

POSITIVE SELF-ESTEEM

CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE HIGH SELF-ESTEEM

write a number from 1-10 on the line to estimate your (or another persons) level in that category

- _____ **Ambitious.** People with high self-esteem tend to be more ambitious in what they hope to experience in life, emotionally, romantically, intellectually, creatively, spiritually. They have a strong drive to express the self, reflecting the sense of richness within.
- _____ **Goal-oriented.** They seek the challenge and stimulation of worthwhile and demanding goals. Attaining such goals nurtures good self-esteem.
- _____ **Communicative.** People with high self-esteem are more capable of having open, honest and appropriate communications with others. They believe their thoughts have value. As a result they welcome clarity instead of fearing it. They *want* to be understood.
- _____ **Loving.** They form *nourishing* relationships instead of *toxic* ones. Vitality and expansiveness in others are naturally more appealing to persons with good self-esteem than are emptiness and dependency.
- _____ **Attractive.** Self-confident women and men are usually drawn to each other.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE LOW SELF-ESTEEM

- _____ **Fearful of change.** These people aspire to less and, therefore, achieve less. People with low self-esteem seek the safety of the familiar and undemanding. Confining oneself to what is already known serves to weaken self-esteem.
- _____ **Noncommunicative.** People with low self-esteem become muddy, evasive and inappropriate in their communications because of uncertainty about their own thoughts and feelings. And they feel anxious about the listener's response.
- _____ **Insecure.** Like those with high self-esteem, these men and women tend to be drawn to one another. They often form destructive relationships that reflect and increase their essential lack of self-worth.

THE SIX PILLARS OF SELF-ESTEEM

The key virtues, or practices, on which healthy self-esteem depends are *living consciously, self-acceptance, self-responsibility, self-assertiveness, living purposefully and personal integrity.*

- _____ **To live consciously** is to be aware of what you are doing. You must seek to understand whatever has an impact on your interests, values and goals. Be aware of both the world around you as well as the world within.
- _____ **To be self-accepting** is to be respectful and compassionate toward yourself even at those times when you do not admire or enjoy some of your feelings or decisions. It also means consciously refusing to reject yourself.
- _____ **To be self-responsible** is to recognize that you are the author of your own choices and actions. You are the source of your own fulfillment. No one is going to make your life right for you ... or make you truly happy ... or give you self-esteem.
- _____ **To be self-assertive** is to honor your wants and needs and to look for ways to express them. Be willing to be who you are and allow others to see it. Stand up for your convictions, values and feelings.
- _____ **To live purposefully** is to take responsibility for identifying your goals. Perform the actions that will allow you to achieve them, and keep yourself on track and moving toward their fulfillment.
- _____ **To live with integrity** is to have principles of behavior to which you remain loyal in your actions. Keep your promises and honor your commitments..

THE KEY TO A HAPPY RELATIONSHIP

If you hope to achieve a happy relationship with someone, nothing is more important than self-esteem-both for you and the other person. There is no greater barrier to romantic success than the deep-seated feeling that one is not lovable. The first love affair we must consummate successfully is the one we have with ourselves. Only then are we ready for relationships, and only then will we be fully able to love and to let love in-to accept that other people love us. Without that confidence, another person's love will never be quite real or convincing, and in our anxiety, we may find ways to undermine it.

I want to stress that self-esteem is an intimate experience. It resides in the core of one's being. It is what you think and feel about yourself, not what someone else thinks or feels about you. You can project an image of assurance and poise that fools almost everyone yet secretly tremble with a sense of inadequacy. You can fulfill the expectations of others yet fail your own...or win every honor yet feel you have accomplished nothing.

The acclaim of others does not create self-esteem. Nor do education, material possessions, marriage, parenthood, philanthropic endeavors, sexual conquests or face-lifts. These things can make us feel better about ourselves temporarily or more comfortable in particular situations.

BUT COMFORT IS NOT SELF-ESTEEM

Bottom Line/Personal (June 1, 1994) interviewed Nathaniel Branden, PhD, a Los Angeles-based psychotherapist and management consultant who began pioneering the field of self-esteem nearly 40 years ago. He is author of several prominent books on the subject. His latest is *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*. Bantam Books, 1540 Broadway, New York 10036. \$22.95.



**OPINIONS AND FEELINGS ARE FREQUENTLY A PERSONAL TRIUMPH OVER GOOD THINKING
YOU DEFINE REALITY BY WHAT YOU KNOW, WHAT YOU BELIEVE, AND WHAT YOU DO ABOUT IT.**