



the portage path behavioral health reference guide to: **Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem is defined as how much a person likes, accepts, and respects himself overall as a person. According to John Nemiah, M.D., author of *Foundations of Psychopathology*, all of us have varying degrees of self-esteem. "In order for a person to look upon himself as having value, he must feel that he is loved by other people, that he has strength and capabilities and that he is good and loving."

Individuals with healthy self-esteem are known to have the ability to feel secure, enjoy life, feel confident, be assertive, communicate effectively, and have respect for themselves and others. Nathaniel Brenden, Ph.D. a recognized pioneer and authority in the field of self-esteem and self-esteem development comments, "Positive self-esteem is a cardinal requirement of a fulfilling life. There is overwhelming evidence, including scientific research findings, that the higher the level of an individual's self-esteem, the more likely that he or she will treat others with respect, kindness, and generosity."

Signs & Symptoms of Low Self-Esteem

- *Inability to accept compliments.*
- *Self-disparaging remarks; sees self as unattractive, worthless, a loser, a burden, unimportant; takes blame easily.*
- *Lack of pride in grooming*
- *Difficulty in saying no to others; assumes not being like by others*
- *Fear or rejection of others, especially peer group*
- *Lack of any goals for life and setting of inappropriately low goals for self.*
- *Inability to identify positive things about self.*
- *Uncomfortable in social situations, especially in larger groups.*

According to the National Association of Self-Esteem, no one can have too much reality-based self-esteem (not to be confused with grandiosity). It is no more possible to have too much self-esteem than it is to have too much physical or mental health. But sometimes when people lack adequate self-esteem they fall into arrogance, boasting, and grandiosity as a defense mechanism - a compensatory strategy. Their problem then is not that they have too big of an ego, but they have too small of one.

Joyce Beck, R.N.C., P.C.C., an intensive treatment therapist at Portage Path Behavioral Health says that individuals with low self-esteem tend to have difficulty identifying and changing their mistaken beliefs about themselves and the world, reacting primarily on emotion and interpreting themselves and events based on feelings. Their behaviors are often defensive in nature and formed by others expectations.

Low self-esteem is thought to have a powerful affect on a person's thoughts, feelings, physical health, behavior, and overall functioning. Some people with low self-esteem tend to avoid seeking new employment opportunities, have difficulty initiating relationships, do not learn new skills out of a fear of rejection or failure, avoid social settings, and refrain from sharing their opinions. Others might have a strong drive to prove themselves to others that they are adequate and deserving. Often times these individuals become workaholics.

Causes of low self-esteem are based upon the unique experiences and personal relationships that have made up your life. Whereas positive and fulfilling relationships help raise your self esteem, negative experiences and troubled relationships tend to lower self esteem. Experiences within your family, at school, or within your society all influence your self esteem.



Can Counselors Help People with Low Self-Esteem?

It is important to remember that low self-esteem is a symptom of depression, and to make things even more complicated, the depression may be a symptom of some other illness. Therefore, it is recommended that before treatment begins a person should have a complete physical examination and a medical history review to rule out any other possible causes for their symptoms being experienced.

Licensed, qualified behavioral health professionals can help you discover the origins of your low self-esteem and work with you to develop a consistent, positive self-image, as well as help you improve pride in appearance, become more assertive, make greater eye contact, and identify positive traits in self-talk messages.



What are the Benefits of High Self-Esteem?

- adapted from the National Association for Self-Esteem

1. You are generally not thinking about yourself and do not analyze yourself.
2. You have lots of energy. You are able to set and accomplish most of your goals.
3. You are friendly. You enjoy meeting and being with others.
4. You draw people to you. You make long-term friendships.
5. You look others in the eye. You are trustworthy and able to be intimate and affectionate.
6. You take risks. You are independent and autonomous.
7. You feel good most of the time. When you feel bad, it doesn't last long. You are resilient in the face of diversity.
8. You smile a lot. You have positive belief systems about your self, your family and society as a whole.
9. You have positive effects. You have behavioral and academic success in school.
10. Things others cannot observe include: You talk to yourself positively, tell the truth, keep your word, are grateful to be alive, forgive yourself and others. You are empathetic, compassionate and you have a conscience.

If you have identified with the issues discussed in this flyer and you're ready to take the next step toward feeling better, visit our web site or call Portage Path and find out how we can help:

Web Site www.portagepath.org

Appointments **330-253-3100**
800-828-4508

If you feel you're in emotional crisis and you need someone to talk to, call our free 24-hour, 7-day crisis hotline:

Support Hotline **330-434-9144**
888-434-8878



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