shame
- Realistic in their expectations and are not overly critical of self and others
- More resilient and better able to weather stress and setbacks
- Less likely to develop an addiction or mental health condition such as depression, anxiety, or an eating disorder

Self-esteem affects virtually every aspect of life. Maintaining a healthy, realistic view of yourself is not about promoting yourself, but is learning to like and respect yourself, faults and all.
RAISING YOUR SELF-ESTEEM - WORKSHEET 1

LOW SELF-ESTEEM CHECKLIST

Your overall perception of yourself, complete with abilities, limitations, and shortcomings, becomes your self-esteem. For many people a struggle with low self-esteem is lifelong. Do you:

- Avoid eye contact with others
- Find it difficult to start conversations
- Have trouble making up your mind or making a decision
- Have trouble expressing how you feel
- Not feel confident
- Rarely express your opinion in a group
- Feel embarrassed about how you look
- Have difficulty asking for what you need or want
- Feel tense around most people
- Often worry about what others think of you
- Not feel others approve of you
- Think life lacks purpose and direction
- Worry about saying or doing the wrong thing
- Focus on the needs of others more than your own
- Feel pessimistic and negative most of the time
- Have difficulty accepting compliments
- Depend on others for your happiness
- Often feel inadequate or insecure
- Have an unusually high fear of failure
- Feel badly about yourself most of the time
- Harm or injure yourself

As you look at your answers, what does it indicate about your self-esteem?

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HEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM CHECKLIST

A healthy self-esteem acknowledges both your abilities and limitations. Consider the following checklist and select the statements that apply to you.

- I'm growing and learning
- I have many talents and positive traits
- I am wanted by others
- Other people value me
RAISING YOUR SELF-ESTEEM- WORKSHEET 1

- I can make contributions to others
- I enjoy life
- I’m helpful to others
- I can receive and believe compliments from others
- I’m proud of the character traits I have
- I feel confident
- I don’t really worry about making mistakes
- I can be courageous, brave, and bold
- I’m able to state my opinion
- My life has purpose and meaning
- I can make decisions and feel comfortable with them
- I feel comfortable around others
- My mind is peaceful
- I am, for the most part, content
- I don’t worry what others might think of me
- I can ask for what I need
- My needs are as important as others
- I have abilities and skills
- I can look at others directly and with confidence

People with low self-esteem use very specific criteria to determine their worth, competence, and adequacy. They review past mistakes, disappointments, and failures as the measurement to prove their inferiority. Minimizing faults and highlighting strengths and positive characteristics is a skill that can be developed. Doing this will build confidence, improve mood, and build inner strength. Consistent review, alongside a strong belief, of these positive traits and qualities can help bring a healthier view of self and provide encouragement when bad days come along.