Lesson Objective: Explore ways to increase self-esteem

A POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT
Because we act and feel according to how we see ourselves, a healthy self-concept is important. If we see ourselves as adequate, influential, and valuable we will act confidently, talk to others freely, and express our opinions openly. If we see ourselves as inadequate and inferior, opinions are withheld, other people avoided, and new friendships approached with caution.

WRITING YOUR STORY
Rebuilding a positive self-concept and restoring your self-esteem is possible. It is easy to remember regretful words, a past bad attitude, and things that have gone wrong. In the space below, reflect on recent things that have gone right for you. Describe situations and circumstances that you have managed well. Look at positive strides you have made and character qualities you possess that you are proud of. Reflect on character traits you value.

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TEN WAYS TO INCREASE SELF-ESTEEM

1. Identify and replace your negative self-talk.
People with low self-esteem often put themselves down or even call themselves names. Practice speaking positively to yourself, about yourself, to increase self-confidence.

2. Review positive attributes about yourself.
Write a list of the positive characteristics, attitudes, personality traits, and attributes you possess. Regular review will increase your self-esteem and act as a defense against your negative self-talk.
RAISING YOUR SELF-ESTEEM - WORKSHEET 2

3. Set character goals.

Set a goal to be kind, loving, understanding, or patient. Rather than comparing your appearance, performance, wealth, or social standing against your friends or family members, compare yourself with your own character goals. Live according to your own values. For example, if you admire honesty, identify your success at telling the truth in each and every situation.

4. Highlight and review victories.

Minimize setbacks and failures. To increase a positive sense of self, it is helpful to highlight progress and improvements and spend your time focusing on these things. Maximize success and minimize your struggles. There will always be a mix of both, and you can decide which you want to review most often. Your primary focus should be on where you are going, with only minimal attention to where you have been.

5. Focus on the things you can change.

Many people spend too much time focusing on situations, circumstances, other people's feelings toward them, and any number of issues outside their control. Time is better spent focusing on the character goals you set. You are the one who controls your mood, attitude, and disposition, so focus on these things.

6. Develop a support team.

Interacting with positive people makes it much easier to believe the best about yourself. A support team will have ways to encourage and affirm you. Developing a support team also means reducing or eliminating contact with those who pull you down. Surrounding yourself with positive, supportive people will greatly enhance your recovery journey.

7. Increase exercise.

Endorphins are the body's natural anti-depressant, and adding activity and exercise to your life can boost endorphin production. Daily exercise can energize you, improve your mood, make it easier to interact with others, and help you feel better about yourself.

8. Add hobbies, interests, and activities.

Schedule some time for relaxation, fun, and entertainment. Anxiety and worry rob you of the simple pleasures in life. Give yourself permission to enjoy the wide variety of experiences and opportunities life offers. This can increase your positive outlook and keep you from feeling deprived.
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9. **Do something nice for someone and don’t tell anyone about it.**

Helping someone else can increase positive feelings about yourself. Not only can you do something to help them but your own mood will be lifted. Instead of trying to receive credit or gain approval for what you have done, let your thoughts and actions be their own reward.

10. **Increase your independence.**

Self-esteem is often increased as you do more to improve your own situation. As you become more responsible for your own mood, you will become less dependent on others to help you feel good about yourself.

**CHANGE FOLLOWS ACCEPTANCE**

It is not difficult to see how co-occurring disorders and low self-esteem go hand in hand, and how a healthy self-esteem goes along with solid recovery. Changing yourself because you dislike yourself is not effective motivation. You can accept and like yourself the way you are and use that acceptance as a platform and foundation to change yourself for the better. Learning to like and believe in yourself is a process and it has many rewards for your recovery and beyond.