

Building your Self-Esteem

Raising your own self-image is paramount as a prelude to being able to love yourself. How can it be done? First, it is important to ask for help when making such an important paradigm change in your life. It is wise to speak with someone you trust absolutely; a family member, a close friend you have known for a very long time, or if there is no-one close to you that you could speak to, be courageous and speak with a professional counsellor. Tell yourself over and over again that you *do* deserve to love and trust yourself.

Second, forget the past. This is a hard one, but it is very important. As you move forward toward loving yourself, your mind may try to play tricks with you and remind you of all your failures and weaknesses. Don't allow your mind to focus on your past mistakes. Instead, live in the present (after all, every day is a gift) and look forward to the future in a positive manner.

Third, don't allow yourself to be your own worst enemy and don't criticise you when you feel you haven't lived up to the picture you have of yourself. Throw out all negative thoughts and refuse to think badly of yourself and others. It is important to keep love for others in the loop or your love for yourself may become egotistical and self-serving. Instead, appreciate, cherish and respect yourself. Growing love inside you will produce self-respect, honesty, trust, enthusiasm, kindness, contentment, empathy, hope, faith, peace, happiness and success. When love is uppermost in your thoughts your life will change for the better and you can start being your best friend instead of your worst enemy.

Fourth, when you have travelled through a difficult or negative patch and defeated it, reward yourself in some way. Tell yourself you deserve to feel good and soon you will believe the truth and respect yourself.

Fifth, learning to love yourself when you have always beaten yourself down can be stressful. Make the time for rest and relaxation and keep healthy. As you relax, visualize and then write down all the things that you like about yourself (come on, now, think hard) and compliment yourself often. Remember, you create your world and you can do anything.

Sixth and finally, accept yourself with all your weaknesses and flaws (after all, everyone has them, not just you) and come to an understanding that you are special and unique. When you are prepared to open up and share your love around you will find (and this may surprise you at first) that you are loved and fully accepted in return. It is then you will find the world is your oyster and that your potential is unlimited. There is a saying, "Start by doing what is necessary, then do what is possible and suddenly you will find yourself doing the impossible." When you love and accept yourself completely, you will not feel the need to sacrifice your needs in order to be loved and you will not feel

dependent on or vulnerable to the requirements of others. Instead, you can feel confident and love others with all their faults and differences.

Learn all these lessons with a light and happy heart and keep laughter in your life. This way the path to loving yourself will be easier. Accept personal responsibility for making your life a better, more enjoyable experience by loving yourself and making a conscious decision to be happier and more fulfilled in every aspect of your life.