

OVERCOMING A LACK OF SELF ESTEEM

One of the most common factors limiting our performance is that of a lack of Self Esteem. It can be a debilitating feeling that, at best, stops you achieving and at worst, can spiral into self doubt and depression.

People with poor self image:

- Struggle to achieve things
- Find interpersonal contact difficult
- Struggle to make decisions
- Fear the outcomes of things they do
- Worry about the future
- Feel unsafe in the world around them

People with a good self image:

- Feel energetic and alive
- Rise to any problem
- Generate a positive feeling around them
- Support other people in their efforts
- Are more resilient to poor outcomes

You can think of your self esteem as being a belief about yourself.

There is a true self, the person you are. This person acts and behaves in ways that are then modified by your beliefs. If you believe you can't do something, then you are probably going to be right. This negative belief limits your performance.

Henry Ford once said, *'Believe you can or believe you can't, and you are probably correct!'*

So how does the poor self esteem and limiting belief influence your behaviour?

Imagine you are thinking of asking someone to dance. You don't have much belief that they are going to say 'yes' and so you rehearse the event in advance. You see the person look at you, hear your question and then say 'No'. Having rehearsed the event in your mind, you begin the event in real life, but your expectation is that the person will say 'No'. So your shoulders drop and you feel rejected even before opening your mouth. You shuffle over, feeling under confident and mumble through a statement like 'I don't suppose you want to dance with me do you?'.
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Now imagine an alternative approach. You are interested in asking someone to dance and you think to yourself 'I want to dance with that person and I think that they will want to dance with me!' You have your best dancing clothes on and you think you look great when you stand up tall. Imagine walking over, tall and gracefully, full of confidence and asking in a clear voice, 'I think you look stunning tonight and really wanted to see if you can dance as well as I hope you can?' Now imagine the person smiling and saying 'Yes'.

Having mentally rehearsed this event, you are more likely to act in a more positive way

and ask for the dance in a confident manner. The outcome may not be the dance you wanted but at least you are better prepared for the asking part.

If you do get the dance, great. If not then remember that the person isn't necessarily rejecting you. The person may not like dancing or may have another reason. It in no way reflects upon you as a person. You can walk away knowing that there are other reasons for the person to say 'No' that have nothing to do with who you are.

Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) has several techniques that can help you improve your self esteem and such a solution it is worth considering if you are having significant self esteem and confidence problems. One approach is to think back to time when you felt really valued and worth while, perhaps a time when you had just completed a significant achievement that you felt proud of. Build a picture in mind of that moment and see yourself as an element of that picture.

Look at that picture carefully. Is it light or dark? Colour or black and white? Still or moving? Big or small?

Now make that picture bigger, brighter and more colourful in your mind. Make it brilliant, remember (or create) the sunlight shining down on you and the faces of those around you praising your efforts and performance. Then imagine yourself moving into the picture of your body. Look through your imaginary eyes into the image around you and see what you would see, hear what you would hear and feel what you would feel. Now build that feeling until you feel confident and remember that feeling. Hold it in your mind and build a shining glow around you.

You can anchor this feeling by touching a part of your body at the point when you think you are at a peak state. After several repetitions of this exercise. you should get that feeling of confidence again by touching that part of your body and without the need to rebuild the image in your head again.

Having a high level of self esteem is a significant part of improving your performance both personally and professionally. Use this exercise to build your belief in yourself and grow your self esteem on your way to reaching your highest potential.

Dare to Aspire