

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is how we value and perceive ourselves, our personality and our appearance. It has a big impact on the way we feel and treat ourselves.

People with **low** self-esteem:

- feel bad about themselves
- are hard on themselves
- think they are not good enough

Body Image

It's common for body image to play a big part in self-esteem. Someone with a negative body image may be unhappy with aspects of their physical appearance, causing them to feel shame or self-hatred, be overly self-critical and low in confidence.

What affects self-esteem and body image?

Relationships **Bullying** **Abuse**
Past experiences **Social media**
Other people's expectations **School work**
Prejudice or discrimination

What keeps low self-esteem going?

“Negative self-talk” is the way you “talk” to yourself in your mind. It's that little voice in your head that always criticises and puts you down.

Negative self-talk might come from what we've heard from others or in the media. We then start to repeat and believe these negative thoughts, even though they are **not always true, important or useful.**

What can help?

Notice Your Thought Patterns

Low self-esteem and poor body image often include **negative thought patterns**, also called **‘negative self-talk’**.

Sometimes negative self-talk can become so “normal” that we don't even notice it anymore!

Noticing it is the first step towards challenging it:

- ⇒ Use **thought records** to monitor your self-talk
- ⇒ Keep a thought/feeling **journal**
- ⇒ Read about **unhelpful thought patterns** and see if you recognise any in yourself

Challenge Negative Self-Talk

When you notice it, ask yourself:

- ⇒ “Is this based on fact or opinion?”
- ⇒ “Would I talk to a friend this way?”
- ⇒ “Is this fair, important or useful?”

Positive Self-Talk

Once you have practiced noticing your negative self-talk, you can learn how to manage it. Reduce negative self-talk by being **kind and accepting** towards yourself.

- ✓ Talk to yourself as you would talk to **a friend**
- ✓ Use more **friendly, fair and balanced** language
- ✓ Remember you **don't have to be perfect** to be ok

Coping Strategies

- ⇒ Avoid **comparing** yourself to others
- ⇒ Make your own **“What I will say to myself”** cards
- ⇒ **Use relaxation techniques** to calm upsetting thoughts
- ⇒ Acknowledge your **strengths** and the things you **do** like about yourself. Make a mind map or write them down.
- ⇒ Every night before you go to sleep, think of **3 things you did well** that day – no matter how small