

**Self-Esteem –
Seven Things You Can Do Today To Build Your Self-Esteem
By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.**

Self-esteem really is an "inside job." Regardless of the deprivation, abuse, abandonment, or any other negative contributions from your family of origin, you can begin today to improve your self-esteem, empower your self-confidence, and begin to change your own life. Here is a list of suggestions to start doing immediately:

1. Start writing. Write about things you like, things you dislike, things that drive you crazy, things that inspire awe. Write about your feelings. Identify them. Label them. Own them. Say them proudly. "I feel" . Period. No arguments from anyone about your feelings. You are the expert on them. Get to know yourself.
2. Identify what your own values. Question where you learned your values and identify if, indeed, the way you behave or the things you do, reflects YOUR values. If they don't do match, change your behavior to fit your values. Don't worry about what others may or may not think about that. Worrying about what others think about you, keeps you feeling fearful and less than. Let go of that. Always do what you believe to be right.
3. Cultivate relationships with people who affirm you rather than criticize you. Spend time with people who bring you up rather than putting you down to feel better about themselves. Eliminate or greatly reduce the amount of time and energy that you put into negative relationships. Find people to have fun with that you can enjoy, rather than feeling drained when you are around them. Cultivate friendships with people who can teach you new things and help you grow.
4. Learn and practice assertiveness. Identify the areas that you have problems being assertive in and the ones that you feel confident in. Ask yourself what you are doing in those areas where you are assertive that is different from what you are doing in the non-assertive areas. Most of the time you will find that the difference is "risking." Assertiveness skills are transferable. All it takes is to take the risk to do what you already know how to do, in an area where you have been afraid to try.
5. Pay attention to the kinds of things that you say to yourself in your own thoughts. Do you call yourself stupid when you make a mistake? Do you look in the mirror and focus on any negatives that you might see? Stop the self-criticism. Stop it all together. When you catch yourself criticizing yourself, replace the criticism with a positive. If you find yourself saying something like "I look horrible!", replace it with something like "I have such pretty eyes" or "I look better with makeup on", or "I look better when I shave."
6. Practice accepting compliments graciously. When someone compliments your hair or clothes, say something like, "Yes, this is a nice dress, isn't it" or "Thanks; I

really like the way it looks today, too." Practice acceptance of someone's affirmation that you do something well. Say, "Yes, I do, don't I", or "Thank you." Period.

7. Try new things. Accept that you will not be able to do new things perfectly. Some new things you try, you won't even be able to do well. Try them anyway. If you have an interest in something, check it out. Who says you have to be perfect at everything you do? If it is you, who are saying it, stop it. Give yourself permission to try something new just because it would be fun, even if you are lousy at it.

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