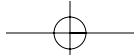
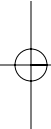
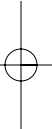


SECTION I

PERSONAL BARRIERS



## 1

# How Do You Feel about Yourself?

## THE SELF-ESTEEM RATING SCALE

This questionnaire is designed to measure how you feel about yourself. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer each item as carefully and accurately as you can by placing a number by each one as follows:

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = A little of the time
- 4 = Some of the time
- 5 = A good part of the time
- 6 = Most of the time
- 7 = Always

- \_\_\_ 1. I feel that people would *not* like me if they really knew me well.
- \_\_\_ 2. I feel that others do things much better than I do.
- \_\_\_ 3. I feel that I am an attractive person.
- \_\_\_ 4. I feel confident in my ability to deal with other people.
- \_\_\_ 5. I feel that I am likely to fail at things I do.
- \_\_\_ 6. I feel that people really like to talk with me.
- \_\_\_ 7. I feel that I am a very competent person.

- 8. When I am with other people I feel that they are glad I am with them.
- 9. I feel that I make a good impression on others.
- 10. I feel confident that I can begin new relationships if I want to.
- 11. I feel that I am ugly.
- 12. I feel that I am a boring person.
- 13. I feel very nervous when I am with strangers.
- 14. I feel confident in my ability to learn new things.
- 15. I feel good about myself.
- 16. I feel ashamed about myself.
- 17. I feel inferior to other people.
- 18. I feel that my friends find me interesting.
- 19. I feel that I have a good sense of humor.
- 20. I get angry at myself over the way I am.
- 21. I feel relaxed meeting new people.
- 22. I feel that other people are smarter than myself.
- 23. I do *not* like myself.
- 24. I feel confident in my ability to cope with difficult situations.
- 25. I feel that I am *not* very likable.
- 26. My friends value me a lot.
- 27. I am afraid I will appear stupid to others.
- 28. I feel that I am an okay person.
- 29. I feel that I can count on myself to manage things well.
- 30. I wish I could just disappear when I am around other people.
- 31. I feel embarrassed to let others hear my ideas.
- 32. I feel that I am a nice person.

## HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOURSELF?

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- \_\_\_ 33. I feel that if I could be more like other people then I would feel better about myself.
- \_\_\_ 34. I feel that I get pushed around more than others.
- \_\_\_ 35. I feel that people like me.
- \_\_\_ 36. I feel that people have a good time when they are with me.
- \_\_\_ 37. I feel confident that I can do well in whatever I do.
- \_\_\_ 38. I trust the competence of others more than I trust my own abilities.
- \_\_\_ 39. I feel that I mess things up.
- \_\_\_ 40. I wish that I were someone else.

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## SCORING

The following items must be reversed (1 = 7, 2 = 6, 3 = 5, 4 = 4, 5 = 3, 6 = 2, and 7 = 1): 1, 2, 5, 11, 13, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27, 30, 31, 33, 34, 38, 39, and 40. After reversing these items, add your responses together to obtain your final score.

## NORMS

SCORE	PERCENTILE
260	85
244	70
227	50
210	30
194	15

## About the Self-Esteem Rating Scale

Over the past decade or so, there has been an interesting turn-about regarding how people view self-esteem. Twenty years ago, the evidence seemed clear that high self-esteem was crucial if people were to have happy, productive lives. Nowhere was this belief more influential than in the school system. Research conducted in the 1960s appeared to prove that school achievement was influenced more by children's self-esteem than by their intellectual ability. These studies inspired educators to do everything they could to help children feel better about themselves in the belief that this would help them become better students. As everyone knows, these programs have become the target of numerous vitriolic critics.

Research in psychology is always difficult. A typical study may focus on a handful of variables while, because of practical limitations, it ignores countless other variables that are potentially important. This means that virtually any research study is open to alternative interpretations, and it is up to subsequent researchers to untangle the myriad possibilities that account for the results of any one study. I believe this is what happened to the research regarding the relationship between self-esteem and school achievement in the 1960s. People were too quick to accept the results at face value. Before designing school programs that focused on increasing children's self-esteem, they would have been well advised to wait for further research to provide a clearer picture as to how things really worked.

Had they waited a few years, the educational gurus who wanted "I am a wonderful person" to be every child's mantra would have realized that high self-esteem in a vacuum is not necessarily a good thing. Children who are praised for their ability regardless of their work are likely to learn that not much is expected of them; they would have every reason to feel good about themselves even if they produce mediocre results. We know that

children are more likely to master difficult material if we comment on their efforts rather than on their ability. Indeed, psychologist Carol Dweck found that the performance of students who were given tasks that were too difficult to complete and were told that they failed because they did not try hard enough improved more than students who were given easy tasks in order to encourage them to feel good about their ability. The moral of the story is clear—self-esteem should be earned, not provided unconditionally.

Indeed, extremely high self-esteem may be a sign of maladjustment. We have all known people who think they are the most wonderful human beings alive, even though their flaws and limitations are obvious to all who care to take even a cursory look. Sometimes called defensive high self-esteem, the people with this quality seem to be capable of putting a positive spin on even the worst failures. It appears to be the case that people with moderately high self-esteem are the best adjusted. They generally feel good about themselves, but they are capable of acknowledging their flaws and doing something about them.

Now that I've vented my frustrations about the view that all children should be praised unconditionally, let me say that I have seen a number of clients who suffered terribly from poor self-esteem. Perhaps one of the most poignant examples was a graduate student I'll call Doug. He suffered from intense anxiety and depression even though his life was going pretty well. Doug had had a successful academic career, was married to a woman who loved him, and was a doting, caring father. Yet he was incapable of articulating anything good about himself. During one therapy session, I told him I was going no further until he could say one positive thing about himself. He spent five agitated minutes mulling over possibilities before he said, "I *used* to play the piano well." When I told him that he had to tell me something good about himself in the present, he was completely stumped. I finally gave in and asked him to tell me what his wife would say about his good qualities. He was able to list several qualities she

would point to, but then immediately dismissed them as unreliable. After all, Doug's wife loved him and consequently she could not be objective. Just as people with defensive high self-esteem cannot acknowledge any negative information about themselves, people such as Doug cannot recognize anything positive about themselves.

If you scored below the 30th percentile on the Self-Esteem Rating Scale, you undoubtedly deserve to feel better about yourself. I do not believe that people should have unequivocally positive feelings about themselves, but I do believe that almost everyone deserves to feel generally good about the kind of person they are. The first piece of evidence that you deserve to feel better about yourself is that you are reading these words. That means that you care about becoming a better person, and you care about how others react to you. And people with modest self-esteem often make caring, loyal friends. Because they are convinced of their own inadequacies, they are more than happy to shift the focus of attention away from themselves onto those around them. Unless your poor self-esteem has caused you to cut yourself off from others completely, you probably have several people in your life who care about you and value the time they spend with you. That alone shows you have reason to feel good about yourself.

A second key to feeling better about yourself is to accept that you do not have to be perfect in order to feel good about yourself. Poor self-esteem was one of my struggles when I was younger, and this was a lesson I learned only over time. No, I had to admit, I was not brilliant, but I came to accept that I was smart enough to get a Ph.D. and to do my job reasonably well. No, I was not a Robert Redford clone, but I was presentable enough to entice an attractive, vivacious woman to marry me. And no, I was not the most outgoing, entertaining guy around, but I was interesting enough to develop a valued circle of friends.

It took me many years before I felt generally comfortable with myself, but you can speed up the process by making a concerted

## HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOURSELF?

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effort. Make a list of your strengths. Ask your family and friends for their suggestions. When you find yourself obsessing about your limitations, get out your list and read it out loud. You can also use your self-doubts to your advantage. If you are convinced your negative self-evaluation is justified, do something about it. I have known students who have a low opinion of their academic abilities who use their feelings as an excuse for giving up. They skip class, fail to prepare for tests, and then complain, "See, I just can't hack it." Your self-doubts should motivate you to do your best. And if your best is still not good enough, you can be sure that there is something else you can do where your best will be more than good enough. As long as you do not give up, you can feel good about yourself. It's up to you.

