



Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Oklahoma State University

Pathways to Success

A Basic Living Skills Curriculum

Building Self-Esteem

Sissy Osteen, Ph.D., CFP®
sissy.osteen@okstate.edu

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Leader Materials

Building Self-Esteem

Objective: To explain the basic concept of self-esteem
To encourage learners to help build their own self-esteem

Materials need: Learner's guide, pencil, colored 3x5 note cards

Introduction: Read definition (paragraph 1) of self-esteem on page 1 of learner's guide.

Note: It is not truly possible to teach self-esteem as a free-standing curriculum unit. For learners to achieve benefits, the concepts of self-esteem enhancement should be merged with other topics throughout the Pathways to Success materials. For additional material on self-esteem building activities, I recommend Canfield and Wells' *100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom*. Although written for the public school classroom, the materials lend themselves easily to adaptation to the adult learning situation. For adult learners, Barbara Braham's *Self-Esteem and Getting Ahead* provides a comprehensive approach to self-esteem building.



Building Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is what you believe you are worth as a person. Every human being is a one of a kind creation. Each person is worth respect. Some people are sure of themselves while others feel unsure.



Having low self-esteem keeps us from being all we can be. You may be unsure of your ability because you may have been taught to believe you don't deserve good things. This bad or negative thinking can make you feel even worse.

To Say

Here is a questionnaire designed to give you an idea of your self-esteem level.

To Do

Read questions on page 2 and allow time to answer and score.

Check Your Self-Esteem

Read through each of the following statements. Put a "T" in the space provided if you believe the statement is true for you. Leave the space blank if it is not true for you.

1. ____ I can admit a mistake.
2. ____ I can talk to people I don't know.
3. ____ I do what I believe is right even if others don't approve.
4. ____ I can accept a compliment and not feel uncomfortable.
5. ____ I can be myself around other people.
6. ____ I can accept myself with all my faults and weaknesses.
7. ____ I can tell you my strengths.
8. ____ I can feel happy for someone else when he or she succeeds.
9. ____ I do not compare myself with others.
10. ____ I have peace of mind.
11. ____ I believe I am unique.
12. ____ I accept differences in others without judging them.
13. ____ I compliment others.
14. ____ I can say "I love you" to all the people I love.
15. ____ I love myself.
16. ____ I am comfortable being alone.

Count the number of statements you marked *True*. If you have 11 or more trues, you have high self-esteem. Answering true to 6-10 statements puts you in average self-esteem. 5 or fewer trues indicates low self-esteem. No matter the score on the checklist, you can learn to feel better about yourself.

Reprinted by permission from Barbara Braham, *Self-Esteem and Getting Ahead*

To Say

What are some ways to practice some of the behaviors?

To Do

Help learners generate examples.

Say “Hi” to counter help in stores, neighbors in your building.

Say “thank you” when complimented, rather than “not really” or “it’s nothing.”

How can a person develop better self-esteem?

Feelings about self-esteem are formed in childhood. If someone who took care of you (mother, grandparent, friend or babysitter) saw the good in you, you probably already have fairly good self-esteem. If you weren't that lucky, thinking well of yourself will probably take more work, but you can learn to do it.



Try this exercise:

Choose one item from the self-esteem checklist.

For one week try to do that item every chance you get. See how you feel when you act that way. How do others treat you?

To Say

Let's talk about suggestions.

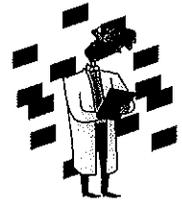
To Do

Lead discussion about the things you can do to like yourself more.

Things you can do to like yourself more.

Learn to give to others.

Help others.



For example,

Janie likes her job at the thrift store because she gets the chance to help people who really need help. She says, "When I'm doing good for other people, I don't worry about my own problems as much. I want to help them and I feel good when I do just that!"



Develop your own support group.

There are people who like you and care about what happens to you. Know who they are, and keep in touch with them, and let them know you care about them as well.

To Say

To Do

Read information below; then say:

Have you noticed this is true? Has this ever happened to you? Are doing new things easy or hard for you?

Take action

Do what you can do and don't worry about what you can't do.

Here's how one woman answered someone who said something bad about people of other races:

"There were times when people would make mean remarks around me, and they expected me to laugh. But if I felt it was rude, I would say so. I would do it nicely, in a very direct way. I would not do it loudly and I would not curse."



Take care of yourself. Eat right, take time for yourself, do what you think is right, don't worry so much about pleasing others. Doing things that we know are bad for us lowers self-esteem. People with low self-esteem often work hard to please others, trying to buy their respect or attention. People respect others who are true to themselves.

To Say

In a few minutes, I'll need a couple of volunteers to help me lead an activity in front of the class. It's a little complicated, but I'm sure we'll get through it.

To Do

You really won't need volunteers. This is an exercise to help learners tune into self-talk. Play it up.

Try new things. Learn to swim or ride a bike. Take a class. Be brave enough to take chances.



Be proud of your success! Set yourself up to win. Do the things you can do. If your plan is to get into shape, 10 minutes of TV-exercise program every day is a good place to start.

To Say

To Do

What kind of statements do you hear in your head? Are they helpful and encouraging?

Use positive self-talk

Everyone has heard bad messages from somewhere. The more you've heard "you're so dumb," "you're ugly," "you're a loser," "you'll never amount to anything," the more you'll hear that over and over in your own head.



Your job is to *unlearn* those bad messages. You may keep hearing them for a while, but stop listening and stop believing them. Tell yourself that you're okay, that you *can* do it. You're growing and learning and getting better day by day.

At first you may feel clumsy and even fake doing this, but you will become more comfortable and happy as being good to yourself becomes the natural thing to do.



To Say

I don't really need any volunteers. I asked for them because I wanted you to get a little nervous about being picked.

To Do

Explain rationale for request for volunteers. Ask participants how they felt and what they thought about being asked to help.

What types of things were you saying to yourself as you waited for the instructor to ask for volunteers? Were you jumping up and down hoping to be called on or were you trying to hide, hoping not to be noticed? If you were hoping not to be noticed, what thoughts were going through your mind? "Oh, not me, I'll just mess it up!" "I hate being put on the spot." "I know I'll be the one, I have no luck!" "I am such a loser!"



Negative Statements

1. _____
2. _____

Catch negative thoughts before they do more damage. You can silence those negative words by listening to your positive thoughts. Create a kind inside voice if you don't already have one.

To Say

To Do

Take time now to think about your strengths and good qualities.

Every time a person says, "I can't," "I'm afraid," "People will think I'm stupid," "Someone hates me," levels of self-confidence and self-respect drop. Replace your bad or negative comments with positive ones. Doing this takes effort at first. It's often necessary to stop in mid-sentence and say, "No, this isn't true. I won't think like this!" Choose to say something good instead of something bad. A helpful book about how to change thought patterns is by David Burns, *The Feeling Good Handbook*.



Go back to the negative statements you wrote down earlier and change those negative thoughts. Mark a line through them and write something positive instead. Think of good things about yourself. Include skills and abilities you have, nice personal qualities, etc. The more you do this the better you will become.

To Say

Encourage learners to think of positive characteristics that describe them.

To Do

Other good things might include: positive person, good friend, careful with money, helpful, funny.

Here's a list of idea-starters.

Circle those words that apply to you. Write others you can think of in the spaces below.

Loyal *Hard-working* *Thinks of others* *Honest*
Loves kids *Clean* *Giving* *Good appearance*
Manners *Smart* *Friendly* *Kind* *Can be trusted*
Habits *Good talker* *Talents* *Healthy* *On time*

Other good things about me:

1. _____ 2. _____
3. _____ 4. _____



To Say

To Do

	Finish session with encouragement activities designed to build individual self-esteem and personal support network.
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Self-Esteem Building Activities

Self-esteem also increases when we are valued by others.

Class exercise: Take turns saying one nice thing about another person in the class. For example, "Jennifer, I liked what you had to say about standing up for yourself when your friend was mean. That took courage."



To Say

We have been talking about building your own self-esteem. We can also help build another person's self-esteem by seeing the good in them. Let's give that gift to each other before we leave today.

To Do

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'Reminder Card' activity.

We all need to know that someone else thinks well of us.



Divide up into groups of three or four. Write your name at the top of your note card then pass it to the person on your left. Each person writes something good (a word or a short sentence) about the person whose name is at the top of the card, then sign your name. Pass that card to the person on your left, and repeat until the cards return to their owners. Keep your card in your purse or pocket, to remind yourself of the good things others see in you.

Remember, developing self-esteem takes time. You can learn to be more confident and content.

Building your self-esteem is not a selfish act. It's an important step to a happier way of life.

References

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Recommended Reading

For leaders and participants who want to learn more about self-esteem:
(Required reading level, approximately 10-12th grade)

Burns, D.D. (1989). *The feeling good handbook*. New York: Plume/Penguin Books.