**IMPROVING SELF-ESTEEM**

**by Simon Moss**

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| **Introduction** |

Our self-esteem—the extent to which we like and accept ourselves—varies over time. Nobody feels good about themselves all the time. On some occasions, people feel either slightly or very ashamed. On other occasions, people feel better about themselves. To illustrate

* Recall a day, perhaps several months or years ago, when you did not feel good about yourself
* Now recall a day, perhaps in the last week or so, in which you felt better about yourself
* What happened on the day in which you felt better about yourself? Where were you? Who was nearby? What did you hear or see?

However, when your self-esteem is low, you experience unhelpful thoughts about yourself. You might feel too incompetent to change. You might judge yourself too harshly. You might avoid other people. Consequently, you feel even more ashamed. You feel your low self-esteem will last forever.

But, as this document shows, you can undertake a range of activities to improve your self-esteem.

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| **Who are you?** |

After people consider their characteristics—especially the characteristics they do not often reveal to other individuals—they feel more inspired. They experience a sense of purpose, meaning, and determination.

Therefore, the following table invites you to consider some of your qualities and characteristics, such as your favourite possessions. In the second column, include answers that many of your friends and family probably know. In the third column, include answers that few other people know.

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| What are two of … | Answers other  people might know | Answers few  people know |
| your favourite foods |  |  |
| your favourite songs or musicians |  |  |
| your favourite pastimes or hobbies |  |  |
| your favourite possessions or belongings |  |  |
| your favourite places to visit |  |  |
| the most trusted people in your life |  |  |
| activities or settings in which you feel happier |  |  |
| your strengths—or activities you perform well |  |  |
| changes in your life you hope will happen |  |  |
| changes in the world you hope will happen |  |  |
| dreams or aspirations you would like to fulfill |  |  |

When completing this table, you wrote about changes in your life you hope will happen and some dreams or aspirations. Now, if you like, record in the box below

* some activities you have undertaken, if any, to help you pursue these hopes or aspirations
* some activities you could undertake in the future to help you pursue these hopes or aspirations

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| **With what do you identify?** |

After people consider the groups, teams, or movements, to which they belong, they often feel more resilient and determined. If these groups, teams, or movements are quite small, exclusive, or radical, people often feel particularly energized. Therefore, the following table prompts you to consider some of the groups, teams, or movements with which you identify. The final column presents some examples.

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| Question | Answers | Examples |
| To which small teams or associations do you belong, if any? |  | * my work team * a cricket club * an organization against animal products |
| What are some passions or interests you share with other people? |  | * my interest in chess * my passion for women’s rights * my love of fine food |
| What are some of your family or work roles? |  | * I am a parent * I am an engineer |

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| **Draw a symbol that represents you** |

Sometimes, people cannot readily express who they are verbally. Instead, they can express themselves better with symbols or pictures. So, perhaps identify one or more symbols that could represent you. Maybe the symbol is an object or animal. Maybe the symbol is abstract, like some curvy lines or overlapping circles. You could draw the symbol in the space below. Do not worry about why these symbols might represent you: Just draw

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| **Consider your strengths** |

After people contemplate their strengths, they sometimes feel more resilient. They feel they can manage problems better. To help you clarify your strengths, the following table presents a series of statements. Which statements may be true of you? Perhaps insert an X alongside the 3 to 6 statements that are most true of you.

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| Characteristics | Which of these statements may be true of you? |
| **Social qualities** |  |
| I listen well whenever my friends or family are upset |  |
| I am caring towards my friends or family |  |
| I treat strangers or acquaintances with kindness |  |
| I can forgive people easily |  |
| I can develop very close relationships with other people |  |
| I can easily decipher how someone is feeling |  |
| I am very honest, sincere, and truthful |  |
| I feel I can depend on some of my friends or family |  |
| I laugh with my friends or family |  |
| I can engage in good conversations with my friends or family |  |
| My sense of humour is sometimes, or often, very good |  |
| **Study and work** |  |
| I try hard in my studies or work |  |
| I enjoy some of my studies or work |  |
| I enjoy learning knowledge and skills in my studies or work |  |
| I assist other people in my studies or work |  |
| In my studies or work, I can be a good leader and direct, inspire, and help other individuals |  |
| **Interests or hobbies** |  |
| I like to be creative |  |
| I am passionate about a specific hobby or pastime |  |
| **Other qualities** |  |
| I can resist temptations well, such as unhealthy food |  |
| I can persist in response to problems or failures |  |
| I can be energetic, excited, and motivated |  |
| I can be brave and courageous |  |

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| **Changing your behaviour** |

After you contemplate your strengths, you might feel more confident that you could change some of your behaviours, even slightly. These changes often boost your self-esteem. The following table presents some behaviours that have been shown to boost self-esteem.

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| Behavior | Details or examples |
| Stand and walk with a straight posture | This posture can enhance your confidence. |
| Speak confidently | Perhaps talk louder than usual or articulate your words more precisely |
| Deliberately smile more often | Smiling can enhance your resilience |
| Help someone else, if possible | Attempt to uncover an opportunity in which you can utilize one of your strengths or skills to help someone. |
| Show your appreciation to people if they help you | You might say to a friend “Thanks for your advice the other day; that was really what I needed”. You might need to practice first |
| Reward yourself whenever you achieve even a small goal, such as tidy one room | Some of the most effective rewards include relaxing and watching nature, listening to a song you like, playing with a pet, or speaking to one of your favourite relatives or friends. |
| Occasionally, learn some knowledge or develop a skill | You could watch a documentary on Youtube or try a new hobby |

Finally, after people feel confident they can resist temptations and override their habits, their self-esteem tends to improve. To resist temptations

* when deciding whether or not to yield to some temptation, such as to purchase chocolate, repeat to yourself “What will I not do today”. This simple question tends to override habits.