



SELF-ESTEEM

What is low self-esteem?

When we suffer from low self-esteem, we have a negative image of ourselves, often comparing ourselves to others who can seem better in every way than us. It is as though we look at ourselves through critical glasses, always finding fault or considering ourselves lacking.

What causes low self-esteem?

Often a low self-image grows out of difficulties in childhood. If we have had a very critical parent who judged us harshly, then we can take on this view of ourselves too. If we are not adequately cared for and loved, it can leave us feeling unworthy of love. Being bullied or feeling excluded as a child can also affect our sense of self-worth. Negative experiences in adulthood such as redundancy or divorce can also damage our self-image. Low self-esteem can lead us to avoid new challenges or withdraw from others. This behaviour can re-enforce a sense of failure.



Union Baptist Church
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Developing a better self-image

Avoid comparison: Comparing yourself to others is rarely helpful. Often, we only see the polished side of another person, the shiny image that they present to the world and in contrast we can feel a failure. Social media is particularly unhelpful in this area as we only see the edited highlights of someone else's life. the world and in contrast we can feel a failure. Social media is particularly unhelpful in this area as we only see the edited highlights of someone else's life.

Challenge negative thoughts: Start to listen for your internal voice and when you notice negative thoughts, try to pause your thinking. Ask yourself, is this a rational thought, am I being overly self-critical? Is there another way of looking at the situation? A counsellor could help you with this if you struggle to do it alone.

List your strengths: It can be helpful to reflect on areas where you have been successful and identify your special giftings. If you struggle to do this, you could try asking some good friends what strengths they see in you.

Find supportive friends: Try not to spend your time with people who put you down or constantly criticise. Instead look for friends who are encouraging and open and honest about themselves. Often critical people suffer from low self-esteem themselves and knock others in order to boost their own sense of self.

Set realistic goals: Often we set unrealistic goals for ourselves, such as losing six stone or never getting angry again! This only leads to further disappointment as they are unattainable and we set ourselves up for a fall. Instead, set yourself small realistic goals such as losing a few pounds or getting through an encounter without using angry words. When you are able to attain these goals, your self-image is improved and you can go on to set more small goals.

Be kind to yourself: Make allowances for mistakes - we all make them. No-one is perfect all the time. Almost everyone is disappointed about some aspect of themselves. It's not tripping up that makes us different - it's what we do with ourselves once we messed up. Do we wallow in our sense of failure, or do we pick ourselves up, forgive ourselves and try to work out what we can learn from our mistakes?

If you have a faith and struggle to forgive yourself, remember that nothing that you can do is beyond God's forgiveness.

Learn to say no to others: It is important to respect yourself and set sensible boundaries in your relationships with others. Often when we suffer from low self-esteem, we become people pleasers afraid to say no to anything that is asked of us. This does not help with our sense of self and if we take on too much, it can lead to more failure. When someone asks something of you, learn to pause, taking your time before deciding if it is the right thing for you.

Look for achievements: Finding a hobby that you enjoy such as gardening or cooking where you can produce something to be proud of, can help lift low-self esteem.

SOURCES OF HELP

Building self-esteem can be difficult to do alone. Working with a trained professional such as a counsellor can help you understand the roots of your opinion of yourself and how to challenge limiting beliefs.

If you would like someone to pray for you regarding the difficulties you are having, please get in touch with us: administrator@unionbaptist.org.uk.

Counselling Services

The Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC) is the only Christian UK-wide counselling organisation holding an Accredited Register with the Professional Standards Authority. For further details see their website:

<https://www.acc-uk.org>

The British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists is the professional association for members of the counselling professions in the UK. For further details see their website: <https://www.bacp.co.uk>

SELF ESTEEM AND FAITH

Many Christians struggle with issues of self esteem, which can impact their spiritual life and service. Although the Bible contains plenty of affirmation about how God views us, sometimes it can be hard to recognise that reality in our own lives, particularly if we have had negative language used towards and about us in the past. As Christians it can be easy to compare ourselves negatively with other Christians.

Low self-esteem can limit us in our service, making us reluctant to step out of our comfort zone even when prompted to do so by the Holy Spirit. Regardless of how incapable you feel, God can still use you in His service: it's not about your ability, but about God's ability through you. If you want to test out a prompting, why not talk to your pastor or other Christian whom you trust.

Scripture tells of many people called by God to great things who thought themselves inadequate to the task. When God called Moses, he objected: **"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"** (Exodus 3:11). How did God respond? **"I will certainly be with you"** (Exodus 3:12)

When God tells Gideon to go and save the people of Israel from the hand of the Midianites, like Moses, Gideon objects: **"Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family"** (Judges 6:15). Once again, God's reply was simply **"I will be with you."** (Judges 6:16)

When God called Jeremiah, he protested: **"Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth"** (Jeremiah 1:6). **"Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: 'Behold, I have put my words in your mouth'"** (Jeremiah 1:9)

A healthy self-esteem isn't grounded in our strengths or abilities, but depends on recognising God as the source of our self-worth.

If you evaluate yourself in terms of worldly success and achievement, you are likely to think too much about your worth in the eyes of others, and fail to see your value in God's eyes.

Don't waste or bury the gifts which God has given you because you are comparing them negatively to those of other Christians. **"We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us."** (Romans 12:6) **"And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body."** (1 Corinthians 12:16) Everyone in the church has a different role to play; don't limit yourself by comparing yourself with others.

According to Jesus, the most important thing we can do is to **“love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and all your mind”** (Matthew 22:37). The more you focus your mind on God, through reading Scripture, listening to teaching, and spending time in prayer, the less inclined you will be to focus on yourself and what others think of you. The verses from Scripture overleaf may be helpful for reflection and encouragement. You may find it helpful to choose one or two of these to repeat to yourself each day.

Hand over your insecurities and low self-esteem to God in prayer. When you find yourself making comparisons with others, or worrying about other people’s opinions of you, stop and thank God for the gifts and abilities he has given you.

VERSES FROM THE BIBLE

Luke 12:6-7 “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

Romans 8:1 “So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.” If you are inclined to replay past sins and failures over and over in your mind, remind yourself to trust in Christ alone for your salvation: you are forgiven, you are chosen, you are His.

Psalm 139:13–14

**“For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.”**

You were fearfully and wonderfully made by God. Nothing about you is a mistake. He created you on purpose.

2 Corinthians 12:9 “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.” Instead of dwelling on your flaws and weaknesses, remember that they may be the very means through which God reveals His power in your life.

Hebrews 10:35–36 “So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.” Don’t lose your confidence when things don’t go as planned; persevere and keep trusting in the Lord and not in your own strength.

2 Corinthians 10:12 “We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.” Unhealthy comparisons with other believers will make us feel inadequate.

Isaiah 43:4 “Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you... ” You are precious in God’s sight!