

# Self – Esteem in Teens

Ages 13 to 18 years of age



## What is Self-Esteem?

- It can be how well you think of yourself in comparison to others.
- Having low self-esteem means you sometimes feel like you do not measure up to other people or their expectations.
- Good self-esteem does not mean being arrogant. People with good self-esteem do not have to go around saying how great they are because they already feel OK with themselves.
- Low self-esteem can stem from things that happened in childhood, it can happen after a traumatic incident, or an accident. It can also be a sign of low mood, if it affects your ability to function on a daily basis.

**But sometimes people feel insecure about themselves for no obvious reason. They might be naturally shy, or unsure of themselves in social situations.**

## Shield Anti-Bullying Programme

### Signs of Low Self-Esteem

- Feeling like you'll fail before you even start something
- Feeling like you're the odd one out all the time
- Feeling like everyone's looking at you and judging you
- Feeling like you have nothing interesting to say
- Feeling like you have no talents
- Feeling too scared to try new things
- Not standing up for yourself when someone picks on you.
- Aggressive behaviour can also be a sign of low self-esteem.
- Feeling like you cannot accept compliments



- Young people's self-esteem can be affected by the physical and hormone changes, and most importantly by how they look or how they think they look.
- Whether it comes from other people or your own thoughts, negative references to our looks, personality or actions can sometimes take a knock to our self-esteem.

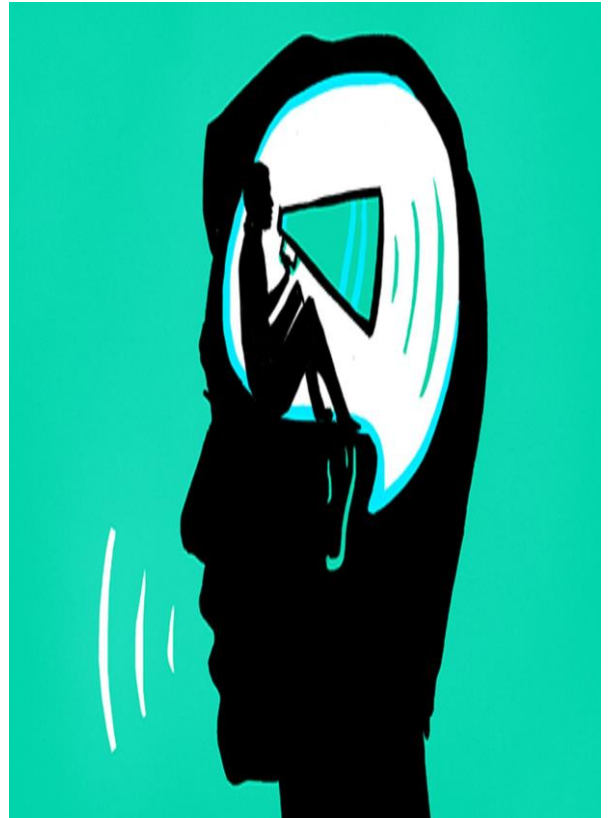
### **Self-Esteems Effect on Relationships**

- Low self-esteem can influence the way you behave with other people.
- For instance, you might find yourself being unassertive (not saying what you think, feel or want), or doing things you do not want to do.
- You might find yourself trying too hard to please other people – agreeing with them and offering to do things for them in order to 'earn' their friendship.

- Low self-esteem can also cause us to seek reassurance from our friends, because deep down, we're not sure they like us.
- Being treated badly by other people can reinforce the belief that we're not good enough, and can lower our self-esteem even more.
- Young people who have a goal in life often have high self-esteem, as do those whose families support them.
- Belonging to a group of friends is also very important to a young person's self-esteem. This is why social media can seem so important.

## **The Voice in Your Head**

- The things you say to yourself can play a big part in how you feel about yourself. Thinking, "I'm such a loser" or "I'll never make friends," hurts your self-esteem.
- There are other ways to think about the same things. "I didn't win this time — but maybe next time." "Maybe I can make some friends." That voice is more hopeful. It helps you feel OK. And it could turn out to be true.
- Sometimes, the voice in our head is based on harsh words others have said. Or on bad times we have faced. Sometimes, the voice is just us being hard on ourselves. But we can change the voice in our own head. We can learn to think better of ourselves.



## What Can You do To Increase your Self-Esteem?



- **BE WITH PEOPLE WHO TREAT YOU WELL.** Some people act in ways that make you feel down. Others lift you up by what they say and do. Learning to tell the difference can be very useful. Start by choosing friends who help you feel OK about yourself. Find people you can be yourself with.
- **SAY HELPFUL THINGS TO YOURSELF.** Tune in to the voice in your head. Is it too critical? Are you too hard on yourself? For a few days, write down some of the things you say to yourself. Look over your list. Are these things you'd say to a good friend? If not, rewrite them in a way that's true, fair, and kind. Read your new phrases often. Do it until it's more of a habit to think that way.  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/positive-thinking/art-20043950>
- **ACCEPT WHAT'S NOT PERFECT.** It's always good to do the best you can. But when you think you need to be perfect, you cannot feel good about anything less. Accept your best. Let yourself feel good about that. Ask for help if you cannot get past a need to be perfect.
  - Example: if you get 85% on a test but cannot stop thinking you should have got 100%. Remind yourself you did a great job. That it is still a good mark and you worked hard for it.
- **SET GOALS AND WORK TOWARD THEM.** If you want to feel good about yourself, do things that are good for you. Maybe you want to eat a healthier diet, get more fit, or study better. Make a goal. Then make a plan for how to do it. Stick with your plan. Track your progress. Be proud of what you've done so far. Say to yourself,

"I've been following my plan to work out every day for 30 minutes. I feel good about it. I know I can keep it up." It is important to remember that there will be set backs. Some days you will not keep on track or may even go back a few steps. This is normal and is part of the process. What is important is not blaming yourself for this and reminding yourself you will do better on another day.

- **FOCUS ON WHAT GOES WELL.** Are you so used to talking about problems that they're all you see? It's easy to get caught up in what's wrong. But unless you balance it with what's good, it just makes you feel bad. Next time, catch yourself when you complain about yourself or your day. Find something that went well instead.
- **GIVE AND HELP.** Giving is one the best ways to build self-esteem. Tutor a classmate, help clean up your neighbourhood, walk for a good cause. Help out at home or at school. Make it a habit to be kind and fair. Do things that make you proud of the kind of person you are. When you do things that make a difference (even a small one) your self-esteem will grow. Volunteering is a great way of doing this. Here is a link to look for volunteering opportunities in cork. <http://www.volunteercork.ie/>

## Self-Acceptance

- The key to good self-esteem is self-acceptance. This means not waiting until you're perfect before you can accept yourself. When you practise self-acceptance, you accept yourself completely, without criticising or judging yourself.
- This does not mean you do not want to improve yourself, or work towards a particular goal. It's important to set goals for things we'd like to achieve, or change things we're not happy with.
- Avoid setting conditions. Resist the temptation to tell yourself you'll be ok if only you lose weight, or pass that exam. Having good self-esteem means liking yourself whether or not you succeed



