

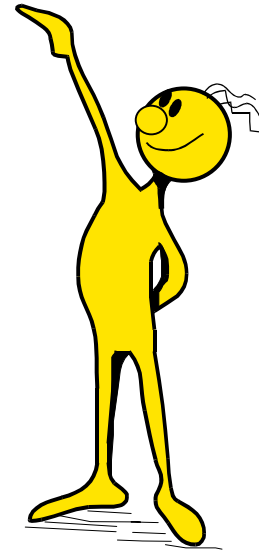
# UNDERSTANDING SELF-ESTEEM

## GOALS:

- To define self-esteem.
- To understand the components of self-esteem.

**Note:** Post sheets of self-esteem affirmations around the room such as:

- *I trust and respect myself and I am worthy of the respect of others.*
- *I am learning to approach my goals one day at a time.*
- *I don't have to be perfect to be loved.*
- *I am learning to let go of doubts and fear.*
- *I take pride in what I've accomplished and look forward to what I intend to achieve.*
- *I am learning that it's okay to make mistakes.*
- *I know what my values are and I am confident of the decisions I make.*
- *I am learning that my feelings and needs are just as important as anyone else's.*
- *The more I love myself, the more I am able to love others.*



## RATIONALE:

Our self-esteem changes as we encounter new challenges or changes in our lives. This topic is an important one because during our job search periods, we need to be motivated, pleasant, confident, and optimistic and we need to have the skills to increase self-esteem.

## **MATERIALS NEEDED:**

Flipchart, markers.

## **METHOD:**

### **Warm Up: Dream Sharing**

Direct participants to close their eyes and relax. Say:

*If you could give yourself one present, what would it be? Take a minute to think about it.*

*Now open your eyes. Share what that present would be.*

### **Exercise 1: What is it?**

In groups of four ask participants to discuss and write a definition of self-esteem (using three sentences or less) and list the components of self-esteem. Have them put their ideas on flipchart paper and be prepared to present to the total group.

Ask each group to present their responses to the entire group.

**THEORY:** Lead a discussion based on what has come from the group and the information in the Theory Box.

### **Exercise 2: Feelings**

Self-esteem fluctuates at various times in one's life. Think of a time when your self-esteem was high.

#### **Questions to Consider:**

- How do you feel when your self-esteem is high? How do you behave?
- How do you feel about others when your self-esteem is high? How do you behave?
- How do you feel when your self-esteem is low? How do you behave?
- How do you feel about others when your self-esteem is low? How do you behave?

### **Exercise 3: Showing Confidence**

Ask the group to stand and direct as follows:

*How do you walk when you feel good about yourself?*

Ask the group to walk around confidently and encourage them to remember their walk of confidence when they need to feel self-assured. Ask:

*When should you remember your walk of confidence?*

Using a similar format, direct the group to practise other behaviors such as:

*How do you....*

*Sit when you feel confident?*

*Stand when you feel confident?*

*Show confidence in your tone of voice?*

*Show confidence in your facial expressions?*

### **Exercise 4: Try it Out!**

Encourage participants to consciously try out in the days ahead, a behaviour that they have just practiced and point out that there will be an opportunity to report back to the group.

### **EVALUATION:**

### **CREDIT:**

Dianne Barham, Call Centre for Youth Program, YWCA of Greater Toronto

## THEORY BOX

### Definitions:

“Self-esteem is appreciating one’s own worth and importance, and having the character to be accountable for one’s self and act responsible towards others.”  
(the US state task force on self-esteem, personal and social responsibility)

“A confidence and satisfaction in oneself” (Webster’s dictionary)

### COMPONENTS OF SELF-ESTEEM

#### **Trust, Self-nurture, Autonomy, Identity, Intimacy**

**Trust** starts early in life and is based on how we are received into the world. We learn to trust ourselves and begin to have a realistic trust of others. We begin to develop confidence in the self’s ability to choose others who are safe or who will not injure or exploit us.

**Self-Nurture** is born of trust. We learn how to be caretakers of ourselves. Self-nurturing is an essential ingredient of self-esteem.

**Autonomy** comes from mastery. We work through necessary dependencies to a growing independence. We find interdependence when we can separate ourselves from other around us and yet retain vital connections to others.

**Identity grows.** We begin to know who we are and who we are becoming. In each stage of life, self-esteem undergoes change and growth. We feel more solid as our identity grows.

**Intimacy** develops from identity and the need for connection. It is the ability to relate closely and to know the limits of closeness. We yearn to lose ourselves in love and yet we need to retain our own separate essence.

**Healthy self-esteem involves all of the above basic elements. If we lose those characteristics or never develop them, there is a significant absence of self-esteem. Low self-esteem affects our body, mind, and spirit. None of us spring full-blown into the world with characteristics fully developed. Their creation takes work.**