

# TRANSFORMATIONS

## Building Your Self-Esteem

By Pamela Bell

Self-esteem is the second behavioral requirement for any successful action. The first requirement is a thought or idea (thought precedes all action) but after that thought there is something you must have that makes the action possible in the first place. In order to take an original idea from inception to manifestation you must believe that you are capable of doing so. You must possess the confidence, inner knowingness and ability to organize and prioritize your steps in order to achieve a successful completion.

Self-esteem defined is "high regard for oneself" or "self respect". But where does self-esteem or the ability to love oneself come from in the first place? The know-how to love and respect ourselves is ours at birth; it is our birthright! But this "right" must be reinforced by our families, schools and communities in order for us to develop a healthy understanding of our own greatness. At the very least our families, schools and communities must not diminish in us what we already know to be true, which is that each of us in our own way is quite magnificent! We are all essentially a walking miracle and bring a unique gift to this world.

Each of us has a choice then to remain true to what we know or to buy into what others tell us about ourselves and what we should or should not believe in or value.

The first step to developing or reconnecting with healthy self-esteem is to be true to yourself and to honor your own ideas, thoughts and beliefs. Remember they are unique to **you** and though they might be different than someone else, that does not make them wrong. Think back to a time when you remember abandoning your own sense of things in order to be readily accepted by others or possibly

to avoid a confrontation. Maybe it was only yesterday or last week or even 5 years ago but all of us have done this and all of us have experienced the same feeling of smallness that accompanies letting oneself down. So the first rule of thumb is to remain true to yourself: yes there will be adversity and yes, you might not always get your way but at least you will be heard and in the process you will be building a stronger sense of who you are.

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Self-esteem comes from within. Other people can encourage it and help you to feel good about yourself but other people, if you allow it, can also make you feel not so good about yourself. The key here is to develop a strong foundation or understanding of who **you** are so you are not reliant on other people to define you. Knowing your assets and being firmly grounded in what you value about yourself is where true strength or esteem will come from. What is it that makes you great? What ground do you stand on that is uniquely yours? What do you love best about yourself? Is it the way you tell a story? Is it your kindness and compassion and the way you listen to others? Perhaps it is the way you can take apart a piece of equipment and easily reassemble it. Maybe you are a great cook and love to nurture your friends and family this way. We possess many exceptional and unique qualities and I recommend that you make a list of what these are for you. Simply sit down and ask yourself: What are my special gifts? And write down whatever comes to you.

Don't judge it or question it, if it is something that you like about yourself it is as good as gold. Make a list of 1-20 qualities or behaviors. (There should be a slight warning here because once you get going it will be hard to stop. Once you have permission to love yourself it is amazing to learn how much you really do!)

The next step is to make these real or concrete. Take the top 5 qualities (your favorites) and bring them to

life in the form of a structure so you can interact with them on a daily basis. You might write a meaningful word on a poster or paint an image that is symbolic of your favorite quality. You might leave yourself post-its all over your house or leave yourself a voicemail to remind you of your unique gifts. Maybe you want to make a collage or an altar in your house that encompasses all of your findings in one place. I personally have developed a mantra that represents me and my values and I can take it wherever I go. I use it to bring me strength and awareness on the days when I forget who I am and the world seems overwhelming. I also use it to empower my ideas and creativity before taking on a new project. I suggest that you let your imagination go wild and create things that allow you to exercise your uniqueness in the process. The only thing to remember is that there are no rules!

The next step that leads to healthy self-esteem is to develop a sacred quietness so that you can listen to what your self is telling you. The world is full of distractions

and we are conditioned to stay busy in order to keep up with the demands of modern day society. In the process however we have lost the ability to hear ourselves think or speak from within. Your inner-self might be trying to point you in a direction that is much more fulfilling and in tune with your nature or it might be trying to warn you that something is not right. Without the ability to listen you may never know the joy of making your own music. I recommend that you spend at least 10 minutes a day (more if possible) in quiet solitude. Intuition and awareness is a muscle that must be groomed and developed just like your biceps or quadriceps, if you are to grow strong, stable and resilient. Be patient with yourself in developing this practice; we are not used to being silent and it can be a tremendous challenge for some people. Trust that it does get easier (but only with practice) and that one day you will grow as dependent on the silence as you currently are on the busy-ness. You may even grow to wonder how you ever lived without it.

The final step in building your self-esteem is to set meaningful and achievable

*Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.*

- Howard Thurman

goals for yourself. As you set and achieve heartfelt goals that are designed by you, your confidence in your ability to positively affect your life will grow. This will bring you a feeling of self control and empowerment as you realize step by step that there really are no limits as to what one person can achieve. If you are not used to setting goals, I recommend that you begin with small yet still meaningful goals and work your way up

to larger and more important ones. It is most important to witness how you are able to make a decision about something that you value and take action to see it through. The key here is completion. Setting goals that are too lofty in the beginning can be a trap and lead you in the opposite direction. We have all set New Year's resolutions at one time or another and failed to meet them, only to end up disappointed in ourselves when in the beginning we set out to do something positive. After actually setting the goal it is beneficial to also have a plan as to how you hope to achieve it. What steps do you need to take? When will you take them? Who will you share your goal with so they can help you stay on track? What is your overall deadline? And how will you measure your progress? Set up a checks and balance system for yourself so you can identify which steps take you closer to your goal and which steps lead you further away from it. Invariably, in order to say yes to what is most important to us, we must say no to the things that inhibit our success. It is important to learn to say no and to stick to your agenda.

The possibilities exist in the world for great success. We are geared for success from the beginning. Know who supports you in this endeavor and spend time developing these relationships. Avoid at all cost relationships that do not support you becoming the bright and beautiful person that you are meant to be. It is your responsibility to listen to and honor yourself (your feelings, beliefs and aspirations), to know what your unique gifts are and to know how to set and meet goals that are inspired by this inner knowingness. These skills will be required of you your entire life and if developed properly will carry you with much joy along your desired path.

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