

## What can I do if I'm struggling with low self-esteem?



It is not easy to change self-esteem, so if you find yourself having difficulty dealing with it alone, remember professional help is available. The following may be of benefit:

### See a personal counsellor

Personal counsellors can help you recognize and change distortions of thought, and develop assertiveness and communication skills.

### See a doctor

Sometimes a lack of self esteem is just one part of a bigger problem. If you feel your problems extend beyond low self esteem, it may benefit you to see a doctor or counsellor.

Appointments can be made at Health & Counselling Services (HCS) by calling 613-520-6674 or by dropping by HCS located at 2600 CTTC Building.

**All appointments are confidential**

## CU Healthy

**HCS** wants to CU Healthy! The Health Promotion Team at HCS tries to achieve this through our:

- Resource Centre
- Student Peer Helpers
- Website ([carleton.ca/health](http://carleton.ca/health))
- Workshops

The Health Promotion Team promotes healthy lifestyles and wellness and can provide you with information about stress, colds, nutrition, sexuality, alcohol, etc. Contact the Resource Centre for more information at 613-520-2600 ext. 6544 or [carletonwellness@gmail.com](mailto:carletonwellness@gmail.com).



2600 CTTC Building

613-520-6674

[carleton.ca/health](http://carleton.ca/health)

## Self Esteem



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## What is Self-Esteem?

Self-Esteem is your sense of worth which develops over time and consistently changes with experience. In general, positive experiences and healthy relationships build high self-esteem, while negative experiences and problematic relationships tend to lower self-esteem. While many people are insecure and incapable in particular situations, people with low self-esteem tend to feel that way in every situation, even when they are fully capable of handling the task at hand.

Having low self-esteem creates a vicious cycle: you believe you could never succeed or be capable of doing things. Doubting your abilities results in poor performance and a lack of confidence in activities you are involved in. This, in turn, fuels further negative thoughts about oneself. Factors that influence your self-esteem include your family, life at school, your work environment, your social life and society.

It is important to have high self-esteem because it helps you to accept challenges and maintain your self-confidence. It also allows you to remain flexible.

### What causes low self-esteem?

Often times early life experiences set the stage for low self-esteem. Some causes include:

- Experiences growing up, relationships with your family and friends
- Being yelled at, abused, or beaten
- Constant harsh criticism
- Being expected (or expecting oneself) to be perfect all the time
- Experiencing failure academically, athletically, or socially

## What are signs of low self-esteem?

If you have low self-esteem, you probably feel some or all of the following:

- Ineffective
- Worthless
- Incompetent
- Unloved
- Incapable of challenges or complex tasks
- Apprehension at trying new things
- Extremely sensitive to criticism



### What are the effects of having low self-esteem?

Some common negative effects on your personal life include:

- Lack of self-confidence in abilities and skills
- Thinking you're doomed to fail because you've failed before
- Little or no initiative to take on goals or challenging opportunities
- Distortions of thought - having negative thoughts about oneself while seeing others in a more positive light
- Difficulty developing social relationships, loneliness

Health & Counselling Services (HCS) gratefully acknowledges McMaster University's Student Wellness Centre as a resource for the information in this brochure.

## Things you can do to help boost your self-esteem

- Identify and accept strengths and weaknesses. You probably forget that there are many things you do well; make a list of your positive qualities and abilities.
- Don't let past failures hold you back. Accept mistakes and learn from them. Be happy with both big and small positive accomplishments in your life.
- Set realistic goals and work on developing new skills and abilities in order to attain them.
- Learn to meet your own needs before attempting to meet the needs of others.
- If you have negative thoughts about yourself, think about what a friend or loved one would say if they knew what you were thinking.
- If you always feel on the edge as though you can't do anything right, try relaxation exercises. Books from your library, websites, or a personal counsellor can help you with this.
- Treat yourself to something nice (it could be as simple as a warm bath or listening to relaxing music) and tell yourself that you deserve that treat.
- Trust yourself and your intuitions.
- Learn to love the unique aspects of who you are.

