

3. Becoming More Confident

Confidence depends on having a healthy level of self esteem and being able to employ skills to help us perform in challenging situations.

Self esteem

Self esteem is the concept we have about ourselves. We are not born with negative beliefs but these often develop as a result of life experiences. Low self esteem can lead us to believe we are not as good as others, or that we must behave in a certain way to maintain the approval of significant people. Because of such beliefs, we adopt biased ways of thinking about the world and behave in unhelpful ways.

Behaviour associated with low self esteem

- Playing down our achievements, or not even noticing them.
- Focusing on what's gone wrong, rather than being pleased about what went well.
- Being self critical and comparing ourselves unfavourably to others.
- Imagining that others think and feel negatively about us.

Raising self esteem

In order to feel better about ourselves we need to recognise & celebrate our positive qualities.

- Write a list of your positive qualities and some evidence for each. Read the list every day and add new items.
- At the end of each day, think about 3 good things that have happened, rather than dwell on disappointments

and what went wrong. Reward yourself for achievements and successes however small.

- Become a better friend to yourself. Use STOPP, a simple skill to help encourage an alternative, constructive and kinder self-perspective. www.get.gg/stopp.htm
- Connect with people who love and believe in you.

Develop new skills to raise your confidence

- Stop thinking and start doing. Good self-confidence comes from healthy living, so stop thinking and start acting. Challenge yourself but set realistic goals so you don't set yourself up for failure with standards that make it impossible to succeed.
- Visit the Resources section on the Student Counselling and Wellbeing website. Check out the booklist and self help materials in the confidence and self esteem section.
- Look out for groups and workshops on confidence related topics through Student Counselling and Wellbeing Centre, Library & LUU.
- Try something new. Get out of your comfort zone and start practising. If we lack confidence we often avoid situations we feel anxious in, but this reinforces our belief we can't succeed and our confidence remains low. New experiences possess the potential for new successes.
- Lower your expectations. Set yourself small, specific, achievable goals you can succeed at, rather than vague, over ambitious ones that are unrealistic.

See the Counselling and Wellbeing website for helpful online resources on Self-esteem, self-compassion and self-confidence:

students.leeds.ac.uk/counsellingandwellbeing