

High Self Valuing Is the Best Predictor of Success

How Do You Know If You Need Higher Self Esteem?

Self Esteem is generally thought to embrace two main aspects of ourselves: 1) our competency and 2) our lovability. In a recent national survey, 85% report that they would be helped by increasing their sense of competency & lovability-their self esteem.

You've probably seen toddlers learning to walk. They plop down, they struggle to pull themselves up, and then waddle onward. No loss of self esteem there, in the "failure" to walk perfectly. (One description of success is to fall down 6 times and get up 7 times.) My point is that it's natural to feel high self esteem, unless we have been taught that we are 'not enough.' The good news is that if we have been taught to have low self esteem, we can also learn the skills to promote high self esteem.

Below are 6 of the more obvious signs of the feeling of 'not good enoughness' that those 85% wanted to change.

1. Sensitivity to criticism. Although people who feel 'not good enough' "know" they have shortcomings, they do not like other people to point these out. They tend to perceive any form of criticism, regardless of how sensitively or constructively it is presented, as a personal attack.

2. Inappropriate response to flattery. This can work two ways. Some people are desperate to hear anything good about themselves and will be constantly fishing for compliments. Others may refuse to listen to anything positive about themselves because it is inconsistent with their own feelings.

3. Hypercritical attitude. People who do not feel good about themselves have trouble feeling good about anyone else. They look hard for the flaws and shortcomings of others to try to convince themselves that they really aren't so bad after all. These people cannot feel intelligent, attractive, competent, and so on, unless they are the most intelligent, attractive and competent person around.

4. Tendency toward blaming. Some people project their perceived weaknesses onto others in order to lessen the pain of feeling inferior. From here, it is only a short step to blaming others for one's failures.

5. Negative feelings about competition. People who feel inferior like to win games and contests every bit as much as anyone else, but they tend to avoid such situations because deep down, they believe they cannot win. And not coming in first is clear evidence of total failure.

6. Tendency toward seclusiveness and timidity. Because people who feel inferior believe that they are not as interesting or intelligent as others, they believe that other people will feel the same way about them. So they tend to avoid social situations, and when they are forced to be with others, they will avoid speaking up because they believe doing so will only provide an embarrassing demonstration of their dullness and stupidity. Whoever coined the expression "It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak up and remove all doubt" provided an apt description of those with low self esteem.

If you'd like to find out more about how you can increase your self esteem, stop by my table at the health expo. –Dr. Jane Bolton, PsyD, LMFT

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