

Building Self Esteem

Here are some examples of what people say if they have low self esteem. Look out for them.

Permanent Talk	“Things always go wrong for me, I never have any luck.”
Global Talk	“I’ve always been lazy.”
Internal (Self Blame)	“I always ruin everything” (exclusively my fault).
Temporary Talk	“This won’t last I’m just waiting for thins to go wrong.”
Specific Talk	“The only good thing in my life is my music.”
External Talk	“Yes I got in the team so the others must have been really bad” (credit given externally).



Changes in Behaviour

When a child or young person is going through a difficult stage of development or there are things in their life that are affecting his/her self esteem, one of the first signs to look out for is them being critical of themselves and their family. This often leads to defensiveness and a tendency to flare up quickly. It is best not to respond in the same way to this type of behaviour, but to remember that you are responsible for demonstrating to them how to cope and become resilient.

Children and young people may also display how they are feeling through their body language and how they talk to us. They may appear rude or sarcastic and have an “I can’t be bothered” attitude. This behaviour can be directly linked to self esteem. People who don’t understand that often respond to such attitude with phrases like “Don’t come to me for help”, “Don’t ask me for money” or “You won’t have any friends if you talk to people like that”. This is not to excuse rude behaviour, but always try and look beyond it and find out if there is something else going on. Challenge rude behaviour but in a way that does not attack the child or young person but tackles the actual behaviour.



The Components of Self Esteem

1. Sense of Security. This is a feeling of certainty. It involves feeling comfortable and safe, knowing what is expected, being able to depend on individuals and situations, and understanding rules and limits.
2. Sense of Belonging. This is a feeling of connection and acceptance particularly in relationships that are considered important. Feeling approved of, appreciated and respected.

3. Sense of Selfhood. This is a feeling of individuality. It gives us a sense of who we are based on how we view ourselves and how we believe others view us.
4. Sense of Purpose. This is a feeling of motivation and satisfaction in life. Being able to set realistic and achievable goals and being able to voice an opinion and make choices.
5. Sense of Accomplishment. This is a feeling of success and achievement in things regarded as important or valuable. Being able to acknowledge our strengths and accept our limitations.

Promoting Self Esteem – your role

- Give children and young people your time, listen to them and try to understand how they feel.
- Offer choices sometimes such as what activity the group will do, or what will be discussed in one to one sessions.
- Encourage them in things they do well
- Give responsibilities that they can do easily, such as organising an outing for the group, or being in charge of a particular activity
- Talk with them about anything they find difficult and support them to come up with ways of dealing with things (make some sensible suggestions to help if they are struggling)
- Give regular praise
- Tell them you trust them and demonstrate this by giving them appropriate levels of responsibility
- Celebrate their achievements
- Demonstrate appropriate behaviour, e.g. manners, respect, calmness etc.
- Define appropriate boundaries