

The Self-Esteem Effect: You're worth it

Self-esteem levels make all the difference

At the basic level, self-esteem is the overall positive or negative impression of self, and what we believe to be true about ourselves. There are three primary levels of self-esteem: low, healthy, and high.

Having low self-esteem means that you don't value yourself enough, which makes it difficult to see the positives in life and may lead to depression, substance use, and becoming reluctant to leave abusive situations. Having very high self-esteem means that you place *too much* value on yourself and are unable to see your own flaws, which comes off as arrogant and entitled, and may lead to impulse control issues and bullying/abusive behavior.

While self-esteem levels can vary by aspect (i.e., you believe you are great at cooking, but feel your paintings are terrible), a healthy opinion of yourself as a whole is best.

Indicators of healthy self-esteem

So what does healthy self-esteem look like? Someone with a healthy self-view possesses attributes such as:

- The ability to be assertive, express opinions, and say no
- Confidence (not arrogance)
- Self-assured decision-making
- The ability to establish stable, authentic relationships (and know when to leave unhealthy ones)
- Positive outlook
- Ability to acknowledge and accept one's strengths *and* weaknesses
- Realistic expectations of self and others
- Higher resilience to stress in the face of obstacles

Improving your self-esteem

Boosting your self-esteem takes work and while it won't happen overnight, there are some important steps you can take toward improvement. The following tips are a great way to get started:

- **Focus on the facts**
People with low self-esteem tend to dwell on the negative and untrue things they may hear and think about themselves. Practice refocusing on the truth to maintain a healthy, positive opinion of yourself.
- **Recognize and take advantage of your true strengths**
When we excel at something, we tend to enjoy it more. Evaluate what you're truly good at and make it a regular part of your life – at home or at work.
- **Reflect on how others see you.**
Bring to mind admirable traits by reviewing positive feedback that others have given you.
- **Go with the ebb and flow**
Self-esteem can change day-to-day and cross through many aspects of life. Understand and accept that there will be highs and lows.
- **Take care of yourself**
Self-esteem starts with you, so encourage, root for, and be kind to yourself. And, if you need a little extra help, support is available.

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to federal employees and their family members at no cost.

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