

Ways to Improve Your Self-Esteem

Accept and believe in yourself.

Appreciate and accept yourself as a unique individual.
Believe in yourself, and in your skills and abilities.

Practice positive self-talk.

When you have thoughts that are negative or critical, make the choice to think differently.
Fill your thoughts with positive, encouraging messages.

Develop your skills.

Whether you like sports, writing, or cooking, developing your skills and becoming more accomplished at something is a great way to improve your self-esteem.

Be willing to try new things.

Challenge yourself, stretch your boundaries and look for new experiences.
Have a can-do attitude.

Help someone else.

Helping others is not only a great thing to do, it makes you feel good.

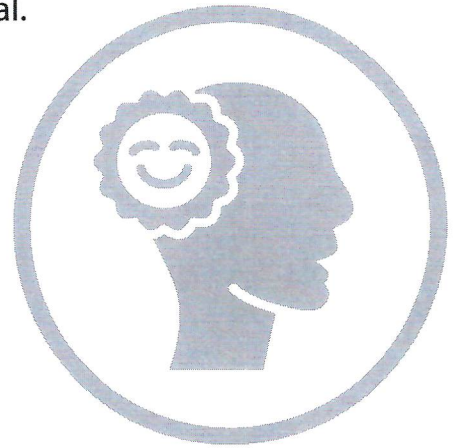
Surround yourself with positive people.

Seek out friends who are supportive, positive, and encouraging. As much as possible, avoid people who are negative, self-destructive, or who bring you down.

Accept that you are a work in progress.

If you tend to be hard on yourself, cut yourself some slack. No one is perfect.
Just strive to do your best.

If your feelings go beyond low self-esteem and cross over into feelings of depression or self-harm, it's important that you talk to a counselor or to someone who can help you. You can also contact the Crisis Text line by texting HOME to 741741, chat online with a counselor at 988lifeline.org, or call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988.



ABUSE, ASSAULT, & MENTAL HEALTH

On average, over 800,000 people are victims of a violent assault each year. Over 650,000 people each year are sexually assaulted, with the highest percentage of victims being under the age of 25—specifically ages 14–17.

If you've experienced any kind of assault, know that you are not alone, and that it is not your fault. Also know there are ways to move forward and to heal—and that you deserve to heal.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

You did nothing to deserve this.

No one deserves to be harmed in any way. Even if you feel guilty or angry at yourself, remember, this is *not your fault*.

You are not alone.

You might feel isolated or ashamed and feel apprehensive about telling someone what's happened to you. This is normal. Just know that you have nothing to be ashamed of, you are not alone, and there is support available.

Give yourself time.

Know that the negative feelings you're experiencing are temporary, and you *will* feel better. Don't get frustrated if you think you can't feel or act normal right away. Give yourself time and get support.

WHAT YOU MIGHT BE FEELING

Abuse and assault, especially sexual abuse and assault, can be very damaging to your mental health. The following are common responses to this kind of trauma:

- ▶ flashbacks and/or nightmares
- ▶ trouble focusing or thinking clearly
- ▶ depression-like symptoms, such as feelings of sadness, loneliness, and/or loss of interest
- ▶ physical symptoms, such as fatigue or shaking
- ▶ being startled easily
- ▶ irritability
- ▶ feelings of guilt or self-blame

If you are experiencing these, or other negative feelings, there are ways to cope and get better.

For more information on dealing with trauma, watch this quick video.



GET SUPPORT

No matter what happened or how you're handling it, there are resources available to you. Talk to a counselor, a trusted friend or family member, or try one of these resources.

- ▶ **RAINN:** Call 1-800-656-4673 or chat online at hotline.rainn.org.
- ▶ **Love is respect:** Call 1-866-331-9474, text LOVEIS to 22522, or chat online at loveisrespect.org.
- ▶ **Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text 988, chat online at 988lifeline.org, or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting HOME to 741741.

ACCEPTING YOURSELF

No one loves everything about themselves all of the time. It's normal to feel insecure at times about things like your looks or abilities, or perhaps just who you are.

Self-acceptance is a lifelong journey—a journey that will lead to a happier, healthier life.

WHAT IS SELF-ACCEPTANCE?

Self-acceptance means being able to accept all parts of yourself, even the parts you don't like or fear others won't like or understand. When you accept yourself, you can present your authentic self to the world and feel good about who you are.

If this sounds hard to do, you're right. It's not easy to accept the things we'd like to change about ourselves. We all have flaws, faults, and failures, and we all struggle to varying degrees to accept certain things about ourselves. Self-acceptance takes work.

People who have trouble accepting themselves unconditionally often find that this affects their relationships, schoolwork, and mental health. If you struggle with self-acceptance, know that there are things you can do to feel better.

Self-acceptance doesn't mean that you don't try to improve yourself. While you are who you are, you want to work to create the best version of you.

WHAT IS SELF-ACCEPTANCE?

If you find it difficult to embrace who you are, the following tips might help. Remember, self-acceptance takes time and work.

Practice self-compassion.

Self-compassion means being gentle with yourself. It's treating yourself with the same kindness and compassion that you'd treat a good friend.

Focus on the positive.

You are a unique individual with many admirable qualities, strengths, and talents. Focus on your positive traits, and on the things you like about yourself.

Develop your skills.

Whether you like sports, writing, or cooking, developing your skills and becoming more accomplished at something is a great way to improve your self-esteem—and your self-acceptance.

Surround yourself with supportive people.

Seek out people who are supportive, positive, and encouraging. As much as possible, avoid people who are negative, critical, or who bring you down.

Change what you can.

We all have things that we can work on, change, and improve—and then there are things about ourselves that we just can't change. Let go of the things you can't change about yourself, and focus on those you can.

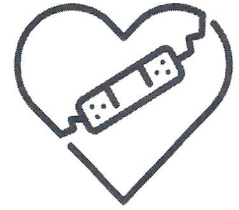
For tips on building your self-esteem, watch this quick video.



Dealing with Disappointment

Disappointment and setbacks happen to everyone. How you deal with it is what makes the difference.

Here are some tips on how to cope with disappointment and setbacks in a healthy way.



1. Accept that disappointment happens.

No one breezes through life with everything going their way all the time. Disappointment is a part of life, and while dealing with it can be difficult, it often provides the best opportunities for growth.

2. Reframe negative situations.

When there's something in your life that didn't work out as you hoped, make an effort to look for something positive. For example, not getting to hang out with a friend because they got sick might give you a free evening to watch a favorite movie.

3. Change your self-talk.

When disappointment or setbacks happen, you can get upset, get angry, or blame others, or you can decide that you're going to accept it and move on. Instead of, "I'll never get over this," tell yourself, "I'm okay. I can handle this."

4. Keep it in perspective.

If you're dealing with a major disappointment, it can feel like it's the end of the world. At these times, it's important to put things in perspective and not let your disappointment become even more important than it is.

5. Talk about it.

When you're dealing with disappointment or a setback, lean on your family and friends. Talk to them about what you're going through and about how you're feeling.

6. Have a back-up plan.

When you know there's a chance—even a small one—that something may not go your way, have a back-up plan in place. For example, if you expect you might not get the job you applied for, have other job opportunities in mind to pursue.

7. Take some time.

Give yourself time to get over setbacks or disappointment. Use this time to get some rest, do things you enjoy, and spend time with people who support you.

8. Have a growth mindset.

Having a growth mindset means that if something doesn't turn out the way you want, you think about how you can do it differently next time instead of getting frustrated or giving up. *For more on having a growth mindset, watch this short video.*



Think of a time you were disappointed. How well did you handle it? Is there anything you should have done differently?
