



# Understanding self-esteem

## What is self-esteem?

Self-esteem is your confidence in your own worth, ability, or value. It encompasses beliefs about yourself (for example, “I am loved” or “I am worthy”), as well as emotional states, such as triumph, despair, pride, and shame.

## What’s your level of self-esteem? Signs to look for



### Low

- Feeling inadequate and worthless
- Avoiding the attention of others
- Finding it hard to accept compliments
- Criticizing and blaming yourself when something goes wrong
- Focusing on the negative
- Struggling with perfectionism
- Avoiding challenges for fear of failing
- Fearful of being judged or rejected
- Getting overly upset by disapproval or criticism
- Having a poor self-image



### Healthy

- Being vulnerable with those you love
- Behaving assertively, not aggressively
- Setting clear boundaries
- Seeking feedback from people you trust
- Accepting failure as a normal part of life
- Believing in your inherent worth
- Using your voice
- Standing up for others
- Knowing and accepting both your strengths and your weaknesses
- Not being ashamed to ask for help



### Excessive

- Speaking highly of yourself
- Needing to feel superior to others
- Engaging in impulsive, reckless, or attention-seeking behavior
- Always performing for everyone
- Indulging yourself in an entitled way
- Ignoring rules
- Refusing to accept feedback, criticism, or failure
- Manipulating others
- Requiring constant praise
- Possibly harboring narcissistic tendencies



## How to achieve healthy self-esteem

### At home

- **Prioritize self-care:** Increase your well-being by getting enough sleep, setting healthy boundaries, and making time for activities that bring you joy.
- **Practice self-compassion:** With healthy self-esteem, you can acknowledge your weaknesses, respect your limits, admit your mistakes, and accept failures.
- **Reject perfectionism:** Instead of striving to be perfect, set realistic goals and continue practicing self-compassion.
- **Resist comparison:** You’re on your own journey. Resist comparing your life to anyone else’s.
- **Stay present:** Practicing mindfulness can help you experience this moment, instead of feeling anxious about the past or the future.

### With professional help

Certain types of therapy can help you address both your mental health and your self-esteem:

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)** helps you identify unhelpful or harmful thoughts that may fuel your feelings of inadequacy and result in unwanted behaviors.
- **Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)** teaches you to accept what you can’t change and encourages you to take committed action to build a meaningful life where you can. Self-compassion, self-care, and self-acceptance are the core components of ACT.
- **Positive psychology** can help you focus on your strengths, identify your values, and practice gratitude so you can lead a more fulfilling life.