

Who loves ya?



February is International Boost Your Self-esteem Month. There's no better time to start seeing yourself in a brighter light.

Self-esteem begins in early childhood. At first, it's based on how adults in your life respond to you. Do they soothe you when you cry? Encourage you when you try something new? Their reactions help shape your sense of self-worth.

Increasing your self-esteem

Many people have low self-esteem. Luckily, it's not set in stone. You can improve it at any time. Do you know how?

- 1. Pay attention to your self-talk.** We all talk to ourselves. What's your style? Do you give yourself positive messages? Or put yourself down? Do you think things like "What's wrong with me?" or "How could I be so stupid?" As you become aware, you can change negative self-talk.
 - Begin to notice achievements and tell yourself "Nice job!"
 - Reduce self-criticism because it's discouraging — not motivating.

- 2. Pay attention to your strengths.** It's easy to pick out flaws. Why not notice how you shine? Are you handy, a good friend, a caring pet owner, funny or loving? Give yourself credit for all your big and little assets.
- 3. Pay attention to your own needs.** Self-care shows how much you value yourself. Take care of your diet, fitness and emotional needs. You can't be "there" for others if you're not "there" for yourself.

Practice these steps to build up self-esteem. It takes awareness and repetition of new habits to improve self-esteem. And you can do it!

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