



Building Self-Esteem

As we rush toward the 21st century, our fast-paced ever-changing society places great demands on us to be independent. "The new social realities require that you do more for yourself and rely less on others to take care of you," says Gary Emery, Ph.D., Director of the Los Angeles Center of Cognitive Therapy. Meeting and fulfilling the demands of society can result in a productive and self-determined way of life. However, avoidance of personal responsibilities can create a vicious cycle which results in lack of self-confidence, an unhappy personal life, and a distorted view of self and others. This detrimental cycle will eventually result in low self-esteem and a poor self-image.

The more negative thoughts and feelings you have about yourself, the lower your self-esteem. People with low self-esteem often have little confidence in their abilities and question their self-worth. A common scenario which exemplifies a lack of self-esteem features college students who say "It won't do any good to study. I won't make a good grade anyway." These students think they are doomed to failure because of poor performance in the past or their current fears of failure. Consequently, their lack of self confidence results in passivity with little or no effort to establish goals. Even when they do make worthwhile accomplishments, these students perceive that the performance of other students looks better in comparison. They let events happen to them instead of making them happen and minimize their successes. As a result, these students feel little control over their lives and often find it difficult to set goals and develop close personal relationships.

On the other hand, high self-esteem consists of the positive thoughts and feelings you have about yourself. In addition, it affects how you think, act, and feel about others, as well as how successful you are in life. The acquisition of high self-esteem involves you becoming the person you want to be, enjoying others more fully, and offering more of yourself to the world. High self-esteem is not competitive or comparative, but rather it is the state where a person is at peace with himself or herself.

There are strategies to enhance your self-esteem:

- Identify and accept your strengths and weaknesses--everyone has them, and no one is perfect.
- Take an "I can" attitude and offer yourself encouragement along the way. Learn to be your own best friend.
- Set realistic goals and then take pride in your achievements.
- Pay attention to your thoughts and feelings, and act on what you think is right for you.
- Don't try to be someone else, but be proud of who you are.
- Explore your own talents and learn to love and appreciate the unique person you are!

The **Counseling Center** offers personal and group counseling and a variety of workshops on many subjects including self-esteem. You can learn more about confidence building and positive thinking by calling the Center at **974-2831**. The Counseling Center is located in SVC 2124 and is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. All services are confidential.

For more information or assistance:

USF students may call 974-2831;

Faculty and staff may call 974-5469