

# Self-Esteem: An Inside Job

## Introduction

Welcome to ***Self-Esteem: An Inside Job***. This is your book. It has been written to assist you in your personal development. As you read it and work through the exercises, you will rediscover the whole, perfect person you have always been, come to accept who you are in a nonjudgmental way, and feel compassion and love for your total self. It is designed to assist you in looking at:

- 1) Where you came from – the significant adults in your life and family patterns you grew up with – and how these helped to shape your current concept of self.
- 2) Who you *really* are – positive and negative aspects of the complete person, *separate from the definitions and opinions of others*.
- 3) How to develop compassion and love for the unique person you are.

Your development as a human being, and your resulting self-awareness and self-esteem, have been greatly influenced by the family from which you came, your peers, and other people whom you have chosen as significant in your life. In your relationships with these people you have picked up clues on how to behave and who you are as an individual and in the world. During this process you may have experienced both positive and stressful encounters, and have dealt with them in whatever ways you were taught.

It is important to understand how your feelings, thought patterns, and experiences have helped create the person you are today, with all your beliefs, attitudes, values, ideas, and preferences. Your past may influence, *but does not completely define*, the person you now are.

To better understand yourself and why you feel and behave as you do, it is important to look at a variety of things. Your parents and family, the role others played in your development, how you relate to others, the connection between your thoughts and emotions, the impact of transitions and losses, your personal reservoir of skills, core beliefs and attitudes and all else which makes you the unique person you are.

As you work through this book you will become aware of the ways you were taught to look at yourself and the world, and will rediscover the parts of you that were suppressed along the way. This is your personal data, and need not be shared with anyone else unless you wish to do so. It is for you alone, and needs no one's approval other than yours. It is "user friendly," penetrating, thorough, and practical!

Although at times the process may be painful, it is through this process of self-exploration you gain awareness of who you are and why. These "insights" are

your "Ah Ha" experiences, which help you understand how you became the special person you are today.

Self-exploration and rediscovering the real you is a slow, building process. Each exercise takes time and thought to complete, and much longer to actually implement become comfortable with the awareness and changes in your daily life. It is important to BE GENTLE AND PATIENT WITH YOURSELF DURING THIS PROCESS.

Although at times it may be painful, once you realize how wonderful and unique you are, you will feel love and compassion for your total self. This is the essence of positive self-esteem and personal empowerment.

## **STEPS TO HAPPINESS**

### **We Know:**

You can't be all things to all people

You can't do all things at once.

You can't do all things equally well.

You can't do all things better than everyone else.

Your humanity shows just like everyone else's.

### **So:**

You have to find who you really are, and be that.

You have to decide what comes first, and do that.

You have to discover your strengths, and use them.

You have to learn to not always compete with others.

Because *no one else is in the contest of "being you"*.

### **Then:**

You will have learned to accept your own uniqueness.

You will have learned to set priorities and make decisions.

You will have learned to live with your limitations.

You will have learned to give yourself the respect you deserve.

And **you'll know you're a valuable, lovable individual.**

### **Dare to Believe:"**

You are a wonderful, unique person.

You are a once-in-all-history event.

It's your right to be who you are.

Life is not a problem to solve, but a gift to cherish.

And you'll be able to stay one-up on what used to get you down.

*Author Unknown*

# Chapter 1

## Self- Esteem

***“It takes courage to grow up to be  
who you really are”***

*e.e.cummings*

SELF-ESTEEM! What is it? How do you get it? How do you *keep* it? These are questions you have probably asked yourself at some time in your life.

In order to have positive self-esteem you must know, accept, and love every part of yourself. To accept your "humanness" you need to be able to take honest pride in your many talents, strengths and unique qualities, as well as have compassion for the part of you that is not always perfect or positive. True self-love is nonjudgmental.

Nonjudgmental self-love and acceptance do not mean you are perfect and therefore have no need for personal growth or improvement. It simply means that you are aware of all aspects of yourself, the ones you're satisfied with and the ones you may want to change, and that you accept rather than reject your total self.

Over the years you have gathered incredible amounts of data about who you are. Input from the people and events in your world have helped create how you currently define your "self."

You were born a "perfect person," yet soon after birth you began to interpret the world around you and your place in it. You did this by watching and listening to others as they related to you and each other.

If your parents or significant adults responded positively when you had a need (i.e. did they feed you when you cried from hunger and hold you when you cried for attention?) you learned that you were a lovable, valuable person and that your needs were important. However, if the opposite happened, and your cries for help and comfort were met with angry voices or rough treatment, or were even totally ignored, you may have interpreted this to mean that you were unimportant and worthless, and began to feel rejected and valueless.

Your concept of *self* – who you are – began when you were a baby, and grew into how you feel about yourself – your self-esteem today. It is a composite of all the input, positive and negative, verbal and nonverbal, that you have received throughout your lifetime.

The exciting thing is that in reality, *how others respond to you does not actually define who you are*. Their responses only reflect who they are, and whatever is going on for them at a particular time. For example, a young mother may have just had a fight with her husband and be angry and upset when her child awakens from a nap. She is not in an emotional place to deal positively with a sleepy, crying baby, so she ignores the child's cries for attention. In turn, the child may interpret this to mean "I'm not important" while in reality the problem is what is happening for the mother. Your self-esteem is probably based on many incorrectly interpreted, non-verbal messages such as this, and is not at all an accurate assessment of the unique person you really are.

It is also important to understand that self-confidence and self-esteem are not the same thing. Self-confidence is how you may feel at any given time, and can be affected by everything from your current health to the weather. There will be some days when you feel strong and in control of your life, and other days when you'd really rather stay in bed and let someone else take care of everything.

Self-esteem is the acceptance, compassion and non-judgmental love you feel for the person you are.

Self-esteem is a constant, and is not affected much by everyday events, *while self-confidence may fluctuate daily and even hourly*. Self-esteem can be compared to the depths of the ocean that remain calm and unchanged even during violent storms. On the other hand, self-confidence is similar to a tiny ship that can be tossed about or sail smoothly depending on surface conditions.

## Reflections on Self-Esteem

- Self-love is nonjudgmental.
- You were born, and still are, a perfect person.
- Your needs are important.
- Your concept of self is a composite of what you choose to believe from all the input, both positive and negative, you have received throughout your lifetime.
- Only *you* can define who you are.
- Self-confidence and self-esteem are not the same thing.
- Self-confidence is how you feel about yourself at any given time.
- Self-esteem is the acceptance, compassion and nonjudgmental love you feel for the person you are.
- Self-confidence may fluctuate but self-esteem remains constant.

Be sure to begin your "Ah Ha" list now. List all new "awareness" about self-esteem. These new insights will guide you in the process of rediscovering your special self.