

### From psychology today:

It generally seems that family members are more prone to act badly toward each other when they are feeling bad about themselves. The worse they feel about themselves, the worse they often treat others, the worse they get treated in return, the worse they end up feeling about themselves, the worse they treat others, and round and round the cycle of unhappiness goes. In low-esteem families, relationships can become mutually destructive. In high esteem families, however, the reverse seems more likely to occur. The better family members feel about themselves, the better they treat each other, the better they get treated in return, the better off everyone tends to become. In high esteem families, relationships can become mutually affirming. Members seem more inclined to bring out the best in each other, not the worst.

Natural self-esteem drops: 9-13 == saying goodbye to childhood

18-23 -- daunting reality of independence and feels overwhelmed and diminished by the future shock mentioned in my previous blog. Feeling not up to this challenge and sometimes acting this way, it is easy to feel disappointed in them selves, to get down on them selves, and even to punish them selves, esteem falling in the process. "Here I am 22 years old, still messing up, and I can't get my life together!"

Self-esteem has to do with how a person identifies and evaluates his or her definition of self.

Start with self-esteem as identification. When the adolescent commits his or her [identity](#) to just one part of life - to having friends, to competitive [sports](#), to high academic achievement - then when friends are lost, when injury ends athletics, when academic performance drops, esteem comes crashing down. "I'm nothing without my friends!" "I'm worthless without my sport!" "I'm a failure if I don't make an A!" To maintain relative constancy of well being through the normal ups and downs of adolescence, it really helps to have multiple pillars of self-esteem.

Consider self-esteem as evaluation. When the adolescent is routinely hard on him or herself - from insisting on excellence, from criticizing failings, from punishing mistakes - then when expectations are unmet, when imperfections become apparent, when human errors occur, esteem comes crashing down. "I'm so stupid!" "What's wrong with me!" "I can't do anything right!" To maintain constancy of well being during the trials of adolescence, it really helps when life goes badly to treat oneself with tolerance and understanding.

"To hurt yourself when you are already hurting only makes the hurt worse. When you're hurting is a time not to treat yourself badly, but well. That way you can motivate yourself to do better."

Is there such a thing as having too much self-esteem? Yes. People who prize themselves too highly often believe they are superior, are always right, are owed special consideration and treatment, need allow no disagreement, know it all (or at least all worth knowing), deserve be given their way, and should be allowed to rule over the lives of others. Many tyrants, petty and great, from the entitled child to the cruel despot, have had extremely high self-esteem -- to other people's cost.

Within the matrix of concepts that explain psychological functioning, I believe self-esteem has a useful place. Important as it is, however, strong self-esteem is not everything.

For example, it is independent of morality. Strong self-esteem does not prevent wrongdoing. People who feel extremely positive about who and how they are can still become bullies, criminals, and even destructive zealots. Evil can claim strong self-esteem as easily as can good.

Self-esteem is also independent of outcome. It does not assure accomplishment. People who feel confident about performing well are still capable of making misunderstandings, miscalculations, and mistakes. Strong self-esteem can lead a person into failure as well as to success.

**From [livestrong.com](http://livestrong.com):**

## **Show Respect**

Instill a sense of self-esteem in your teenager by showing respect when you address him. Listen to your teen's fears and concerns without dismissing them as childhood angst. Give your teen a voice in the family decision-making to show that you value his feelings and opinions.

## **Set an Example**

Teenagers can discover what it's like to have a healthy sense of self-worth by following a role model. According to Kids Health from Nemours, you should be conscious of your attitude and actions, particularly when your teen is around. Set a good example by addressing problems with a positive outlook, asserting yourself politely in public and displaying self-confidence. Your teenager might develop low self-esteem if she consistently sees pessimistic family members who doubt their abilities and react to personal and professional setbacks with negativity.

## **Encourage Activities**

Allow your teenager to build self-esteem by participating in extracurricular activities. According to the Building Strong Families Program, pastimes such as sports not only teach your child how to work diligently to reach goals, but also provide a sense of identity. Being part of a team can also provide camaraderie and boost teenage self-worth as the teammates work together for a common goal. Encourage your teen to participate in competitions and contests to increase his resiliency as he learns to face success with gratitude and failure with optimism.

## **Seek Help**

If your teenager has an extreme lack of self-esteem that generates severe self-doubt, depression or mentions of suicide, seek help from a mental health professional or doctor, according to the U.S. Department of Education. The professional might be able to uncover deeper causes for the feelings of low self-worth or suggest medication or a treatment plan to address the symptoms.

True self-esteem is based on something real. It is not something you are born with, but the outcome of positive experiences and interactions – in effect, if good things happen, your self-esteem can flourish. So, you don't need self-esteem to be successful; rather, you need a few successes to have self-esteem. As educators, we are in a particular position that allows us to boost teens' self-esteem with respect, recognition and real facts.

This kind of self-esteem is naturally resilient, unlike false self-esteem caused by narcissism, which is inherently fragile.

Give true, meaningful compliments – recognize achievement

- Focus on the positive
- Give emotional support
- Watch out for what you say – they may pretend not to be listening, but what we say means a lot to them
- Encourage collaboration and participation

Boosting self-confidence to increase leadership – [Leadershipsimplified.com](http://Leadershipsimplified.com)

**From the Resiliency resource centre:**

- Focus on strengths rather than deficiencies.
- Refrain from harsh criticism, sarcasm and put-downs.
- Provide plenty of encouragement, support and affection..
- Foster social contact and participation.
- Encourage giving and altruistic behaviour.
- Show acceptance of children's faults and failings, and encourage them to do likewise.
- Teach and model respect and concern for others.
- Entrust children with age-appropriate responsibilities.
- Allow time to listen to children's feelings without criticising, judging or moving straight into problem-solving.
- Be involved in children's lives and activities.
- Encourage persistence in the face of obstacles, and help children bounce back from failures by reminding them of their successes.
- Involve children in setting rules and boundaries.

Resilient children:

- Believe they are lovable and good
- Have experiences of competence and mastery in their lives
- Believe they can change, ameliorate, or at the very least cope with, the difficulties in their lives
- Can realistically appraise their capacities and skills

- Have at least some strategies and skills for dealing with problems in their lives
- Are optimistic about their future

## Danger of affirmations

### Instead of affirmations, encourage true statements

How have I done as well as I have done? What are the two or three biggest challenges (including crises or traumas) I have overcome in my life? What did I use to overcome them? What do I use every day to effectively cope with the typical stresses in my life?

In other words, what specific qualities, supports, skills, attitudes, aptitudes, and talents have we– or others– relied on to make it this far?

### Resiliency Builders:

Put a check by the top three or four resiliency builders you use most often. Ask yourself how you have used these in the past or currently use them. Think of how you can best apply these resiliency builders to current life problems, crises, or stressors.

- Relationships — Sociability/ability to be a friend/ability to form positive relationships
- Humor — Has a good sense of humor
- Inner Direction — Bases choices/decisions on internal evaluation (internal locus of control)
- Perceptiveness — Insightful understanding of people and situations
- Independence — “Adaptive” distancing from unhealthy people and situations/autonomy
- Positive View of Personal Future – Optimism; expects a positive future
- Flexibility — Can adjust to change; can bend as necessary to positively cope with situations
- Love of Learning — Capacity for and connection to learning
- Self-motivation — Internal initiative and positive motivation from within
- Competence — Is “good at something”/personal competence
- Self-Worth — Feelings of self-worth and self-confidence
- Spirituality — Personal faith in something greater
- Perseverance — Keeps on despite difficulty; doesn’t give up
- Creativity — Expresses self through artistic endeavor

“What are my strengths? How can I capitalize on them? What one, two, or three things can I do better than 10,000 other people?” are additional questions we should ask or help someone else ask.