

# Improving Your Self-Efficacy

## You Should Know

Self-efficacy refers to the strong sense of trust in your abilities and competencies, and determines how you think and feel about yourself. It influences your thoughts, emotions, actions, and motivation, and enhances self-control. It is a way of understanding and acknowledging what you are truly capable of! An important component of resilience, self-efficacy supports you in achieving goals, feeling accomplished, and enhancing overall wellbeing.

There are four sources of self-efficacy:

- 1. Mastery Experiences** - Success directly impacts the way you think about yourself, boosting your confidence and increasing the likelihood you will achieve similar tasks again. Building self-efficacy through mastery requires resilience to manage expectations and accept inevitable failures.
- 2. Vicarious Experiences** - Observing others around you, especially people you can relate to, motivates you to believe that if they can do it, you can too.
- 3. Modeling Experiences** - Role models are the people you follow, admire, and want to replicate. Their actions, principles, and achievements teach you and motivate you. You are more likely to put in the effort and believe you can be successful.
- 4. Positive Emotional Experiences** - Your mental and physical wellbeing influences self-efficacy. Self-efficacy improves when you have experiences that bring you a sense of happiness and fulfillment.

Check off any of the following statements that apply to you:

- I avoid accepting challenges because I think I will fail.
- I strongly believe I am incapable of performing complicated tasks.
- I tend to focus on my failures or shortcomings.
- I am not confident.
- I have a hard time making commitments.
- It is hard for me to recover from setbacks or failures.
- I quickly lose interest in activities, projects, or work.
- I want results without putting in the effort.
- I am very anxious about failing.
- I feel depressed thinking about past failures.
- I tend to focus more on my weaknesses and less on my strengths.

\_\_\_ I lose motivation and feel helpless when my efforts fail or are not appreciated.

\_\_\_ I don't trust myself.

\_\_\_ TOTAL

If you checked off more than three statements you can work to improve your self-efficacy. People with low self-efficacy may experience more disappointment and feel less fulfilled.

What can you do to increase your self-efficacy? Here are some ways that can help you improve self-efficacy:

**1. Set simple goals.** Goal-setting is crucial to building and sustaining self-efficacy. Set reasonable goals and break them into smaller sub-goals, working on achieving them one at a time. You can celebrate small successes, avoid stressing about the results, and more easily manage your goals – one step at a time.

**2. Stay in the “stretch zone.”** If you want to be highly productive, spend more time in the “stretch zone,” where you take reasonable risks and bounce back from failures and setbacks. Try new things outside your comfort zone, face challenges, and accept failures and criticism with grace.

**3. View the big picture.** Look beyond short-term loss, sort your priorities, plan, stick to your goals, and focus.

**4. Reframe obstacles.** Increase self-efficacy by identifying obstacles and reframing or replacing them. Redefine the way you view obstacles to effectively cope with and understand life's inevitable challenges.

There are things you can do to build and improve your self-efficacy. This worksheet includes four exercises that will help you do just that!

## What to Do

**1. The Three Things Exercise.** This activity allows you to track daily activities and how they make you feel.

List three things you did within the past week that went well.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

How did you feel after doing these three things successfully?

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What are the three things you want to accomplish within the next few weeks/months?

1. 

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2. 

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3. 

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Are there potential obstacles? List them and try to reframe them.

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How will you feel after you have accomplished them all?

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**2. Positive Self-Talk.** Set aside 10 minutes every day to talk to yourself in front of the mirror. Say whatever you would like to say! You can complement yourself, motivate yourself, or ask yourself what is making you happy or sad. Remember to respond and note what your inner voice says. Use a journal to write about your self-talks. Refer back to the “Four Ways to Improve Self-Efficacy” as a reminder how to view the big picture and reframe.

**3. Review your achievements.** It is easy to focus on failure, but if you have high self-efficacy you will more likely focus on your successes and achievements. Recalling achievements and past successes reignites your self-confidence and makes you feel optimistic that you can be successful in the future. Make a list of past accomplishments and successes, small or large. Refer back to the “stretch zone” way of improving self-efficacy, and see if you can come up with ways to stretch outside your comfort zone.

List your past achievements and successes here:

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What can you do to stretch outside of your comfort zone? Successfully accomplishing tasks that make you slightly uncomfortable will increase self-efficacy.

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**4. Self-awareness.** Gretchen Rubin stated, “self-awareness is a key to self-mastery,” and self-mastery is the direct path to self-efficacy. You can practice self-awareness in a journal by recording your thoughts and feelings each day. Include physical cues to help you understand your feelings. Refer back to the “Four Ways to Improve Self-Efficacy” for ideas.

### **Reflections on This Exercise**

After completing the four exercises to improve self-efficacy, describe your experiences.

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What did you learn about yourself while completing this activity?

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