

Stop Putting Yourself Down!

What to Know

Sometimes it's easy to be hard on yourself - to focus on things you do poorly, mistakes you make, or the things you're not any good at. You might even forget about the things you do well and your accomplishments if you frequently put yourself down.

The things you say to yourself play a big part in how you feel about yourself. Putting yourself down damages your self-esteem, confidence, and self-worth. Negative thoughts and words you say out loud can be believable and they distort your perception of yourself. When you talk negatively about yourself to others, you may make it easier for them to put you down.

Putting anyone down, including yourself, is bullying. You probably think bullying is bad, so why would you bully yourself? Do you treat others better than you treat yourself? It's not okay to put *anyone* down - including yourself.

Sometimes, the voice in your head uses harsh words others have said to you. Or, you have had some bad experiences that have affected how you feel about yourself. You can't control what others say about you, but you can control what you say about yourself!

The good news is self-esteem is a pattern of thinking, and you can change the pattern and build your self-esteem. You can change the voice in your head and learn to think better of yourself. Here are some suggestions to stop putting yourself down. Each tip focuses on a behavior - something you can DO. The goal is to do things differently to change the pattern of how you think and feel about yourself. You don't have to think or feel differently to get started - that will change over time.

1. Instead of putting yourself down, turn it around. You might say, "I didn't do well on the test, but next time I'll study harder and do better," or "If I join a club at school, I'm sure to make some friends!" Make your internal voice more hopeful to help you feel better. Use positive affirmations. Write them down on sticky notes or put them on your phone screen.

2. Pay attention to your negative talk. Catch negativity early because awareness is important for you to make changes. Immediately stop your negative thoughts or words and correct them quickly. This may be hard at first. Change takes effort

and habits usually don't change overnight. Keep practicing and you'll see improvements.

3. Make a list of positives. You may think you have many negative traits or believe you've failed a lot, but the truth is you have many positive qualities. Identify them to begin to lift yourself up.

4. Keep an accomplishment journal. Every day, take note of three things you accomplished. You might even create an accomplishment jar or box where your family members add accomplishments they notice about you and each other.

5. Practice what you enjoy or what you do well. Spend time doing activities you're good at and enjoy every day. You'll build your skills and feel good about yourself. Be sure to add these activities to your accomplishment list each day.

6. Do something kind. Acts of kindness make others feel good, but it also makes you feel great. Volunteer in your community or pick up litter in a nearby park.

7. Try something new. You might be afraid of trying new things because you might not be good at it, or you might make a mistake. Mistakes help you learn and grow. Focus on putting forth your best effort and learning something new - not on getting it right the first time.

8. Exercise and stay active. Exercising regularly is good for your self-esteem. Anything that gets you moving is exercise, so think creatively about fun ways to get active.

9. Spend time with people who treat you well. Some people tear you down, while others lift you up by what they say and do. Choose friends who help you feel good about yourself. Find people you can be yourself with and be that type of friend for others.

10. Accept imperfection. It's always good to try your best, but when you think you need to be perfect, it's hard to feel good about anything less than perfect. Accept your best and allow yourself to feel good. Ask for help if you can't let go of perfection.

11. Set goals and work toward them. Make a goal and a plan for how to achieve it. Stick with your plan, track your progress, and be proud of what you do. You might say, "I've been following my plan to _____ for ___ days, and I feel so good about myself! I know I can keep it up." Remember to let go of perfection here, too! What if you don't achieve the goal on time or in the way you expected? Focus on the fact you're working toward something and give yourself credit for any steps

you make toward the goal (no matter how small). Add theses to your accomplishment journal.

12. Focus on what goes well. It can be easy to focus on what's wrong. But unless you balance the good with the bad, you'll just end up feeling bad. Next time, stop yourself when you complain or focus on what went wrong. Identify what went well instead.

13. Have a helpful attitude. Giving is one the best ways to build self-esteem. Help at home or at school. Make it a habit to be kind, helpful, respectful, and fair. When you do things that make a difference your self-esteem will expand.

What to Do

What negative things do you say out loud or to yourself inside your head? Keep track of what you say over the next few days. Write them down. Are these things you'd say to a good friend? Why or why not?

How can you turn these statements around? Rewrite them in a way that's kind, true, and fair. Write down some examples of what you can say to yourself. Read the new phrases often until it's more of a habit to think that way.

What are you good at? What do you enjoy doing? What do you know a lot about? What are your special talents or skills?

Ask other people what they would say are your most positive qualities. What did they say? Write down their responses.

Every day, write down three things you accomplished. They can be big or small. Use the chart to keep track for two weeks.

| Date | Accomplishments | How did you feel? |
|------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Do you spend time with people who treat you well? Why or why not?

Set a goal. What will you do? _____

What steps do you need to take to accomplish your goal?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What else can you do to stop putting yourself down?
