

Stop Beating Yourself Up - Become a Self-Love Warrior!

#WellbeingWarriors

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How we think about ourselves can have a profound impact on our overall wellbeing. When we feel bad about ourselves, it can lead to a variety of negative effects, such as emotional and behavioural challenges. A low (or unhealthy) self-esteem can lead to feelings of anxiety and unhappiness. Behavioural issues such as procrastination and substance misuse can often be linked to low self-esteem.

People with low self-esteem often have severe doubts about their capabilities and self-worth. This may lead to anxiety when in social situations or when they need to perform certain tasks. Having negative views about yourself frequently leads to excessive fear of judgement or rejection by others. This elevated concern about what others may think of you (and wanting to be accepted by others), is a sure-fire way to repeated disappointments and heart-ache.

One of the biggest pitfalls in developing self-esteem is that people tend to place their self-worth on qualities or things that can fade away. These are things such as the opinion of others; having money; being successful, beautiful, or in a relationship. All of these can be lost, and when you place your self-worth on unstable aspects, your self-esteem will also be unstable. Rather place your self-worth on stable, long-term characteristics, such as being hardworking, loving or determined. No-one can take that away from you. This article is a brief introduction to the journey of self-acceptance.

Possible signs that you may have low self-esteem

- Anxiety, especially in social situations (fear of public speaking)
- Negative thoughts (I am not good enough)
- Self-sabotage (not applying for that bursary you need/procrastinating)
- Substance misuse (due to feelings of anxiety/despair)
- Unhealthy relationships (fear of speaking up/rejection)

Complete this [free online self-esteem test](#).

Formation of self-esteem

We are not born with low self-esteem. This means it is something that is modified over time, via our experiences. Thus, the good news is that we can unlearn the negative self-beliefs and adapt to a healthier self-image.

Some factors that can lead to low self-esteem:

- Over-critical parents/caregivers
- Abusive parents
- Negative academic experiences (failing/learning difficulties)
- Bullying
- Abusive (verbal/sexual/physical) romantic partners

- Toxic friendships
- Health issues
- Weight challenges
- Unfaithful relationships

When you experience an event such as mentioned above, you may start to form the internal belief that there is something wrong with you as a person. Very often, external voices become your internal voice. So, when you regularly receive the message that you are 'not good enough' from significant others, you start believing this to be true. Unfortunately, this belief can continue long after the person is out of your life. That is your journey and challenge to tackle – [transforming your inner critical voice](#).

The way forward

Overcoming low self-esteem is not easy to do, but it is one of the most rewarding journeys you will ever take. Here are ways to start on your path.

1. Understand your self-esteem

Although it is not essential to know why it formed, it can be beneficial to understand what may have had an impact on your self-esteem. Reflect back over your life – what significant events do you think could have contributed to your negative self-beliefs?

2. Learn to let go

This may be one of the most challenging actions for humans to take. You may have a variety of emotions and pain related to the past event(s). Forgiving others may even feel like you are excusing their behaviour. It is not. [Letting go](#) is about YOU freeing yourself of past hurt. When you are able to let go and move on in life, you can truly live your best life.

3. Identify your self-sabotaging thoughts and behaviours

Long after these events or people have vanished from your life, you may continue living in a way that confirms your negative self-image. In other words, you may engage in self-sabotaging thoughts and behaviours such as self-judgement, procrastination, substance misuse, self-harm and damaging relationships. This may stem from the belief that you don't deserve any happiness or success in your life. [Become aware](#) of how you self-sabotage and seek out healthier actions and kinder thoughts.

Quote by Robert Brault: "Life becomes easier when you learn to accept an apology you never got."

4. Realise that you are the whole pizza!

If you were carrying a pizza and dropped only one piece – would you throw out the whole pizza? Probably not, because the rest of it is still edible. However, we tend to judge ourselves according to one negative aspect, instead of realising that we are so much more. We have all made mistakes, and no-one is perfect. Learn to see yourself holistically, instead of focusing on your one or two flaws.

5. Get to know, love and accept yourself

Focus on living according to your values, and not your fears or what others may think of you. Explore your [values](#), [strengths and weaknesses](#).

6. Live according to your truth, and not out of fear

A way of dealing with social anxiety/fear of judgement is to ask yourself these questions:

- 1) Do I KNOW what others are thinking of me?
- 2) Even IF they are judging me, why should it matter to me?
- 3) Who are the people whose opinions do matter to me?

Quote by unknown: "When you start seeing your worth, you'll find it harder to stay around people who don't."

7. Stand up for yourself

The majority of people with low self-esteem also tend to struggle with conflict management. It makes sense, as the fear of rejection and conflict is often so strong that you would rather avoid it. Learn how to be [assertive](#), and effectively [manage conflict](#) - you deserve to be heard.

8. Let go of "should" and "musts"

Learn to [love and accept yourself unconditionally](#), and not only when you have achieved particular successes or reached a specific milestone. This doesn't mean you should stop working towards your goals, it means that you accept yourself every day, and not only when you reach your goal. Remember – when you focus on your hard work in achieving your goal, instead of the goal itself, you will have a healthier self-esteem. To illustrate: Imagine your child practised every day for 3 hours over six months for their upcoming athletic competition. Would you tell them that they are a failure if they do not come in first?

The journey to self-love is challenging but vital for your psychological wellbeing. It is something you need to work on regularly, for both your own sake and that of your loved ones. Remember, the way we feel about ourselves can impact those closest to us as well. Pain and suffering are a cycle of energy, and only you have the power of choosing how to channel it. Will you choose to hurt yourself and others or to stop it altogether? Make the right choice today, and start loving yourself unconditionally.

Read this [woman's journey to accepting herself](#) and her body as is.