

Six Behaviors That Increase Self-Esteem

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(excerpted from *The Psychology of Motivation*)

Following are six behaviors that increase self-esteem, enhance your self-confidence, and spur your motivation. You may recognize some of them as things you naturally do in your interactions with other people. But if you don't, I suggest you motivate yourself to take some of these important steps immediately.

First, greet others with a smile and look them directly in the eye. A smile and direct eye contact convey confidence born of self-respect. In the same way, answer the phone pleasantly whether at work or at home, and when placing a call, give your name before asking to speak to the party you want to reach. Leading with your name underscores that a person with self-respect is making the call.

Second, always show real appreciation for a gift or complement. Don't downplay or sidestep expressions of affection or honor from others. The ability to accept or receive is a universal mark of an individual with solid self-esteem.

Third, don't brag. It's almost a paradox that genuine modesty is actually part of the capacity to gracefully receive compliments. People who brag about their own exploits or demand special attention are simply trying to build themselves up in the eyes of others—and that's because they don't perceive themselves as already worthy of respect.

Fourth, don't make your problems the centerpiece of your conversation. Talk positively about your life and the progress you're trying to make. Be aware of any negative thinking,

and take notice of how often you complain. When you hear yourself criticize someone—and this includes self-criticism—find a way to be helpful instead of critical.

Fifth, respond to difficult times or depressing moments by increasing your level of productive activity. When your self-esteem is being challenged, don't sit around and fall victim to "paralysis by analysis."

Sixth, choose to see mistakes and rejections as opportunities to learn. View a failure as the conclusion of one performance, not the end of your entire career. Own up to your shortcomings, but refuse to see yourself as a failure. A failure may be something you have done—and it may even be something you'll have to do again on the way to success—but a failure is definitely not something you are.

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