

Practical tasks to strengthen your self-esteem.



increase your self- esteem

What is self-esteem? Do I need to improve my self-esteem?

Have courage to be yourself because nobody else can do that!

Sue Patton Thoele

self—

image
perception
awareness
confidence
efficacy
acceptance
respect
evaluation
esteem

Self-esteem is an integral part of internal harmony, success and life satisfaction. The lack of self-esteem is one of the most common problems faced by a modern human being. The way we see and evaluate ourselves influences our behaviour in various areas of life, interpersonal relationships, choices and success in studies and professional life, as well as in our personal life. If you think that your self-evaluation is not sufficient, you can always take a step, and use self-help and assistance of specialists to develop a better **self-esteem**!

concepts

Self-evaluation is defined as evaluation of ourselves, our possibilities, qualities and place amongst other people. Positive self-evaluation is related to high self-esteem, and negative self-evaluation with low self-esteem.

Self-esteem – respect for yourself, positive self-evaluation and self-confidence.

Self-confidence is a persons' sense and understanding that they are able to perform the tasks that life poses for them and that they pose for themselves.

Self-efficacy – the set of beliefs that one can perform adequately in a particular situation.

In terms of self-evaluation there are many concepts in both, popular psychology and scientific resources. Sometimes those concepts are used as synonyms, while sometimes - as psychological constructs with different meaning. In this brochure we are using the concept of self-esteem.

Self-esteem reflects our approach to ourselves, what we think about ourselves, what value and qualities we attribute to ourselves and how we feel about it. It is an unconditional self-acceptance, respect and love for yourself as you are, understanding and acceptance of your uniqueness.

how do we gain self-esteem or lack of self-esteem?

Self-esteem develops in a relationships with other people, it is the result of our experience:

Family. Relationships with parents and guardians play an important role. If parents or other close people accept the child unconditionally as he/she is, encourage the child not to be afraid of challenges and difficulties, encourage the child's independence, the child receives support and has clearly defined and adequate limits, the child receives a message that he/she "can achieve the goal", "is worthy of love", "can make mistakes and learn from them". It develops a high self-esteem. Otherwise, when the child is criticised, the requirements for the child are too low or too high, there is a lack of support, he/she is taught to be afraid of failures and it develops negative beliefs about himself/herself and low self-esteem.

School. If a child or a teenager receives support from teachers and peers at school, he/she is successful in school and/or extracurricular activities; it also strengthens self-esteem and knowing that "I can". If there is a lack of understanding and support at school, experience of bullying or other difficulties, it develops low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence.

Studies at KTU. It is a great time to use the changes in your life and new possibilities to strengthen your self-esteem.

Friends. If a person has been surrounded at least by a few understanding friends, who are happy for his/her achievements and supportive in difficult moments, he/she is likely to grow up self-confident. If there was a lack of understanding and support, constant feeling of loneliness, it can be related to lower self-esteem and lack of self-confidence.

Early childhood and youth experience is very important for of self-esteem, but development and strengthening of self-esteem is a life-long process where you can be an active participant!

self-esteem: can there be **too much of it?**

When a person knows himself/herself and evaluates his/her strengths and weaknesses realistically, self-esteem is adequate. Adequate self-esteem (often defined as “high self-esteem”) is a goal, because realistic evaluation of ourselves is something that allows us to choose our goals and direction for development, our pace and methods that are in line with our possibilities and interests. In this situation we are closest to success, which also contributes to maintaining and strengthening of self-esteem.

If a person thinks he/she is valued less than they really are taking into consideration a real situation, such person devalues himself/herself and in this case we talk about a lack of self-esteem.

If a person thinks he/she is valued more than he/she really is taking into consideration a real situation, such person has

an excessive self-esteem. It is difficult to define precisely, when someone is overestimating oneself, but if a person tends to praise his/her actions and qualities, too often focuses on his/her exclusiveness, is characterised by the lack of critical approach to oneself, it may be a case of an excessive self-esteem. In such case failure or criticism provokes intense emotional reaction that does not correspond to the situation (for example, anger, hostility, disappointment, tension, etc.). Sometimes an excessive demonstration of someone’s superiority and self-esteem actually hides the lack of self-esteem. Similarly, as in case of the lack of self-esteem, in case of self-overestimation you can always take a step towards an adequate self-evaluation. First, you have to turn back to yourself; get to know yourself better, simultaneously developing your empathy and kindness.

characteristics of the person, who has high and low self-esteem

H I G H self-esteem person:

- Self-confident person knows his/her strengths and weaknesses, accepts and values himself/herself as he/she is. Knows what he/she wants to improve in himself/herself and achieves that successfully;
- Is proud of his/her achievements and peacefully accepts failure and criticism;
- Tolerant to himself/herself and others;
- Feels responsible for their happiness and able to make changes;
- Takes responsibility for their actions and choices;
- Knows how and is able to say “no”;
- Sets adequate goals (corresponding to possibilities and competences) and can attempt to achieve them consistently, even when facing failures;
- Accepts new challenges and changes enthusiastically;
- Allows himself/herself to experience various emotional reactions (for example, joy, anger, sadness, etc.) and express them in socially acceptable manner;
- If needed, can admit that he/she needs help and asks for help without fear;
- Feels equally valuable in comparison to others;
- Has a strong feeling of “I can”, “I will succeed”;
- Values opinion of others, but, if needed, can act without approval or support;
- Has various emotions, but the dominant ones are positive emotions and internal calmness.

L O W self-esteem person:

- Lacks self-esteem, finds it difficult to accept himself/herself as he/she is, or answer the questions “What am I like?”, “What are my strengths and weaknesses?”. Often negative qualities are overestimated and highlighted, while positive ones are underestimated and ignored;
- Underestimates his/her achievements and has overly emotional response to failure and criticism;
- Strict and demanding to himself/herself and others;
- Thinks that other have to provide him/her happiness, feels powerless to make changes in his/her life; Blames others or circumstances for failures in his/her life;
- Is afraid to take responsibility for his/her actions, behaviour and decisions;
- Finds it difficult to say “no”, because is scared of reaction of others and possible rejection. If he/she says “no”, usually feels guilt and tension;
- Finds it difficult to answer questions “What are my goals”, “What do I really want”. Sets the goals that are too big or too little. Easily gives up when facing a failure;
- Avoids uncertainty and complicated situations;
- Suppresses emotional reactions and their expressions (for example, joy, anger, sadness, etc.);
- Finds it difficult to admit that needs help;
- Feels worthless, worse than others;
- The attitude “I will fail”, “I will not succeed” prevails;
- Often feels guilt, shame, experiences tension and anxiety.

why is it important to strengthen self-esteem?

- The lack of self-esteem can become an obstacle in achievement of the set goals, realisation of resources and potential hidden within you. With low self-esteem everyday challenges can become a difficult task;
- The lack of self-esteem is related to many psychological difficulties: stress, tension, anxiety, communication problems, depression, etc. In turn, it is related to worse academic achievements;
- The lack of self-esteem can also be related to worse physical health.

how to boost your self-esteem?

Get to know yourself. Getting to know yourself (both, advantages and disadvantages), is the first step to a better self-esteem. When you know yourself, you can decide which qualities, features and competences you want to strengthen, and which ones you can accept as they are;

Set realistic goals. Your goals will grow with improvement of your abilities. When you experience success and achieve goals more frequently, it boosts your self-esteem;

Stop criticising yourself. Adequate internal criticism is a great indicator helping to learn from your mistakes, and understand the direction for your chosen personal development. However, in case of the lack of self-esteem, “internal critic” becomes out of control, it crosses the limits of adequacy and overshadows positive aspects of your personality and the situation. It is important to say “stop” on time, learn to look for and find alternative approach to strict self-criticism and negativity;

Reject “all or nothing” way of thinking. Focus on extremities often prevails in case of the lack of self-esteem. For example, “If I am not evaluated 10, I am a loser”, “I won 3rd place in the competition, I exercised in vain, and I have no talent for sport”. There are other options in-between “all” and “nothing”;

Practice techniques for relaxation and stress management. Scientific research determined links between stress and self-confidence. People with less self-esteem experience higher level of stress and tension, in turn, successful stress management helps to strengthen self-esteem;

Leave your “comfort zone”. Face your fears, try new things, it will strengthen your self-esteem;

Take care of yourself. Attention to your physical and mental health and lifestyle (for example, sleep, nutrition, physical activity, etc.) is a great way to express love for yourself and boost your self-esteem.

assess your self-esteem: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

You will find 10 statements below. Read them carefully and assess how much each statement is true for your approach to yourself. Choose one option out of four: "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree", and "strongly disagree".

		strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
1	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself				
2	At times I think I am no good at all				
3	I feel that I have a number of good qualities				
4	I am able to do things as well as most other people				
5	I feel I do not have much to be proud of				
6	I certainly feel useless at times				
7	I feel that I'm a person of worth , at least on an equal plane with others				
8	I wish I could have more respect for myself				
9	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure				
10	I take a positive attitude toward myself				

Questions 1, 3, 4, 7, 10:

3 points – "strongly agree"

2 points – "agree"

1 point – "disagree"

0 points – "strongly disagree"

Questions 2, 5, 6, 8, 9:

0 points – "strongly agree"

1 point – "agree"

2 points – "disagree"

3 points – "strongly disagree"

The results are calculated by adding the evaluations of all statements. The bigger amount of points indicates higher self-esteem (maximum amount: 30; minimum - 0). Less than 15 points indicates a possible lack of self-esteem.

questions to help you to know yourself

Ask yourself the following questions, answer one question per day. Take 10 mins to answer each question. There are no right or wrong answers. It is important to be honest with yourself. Write down all your thoughts. Read the answers. What do you think and feel while reading them?

- What are my long-term and short-term **goals**?
- Who are most **important people** in my life, who **support** me?
- What am I **ashamed of**?
- What makes me **happy** in my life?
- What makes me **anxious**?
- What are my **values**, what is **important** for me in my life and what do I **believe in**?
- If I could make only one **wish**, I would wish for (complete);
- What achievement or **achievements am I most proud of**?
- What is my **biggest failure**?
- Am I a “morning” or an “evening” person? How can I use that for achievement of my goals?
- What do I hear most often from my “**inner critic**”?
- What am I **most passionate about**?
- What is my **favourite** book/film/music band or performer/food/colour, etc.?
- What am I **grateful for**?
- When I feel **depressed**, I like to (complete);
- I feel **tension** and **stress**, when (complete);
- The thing that helps me **calm down** most effectively is (complete).

my positive and negative qualities

my positive qualities

my negative qualities

If you lack self-esteem, it might be more difficult for you to see your positive qualities than negative ones. It is completely normal and it does not mean that they are not there. It only indicates that you need more practice in learning to notice your strengths.

Jennice Vilhauer 30-days exercise to strengthen self-esteem

This exercise helps you to develop your ability to focus on positive things:

- Put a sheet of paper next to your bed and each night before sleep write three things that you liked about yourself today;
- In the morning, before you get up from bed, read the things you wrote last night;
- every day write 3 new positive things about yourself;
- Create this list for 30 days.

changing of the “all or nothing” way of thinking

Replace categorical thoughts with more realistic ones:

"All or nothing" way of thinking	Thoughts in line with reality
I am a loser	I am successful at some things and fail at others, just like everyone else.
What a bad day!	A few unpleasant things happened, but things are not so bad.
Nobody loves me.	I have friends and a family. Maybe I do not receive as much love as I would like to, but I can put more effort in it.

stop criticising yourself/ change your approach to yourself

When this exercise becomes a part of your everyday life, it will help you manage an exaggerated self-criticism and develop an adequate attitude towards yourself:

Date, time	Situation	Emotions and bodily sensations Assess intensity from 0 to 100%	Self-critical thoughts Assess intensity of the belief from 0 to 100%	Alternative approach Ask questions to find an alternative approach. Assess the relief when you find an alternative approach from 0 to 100%	Consequences 1. How are you feeling now, when you found an alternative approach? (from 0 to 100%) 2. Do you believe your self-critical thoughts now? (from 0 to 100%) 3. What can you do (action plan, experiments)?
	I had an argument with my best friend. We had planned to spend the evening together, but she left to the cinema with her new boyfriend.	Guilt 80% Angry with myself 100% Hopelessness 90%	<p>1 thought. I am losing self-control for insignificant things again. I am a loser. 90%</p> <p>2 thought. I have to pull myself together, because I will ruin everything. 100%</p> <p>3 thought. It will never be over. 100%</p>	<p>1 alternative thought. It is true, I was more angry than it would be adequate in that situation, but it happened, because I felt that my friend did not need me and I felt hurt.</p> <p>2 alternative thought. Arguments are not good, but at the same time it is a chance to talk about our feelings in this situation and find out how things really are instead of making unjustified conclusions. The fact that my friend changed her plans one evening does not mean that our friendship is not important to her. Despite this argument we have a good time together.</p> <p>3 alternative thought. I do not know what to say. For a while now it was difficult for me to maintain a longer friendship, communication constantly makes me feel tension and anxiety. I do not like that and maybe it is time to look for help.</p>	<p>1. Guilt 40% Angry with myself 30% Hopelessness 40%</p> <p>2. 1 thought 30% 2 thought 20% 3 thought 50%</p> <p>3. Tell my friend that I am very sorry for shouting and explain why I behaved that way. Look for help.</p>

Building of self-esteem is a process that takes a lot of time and effort, but if you work consistently, you will start noticing changes! Follow these recommendations, practice self-help exercises and tasks; if needed, **you can always find help at the University's psychologist** or apply to the specialists of the institutions providing mental health services.

You will find help at: University's psychologist | psichologas@ktu.lt