

SELF-ESTEEM 101



Self-esteem is not ...

- Self-esteem is not something we are born with or have to earn.
- Self-esteem is not something that is given to us by others. When we look to others for a sense of worth, we need constant approval or praise and can never get enough.
- Self-esteem is not comparative and competitive. We don't build self-esteem by outshining others.
- Having a healthy level of self-esteem is not the same as being self-centred, selfish or over-confident.
- The goal is not to love everything about ourselves and our lives all of the time.

So what is self-esteem?

- Self-esteem is a process, a journey, a practice, a constant work in progress.
- Therefore, it takes time and effort to build up our level of self-esteem and we can expect that level to fluctuate.
- Having a healthy level of self-esteem means having a **realistic** and **appreciative** opinion of ourselves.
 - **Realistic** suggests that we are aware of and honest about our strengths, weaknesses and everything in-between.
 - **Appreciative** suggests that we generally feel good about ourselves. Think of a friend who knows you well and really cares about you, recognizing that there is more to you than your faults, and you'll get a sense of what appreciative means.
- The goal is to focus on the positive things about ourselves and our lives and to look at the not-so-positive things as opportunities for growth.

Why work on self-esteem?

- Because you're worth it!
- There are so many benefits! For example, people who work on self-esteem:
 - believe that they deserve to be happy
 - feel they can succeed
 - experience increased self-confidence
 - are better able to let go of undesirable attitudes and beliefs
 - don't need constant approval or praise
 - learn from their mistakes
 - make effective decisions
 - accept healthy supports
 - are more comfortable accepting feedback
 - express their wants and needs directly
 - trust that they are able to cope
 - have healthier relationships
 - are more self-accepting
 - are better able to come to terms with the past
 - are open to trying new things
 - don't feel sorry for themselves
 - are better able to realize their full potential
 - respect their own and other's values
 - are responsible for their own behaviour
 - care for themselves in healthy ways
 - are better able to set boundaries