

# Self-Esteem Fact Sheet

## ***Self-Esteem Defined***

Self-esteem is a concept that is defined differently by experts. One definition found in the dictionary states, "self-esteem is a realistic respect for or favorable impression of oneself." Some experts view self-esteem more broadly.

According to the National Network for Child Care, a widely accepted definition of self-esteem comes from Dr. Nathaniel Branden, a psychotherapist. Dr. Branden defines self-esteem as "the experience of being competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and of being worthy of happiness."

Dr. Branden contends that self-esteem is composed of two components:

1. Self-efficacy - confidence in one's ability to think, learn, choose, and make appropriate decisions; and
2. Self-respect - confidence in one's right to be happy and in the belief that achievement, success, friendship, respect, love, and fulfillment are appropriate to us (Branden, 2006).

It is important to note that although the terms self-esteem and self-concept have been used interchangeably by some individuals, experts view the terms as different. Dr. Judith Myers-Walls of Purdue University says, "Self-concept can be seen as an overall term that includes all ideas a person has about him/herself."

Dr. Myers-Walls explains that the self-concept can be seen as having four components:

1. Self-image - the way a person describes him/herself and the groups to which a person feels s/he belongs.
2. Self-esteem - the value a person gives to those characteristics or how a person evaluates the self-image.
3. Self-efficacy - the amount of influence a person feels s/he has over the things in his/her environment or the power a person feels s/he has over what happens to him/her.
4. Social-identity - how a person feels society and others around him/her feel about people in the categories into which that person falls.

## ***Traits of Healthy Self-Esteem***

Here are some traits youth with a healthy self-esteem may exhibit:

1. They are more likely to take positive risks - they know they might fail, but they also know they might succeed.
2. They are less likely to take negative risks - they respect themselves and avoid dangerous situations.
3. They are more likely to resist negative peer pressure.
4. They are less likely to go along with the crowd just to fit in.
5. They are strong and can cope with the changes and challenges of life.



6. They are resilient and can bounce back when they experience problems, disappointments, or failures.
7. They set goals and strive to reach them.
8. They feel free to explore their creativity.
9. They have a positive attitude toward life.

### ***Unhealthy Self-Esteem Traits***

Here are some traits youth with an unhealthy self-esteem may exhibit:

1. They are less likely to take positive risks -- they fear failure and may be paralyzed with self-doubt and self-distrust.
2. They are more likely to take negative risks -- they don't respect themselves and may not avoid dangerous situations.
3. They are less likely to resist negative peer pressure.
4. They are more likely to go along with the crowd just to fit in.
5. They do not feel strong enough to cope with the changes and challenges of life.
6. They are not resilient and are less likely to bounce back when they experience problems, disappointments, failures.
7. They are less likely to set goals.
8. They do not feel confident enough to explore their creativity.
9. They have a negative attitude toward life.

### ***Ways to Build Healthy Self-Esteem***

Here are some practical ways to build a child's self-esteem:

1. Let them know they are loved and appreciated.
2. Respect their feelings and abilities.
3. Spend time with them.
4. Praise their effort.
5. Provide them with opportunities for success.
6. Accept them as they are.
7. Allow them to make meaningful decisions.
8. Focus on what they do right.
9. Discipline in a positive way.
10. Help them cope with occasional negative feedback and frustrations.
11. Model healthy self-esteem for them.
12. Encourage their curiosity.

### ***Things to Avoid***

Here are some things to avoid:

1. Expecting too much or too little.
2. Excessive and harsh criticism, especially in front of other people.
3. Not allowing children to make mistakes.
4. Trying to make them somebody else and not honoring their uniqueness.