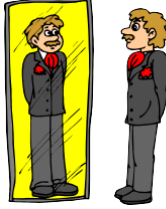


# what is low self-esteem?

## What is Self-Esteem?

As human beings, we tend to place a value or a measure of worth to ourselves or aspects of ourselves. So, self-esteem usually refers to how we view and think about ourselves and the value that we place on ourselves as a person. If the value we place on ourselves is often negative, this is when we run into problems with self-esteem.



## Low Self-Esteem

Have you ever been dissatisfied or unhappy with yourself on the whole? Do you ever think that you are weak, stupid, not good enough, flawed in some way, inferior to other people, useless, worthless, unattractive, ugly, unlovable, a loser, or a failure?

Everyone uses these words on themselves at times, usually when they experience a challenging or stressful situation. However, if you often think about yourself in these terms, then you might have a problem with low self-esteem.

*Low self-esteem is having a generally negative overall opinion of oneself, judging or evaluating oneself negatively, and placing a general negative value on oneself as a person.*

People with low self-esteem usually have deep-seated, basic, negative beliefs about themselves and the kind of person they are. These beliefs are often taken as facts or truths about their identity, rather than being recognised as opinions they hold about themselves.

## The Impact of Low Self-Esteem

**Frequent Self-Criticism.** A person with low self-esteem probably says a lot of negative things about themselves. They might criticise themselves, their actions, and abilities or joke about themselves in a very negative way. They might put themselves down, doubt themselves, or blame themselves when things go wrong.

**Ignoring Positive Qualities.** When compliments are given to them, they might brush such comments aside or say that “it was all luck” or “it wasn’t that big a deal.” Instead, they might focus on what they didn’t do or the mistakes they made.

**Negative Emotions.** A person with low self-esteem might often feel sad, depressed, anxious, guilty, ashamed, frustrated, and angry.

**Impact on Work/Study.** A person with low self-esteem might consistently achieve less than they are able to because they believe they are less capable than others. They might avoid challenges & opportunities for fear of not doing well. They might work extremely hard and push themselves to do more because they believe they need to make up for, or cover up, their lack of skill. They might find it hard to believe any good results they get are due to their own abilities or positive qualities.

**Relationship Problems.** In their personal relationships, people with low self-esteem might become upset or distressed by any criticism or disapproval, bend over backwards to please others, be extremely shy or self-consciousness or even avoid or withdraw from intimacy or social contact. They might also be less likely to stand up for themselves or protect themselves from being bullied, criticised, or abused by partners or family. On the other hand they can be overly aggressive in their interactions with others.



**Recreation and Leisure.** People with low self-esteem might not engage in many leisure or recreational activities, as they might believe that they do not deserve any pleasure or fun. They might also avoid activities where they could be judged or evaluated in some way, such as competitive sports, dancing, art/craft classes or participating in any type of competition or exhibition.

**Personal Self-Care.** People who do not value themselves might drink excessive amounts of alcohol or abuse drugs. They might not bother to dress neatly, wear clean clothes, style their hair or buy new clothes. On the other hand, they might try to hide any inadequacies by not allowing themselves to be seen by others unless they look absolutely perfect.

## Cause or Effect?

It is important to know that low self-esteem is a common problem for many people in our society - so you are not alone. Low self-esteem can occur as part of a current problem (such as depression), or as a result of other problems (such as chronic illness, relationship problems) or it can be a problem in itself. Either way, the good news is that you can take steps towards developing more healthy self-esteem.