

Self-Esteem: Essential to Maintaining a PMA

Webster's dictionary defines self-esteem as "a confidence and satisfaction in oneself". It is the way a person feels about himself or herself. A person with high self-esteem possesses an abundance of confidence and satisfaction. An individual with low self-esteem tends to lack these characteristics. The term "self-concept" is defined as "the mental image one has of oneself." In order to improve a person's mental image an individual must work to build his positive self-esteem.

Nathaniel Branden, Ph.D., a nationally known expert on self-esteem, writes, "Of all the judgments that we pass in life, none is as important as the one we pass on ourselves, for that judgment touches the very center of our universe." Branden says those who feel lovable and deserving of respect treat others well, and expect to be treated well in return. But those who feel unloved and undeserving of respect and are treated poorly, put up with it and feel it is their fate.

**Have a mental picture
of the person you wish
to become and act
with that thought in
mind.**

You must believe in the value of your teaching and your impact on youth. You are an important person and the quality of the education your students receive depends on your willingness and ability to organize challenging lessons. In order to be innovative and imaginative you must possess high self-esteem. To perform at your best and to feel terrific about yourself, you must continually work on building and maintaining self-esteem. Just as you take responsibility for your physical fitness, you need to take complete responsibility for the content and quality of your mind.

Building Self-Esteem

- 1. Greet the people you meet with enthusiasm.** When introducing yourself in any new situation, take the initiative to volunteer your name first, extend your hand for a firm handshake, and look the person in the eyes when you speak.
- 2. Project confidence.** Sit in the front during meetings, classes, conferences, etc. By doing this you are telling yourself that you are interested in personal growth and you have the confidence to be seen and heard. Speak in a loud, clear voice.
- 3. Goals.** How much you respect yourself is directly affected by your goals. The very act of setting challenging goals and developing a written plan to accomplish them raises your self-esteem. Success is often defined as the progressive realization of worthwhile, predetermined, personal goals.
- 4. Accept compliments.** When someone pays you a compliment reply with a simple "thank you". Too often we have a tendency to diminish our achievements by finding flaws in our actions or pointing out shortcomings. Positive recognition by people we respect enhances self-esteem.
- 5. Keep a record of your accomplishments.** Reviewing your previous achievements will give you the confidence to undertake new challenges.

**"The future belongs
to those who believe
in the beauty of their
dreams."**

Eleanor Roosevelt

6. **Personal grooming.** Dress neatly and keep clean. Your appearance projects your self-reliance. Make an effort to maintain good posture and walk with a confident stride.
7. **Accept what cannot be changed.** You cannot control the shape of your face, the sound of your voice, the color of your skin, your height, etc. All of these make you unique and special.
8. **View mistakes as learning experiences.** Realize that failure is a test of your belief and willingness to succeed. Most of the great people in history have failed often. Failure can be a stepping-stone or a stumbling block, whatever you wish it to be.
9. **Compete only against yourself.** Strive for excellence in whatever you do and take pride in your performance. Concentrate on that which you can control---your level of achievement. Help others improve their self-esteem by complimenting, praising, and rewarding when deserved. You will feel good about doing this.
10. **Be Yourself.** Forget about impressing others or going along with the crowd or trying to copy the traits of someone else. Be the person you are most comfortable with---you! Develop your own style of teaching and take pride in your uniqueness. It is meaningful to learn from successful people, but comparison can destroy originality and lead to resentment.
11. **Visualization.** Use the process of visualization to see yourself being successful in a variety of experiences. Carry a mental image of achievement.
12. **Rewards.** In most professions it is customary to receive rewards and tangible recognition for a job well done. An insightful administrator will provide positive feedback that leads to greater feelings of self-worth, but Christmas bonuses and performance incentives are non-existent in the field of education. It is necessary to maintain a somewhat altruistic attitude toward teaching and the greatest rewards will come from the gleam in the eyes of your students as you help them discover more about themselves and their subjects.

It's not how seldom you fail in life that counts, it's how often you rise again after failure.

Follow these tips and you will feel better about yourself and your profession. You need to take the responsibility to build your own self-image. There is another part of self-esteem building that is equally important as everything that is listed. It is called "performance-based self-esteem." You like and respect yourself only when you know, deep in your heart, that you are good at something that is dear to you. Most of all, always remember that you are making a difference in the lives of our children. As Christa McAuliff said: "**I touch the future, I teach**".

"The quality of your life is determined by the level of your commitment to excellence, no matter what your chosen field."

Vince Lombardi

"Let nothing dim the light that shines from within."

Maya Angelou