

BUILDING FAMILY STRENGTHS

SELF-ESTEEM

An individual with high self-esteem feels good about himself and can face the challenges of life more effectively. High self-esteem provides the basis for success and coping with daily living in a rapidly changing environment. You are the only person that can build your self-esteem; however, your family, parents, teachers and friends can provide support and influence many of your life decisions and choices.

Self-esteem is the way we relate to ourselves, to others and to life in general. It affects the way we learn, work and build relationships. Our personal success or failure lies in our self-esteem. If we believe we **can**, we **do**. If we believe we **can't**, we **don't even try**. If you have high self-esteem, you are willing to try new things, develop closer relationships, maintain self-confidence and remain flexible.

WHAT IS SELF-ESTEEM?

Self-esteem means truly loving and valuing oneself and is a personal assessment of worthiness. Persons with high self-esteem appear poised and confident and are less influenced by their peers. This is different from being self-centered, conceited or obnoxious. Building self-esteem is an ongoing process. It reaffirms that you have accepted yourself as you are but continue to work on capitalizing on your strengths.

Persons with low self-esteem may feel isolated, unloved, unappreciated and powerless. Withdrawal, rebellion and isolation can result from low self-esteem.

Self-esteem is important in every aspect of life. How we learn, how we work, how we act and how we play are all determined by our level of self-esteem. Four factors are necessary for an individual to develop and maintain a high level of self-esteem.

- Positive Role Models - people who provide meaningful goals, values, ideals and standards.
- Personal Strength - the ability to influence life's circumstances.
- Uniqueness and Individuality - a special personal sense and individual worth.
- Sense of Connectivity and Belonging - satisfaction from associations that are significant.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A POSITIVE SELF-ESTEEM WITHIN FAMILIES

Thinking positively about yourself is the first step to having high self-esteem. Ask yourself the following questions to determine if your self-esteem is healthy. Most people feel bad about themselves from time to time. So, when answering these questions, think about how you feel **most** of the time.



1. Are you honest and open about your feelings?
2. Are you happy for others when they are successful?
3. Do you accept constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement?
4. Are you at ease when you meet new people or are in a new surrounding?
5. Are you able to laugh at yourself and learn from your own mistakes?
6. Do you embrace change and look for new challenges?
7. Do you give yourself credit when credit is due?
8. Are you comfortable with your physical appearance?
9. Do you highly value your closest relationships with friends and family?
10. Do you enjoy quiet moments by yourself?

If you answered **most** of these questions **yes**, you probably have a healthy opinion of yourself.



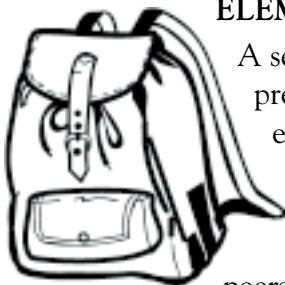
PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Young children are sensitive to ridicule and like to mimic adult behaviors and are beginning to be concerned about how they look to others.

Self-esteem can be fragile at this stage. Family members and teachers

must provide a positive, caring and loving environment for preschool children. Having a high self-esteem can allow preschool children to make good friends, care about others, be responsible, enjoy learning, have pride, handle failures and share feelings.

ELEMENTARY CHILDREN



A sense of security is a prerequisite for self-esteem for elementary children. The child needs to be able to build a trusting relationship with family, teachers and peers. At this age, children have

an increased sense of self and need to know who they can count on and trust. Parents, adults and teachers need to ensure that children feel that a positive and caring environment exists. They must feel valued for their individuality.



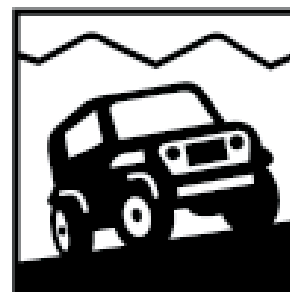
MIDDLE /JUNIOR HIGH ADOLESCENTS

Puberty presents quiet a challenge for self-esteem! Yet, this time can be an exciting and wonderful stage of development. Certain building blocks are necessary for self-esteem to prosper during this challenging time. Adolescents need to feel approval, trust, a sense of power, acceptance, responsibility and self-respect in order to grow into caring, competent and contributing adults.



SENIOR HIGH TEENS

Teens at this stage need to be equipped to be able to maintain control of their lives and deal with peer pressure. Positive self-esteem can enable them to cope with the day-to-day challenges and problems that are a part of this very pivotal stage in their lives. Self-reliant teens are able to look toward their futures with excitement and confidence while making plans toward meeting their life goals.



ADULTS

Adults with a healthy self-esteem that reflects a strong, vibrant and energized person can be successful in this rapidly changing and highly competitive world.

Self-esteem is an important ingredient in improving not only your life, but also the lives of everyone with whom you come in contact in your personal and professional life.

SELF-ESTEEM

Family Activity

Positive affirmations boost an individual's self-esteem. Liking who you are is the key to positive self-esteem. The activity below can be a family or group activity or can be conducted on an individual basis. The following sentence completions can be cut in strips, folded and family or group members can take turns making positive affirmations.

1. I like myself because
2. I consider myself a good
3. I am most happy when
4. I like the way I feel about myself when
5. My goals for the future are
6. One of the most positive traits I have is
7. My friends respect me because
8. The person I look up to most is
9. People say I am a good
10. I have a natural talent for
11. I have a good sense of
12. The person that always makes me feel good about myself is
13. I know that I will be successful in life because
14. What I really enjoy most is
15. People often compliment me about

SUMMARY

Building a stronger self-esteem is one of the most important things you can ever do for yourself. You can change your life by changing how you feel about life. Families should consider the nourishing of self-esteem as a gift for generations to come. Capitalizing on their own family strengths can enable self-esteem to grow and prosper in family members regardless of age. Families should recognize and acknowledge their feelings, establish attainable goals, understand and respect individual differences, identify strengths, acknowledge weaknesses, and appreciate individual worth.

Prepared By:

Brenda J. Thames, Ed.D., CFCS
Extension Program Development Specialist

Deborah J. Thomason, Ed.D.

Extension Family & Youth Development Specialist



Printed on recycled paper with soy ink

The Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer. Clemson University Cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture, South Carolina Counties, Extension Service, Clemson, South Carolina. Issued in Furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914

Public Service Activities