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Our teachers, friends, siblings, parents, and even the media send us positive and negative messages about ourselves.For some reason, the message that you are not good enough is the one that stays with you.Perhaps you found it difficult to live up to other people's expectations of you, or to your own expectations.Stress and difficult life events, such as serious illness or a bereavement, can have a negative effect on self-esteem.Personality can also play a part. Some people are just more prone to negative thinking, while others set impossibly high standards for themselves. If you have low self-esteem or confidence, you may hide yourself away from social situations, stop trying new things, and avoid things you find challenging.In the short term, avoiding challenging and difficult situations might make you feel safe.In the longer term, this can backfire because it reinforces your underlying doubts and fears. It teaches you the unhelpful rule that the only way to cope is by avoiding things.Living with low self-esteem can harm your mental health and lead to problems such as depressionand anxiety.You may also develop unhelpful habits, such assmoking anddrinking too much, as a way of coping. To boost your self-esteem, you need to identify the negative beliefs you have about yourself, then challenge them.You may tell yourself you're "too stupid" to apply for a new job,for example, or that "nobody cares" about you.Start to note these negative thoughts and write them on a piece of paper or in a diary. 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If you prefer, you can talk to a GP first and they can refer you.You could also find a private therapist. Make sure they're registered with a professional body. In this audio guide, a doctor helps you to replace negative thoughts with more positive thinking. Animated video explaining self-referral to talking therapies services for stress, anxiety or depression. Includes British Sign Language (BSL) translation. Self-esteem is your opinion of yourself.Everyone lacks confidence occasionally but people with low self-esteem are unhappy or unsatisfied with themselves most of the time.It takes attention and daily practice to boost a low self-esteem. Self-esteem is your opinion of yourself. People with healthy self-esteem like themselves and value their achievements. While everyone lacks confidence occasionally, people with low self-esteem feel unhappy or unsatisfied with themselves most of the time. This can be remedied but it takes attention and daily practise to boost self-esteem. See your doctor for information, advice and referral if youre having trouble improving your self-esteem or if low self-esteem is causing problems such as depression. Characteristics of low self-esteem Typically, a person with low self-esteem: Is extremely critical of themselves Downplays or ignores their positive qualities Judges themselves to be inferior to their peers Uses negative words to describe themselves such as stupid, fat, ugly or unlovable Has discussions with themselves (this is called self talk) that are always negative, critical and self blaming Assumes that luck plays a large role in all their achievements and doesnt take the credit for them Blames themselves when things go wrong instead of taking into account other things over which they have no control such as the actions of other people or economic forces Doesnt believe a person who compliments them. Low self-esteem and quality of life A low self-esteem can reduce the quality of a persons life in many different ways, including: Negative feelings the constant self-criticism can lead to persistent feelings of sadness, depression, anxiety, anger, shame or guilt. Relationship problems for example they may tolerate all sorts of unreasonable behaviour from partners because they believe they must earn love and friendship, cannot be loved or are not loveable. Alternatively, a person with low self-esteem may feel angry and bully other people. Fear of trying the person may doubt their abilities or worth and avoid challenges. Perfectionism a person may push themselves and become an over-achiever to atone for what they see as their inferiority. Fear of judgement they may avoid activities that involve other people, like sports or social events, because they are afraid they will be negatively judged. The person feels self-conscious and stressed around others and constantly looks for signs that people dont like them. Low resilience a person with low self-esteem finds it hard to cope with a challenging life event because they already believe themselves to be hopeless. Lack of self-care the person may care so little that they neglect or abuse themselves, for example, drink too much alcohol. Self-harming behaviours low self-esteem puts the person at increased risk of self-harm, for example, eating disorder, drug abuse or suicide. If at any time you are worried about your mental health or the mental health of a loved one, call Lifeline 13 11 14. Causes of low self-esteem Some of the many causes of low self-esteem may include: Unhappy childhood where parents (or other significant people such as teachers) were extremely critical Poor academic performance in school resulting in a lack of confidence Ongoing stressful life event such as relationship breakdown or financial trouble Poor treatment from a partner, parent or carer, for example, being in an abusive relationship Ongoing medical problem such as chronic pain, serious illness or physical disability Mental illness such as an anxiety disorder or depression. Seek help for underlying self-esteem problems Chronic problems can be demoralising and lead to self-esteem issues. Seek professional advice for problems such as relationship breakdown, anxiety disorder or financial worries. Self-esteem building Self-esteem is strongly related to how you view and react to the things that happen in your life. Suggestions for building self-esteem include: Talk to yourself positively treat yourself as you would your best friend. Be supportive, kind and understanding. Dont be hard on yourself when you make a mistake. Challenge negative self-talk every time you criticise yourself, stop and look for objective evidence that the criticism is true. (If you feel you cant be objective, then ask a trusted friend for their opinion.) Youll realise that most of your negative self-talk is unfounded. Dont compare yourself to others recognise that everyone is different and that every human life has value in its own right. Make an effort to accept yourself, warts and all. Acknowledge the positive for example, dont brush off compliments, dismiss your achievements as dumb luck or ignore your positive traits. Appreciate your special qualities remind yourself of your good points every day. Write a list and refer to it often. (If you feel you cant think of anything good about yourself, ask a trusted friend to help you write the list.) Forget the past concentrate on living in the here-and-now rather than reliving old hurts and disappointments. Tell yourself a positive message everyday buy a set of inspirational cards and start each day reading out a new card and carrying the cards message with you all day. Stop worrying worry is simply fretting about the future. Accept that you cant see or change the future and try to keep your thoughts in the here-and-now. Have fun schedule enjoyable events and activities into every week. Exercise it is such a good boost to the brain for all kinds of things but especially in combatting depression and helping you to feel good. Targets need to be step by step, such as starting with a walk round the block once a day, enrolling at a local gym class or going for a swim. Be assertive communicate your needs, wants, feelings, beliefs and opinions to others in a direct and honest manner. Practise the above suggestions every day it takes effort and vigilance to replace unhelpful thoughts and behaviours with healthier versions. Give yourself time to establish the new habits. Keep a diary or journal to chart your progress. Seek out support to build self-esteem Further ways to build self-esteem include: Talk to a trusted friend or loved one about your self-esteem issues. Browse the Better Health Channel for further information. See your doctor for information, advice and possible referral. Read books on self-development. Take a course in personal development. Discuss your issues and get advice from a trained therapist. Where to get help This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: Content on this website is provided for information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not in any way endorse or support such therapy, service, product or treatment and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. The information and materials contained on this website are not intended to constitute a comprehensive guide concerning all aspects of the therapy, product or treatment described on the website. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions and to ascertain whether the particular therapy, service, product or treatment described on the website is suitable in their circumstances. 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Having self-esteem not only impacts how you feel about and treat yourself, but it can even affect your motivation to go after the things you want in life and your ability to develop healthy, supportive relationships. It plays an important role in a variety of areas in life, which is why having low self-esteem can be such a serious problem. Having low self-esteem means that you often think negatively about yourself, judge yourself badly, and lack confidence in your abilities. While not a mental illness, poor self-esteem can still affect a persons thoughts, emotions, and patterns of behavior. Sometimes its signs can be fairly apparent. Other times, low self-esteem symptoms are much more subtle. For example, some people with low self-esteem talk negatively about themselves, while others go out of their way to make sure other people are pleased with them. In either case, a lack of personal worth and value can have a negative impact on life and wellness. Some common signs or symptoms of low self-esteem include: Lack of confidenceExternal locus of controlNegative social comparisonsTrouble asking for helpWorry and doubtDifficulty accepting complimentsNegative self-talkFear of failurePoor outlook of the futureLack of boundariesBeing a people-pleaser You can also find online self-esteem tests to help determine whether your self-worth may be low. For instance, the Open-Source Psychometrics Projects offers free access to a version of the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, which is a test used to measure self-esteem in research. People with low self-confidence tend to have low self-esteem, and vice versa. Low self-esteem can play a role in causing a lack of confidence, but poor confidence can also contribute to or worsen poor self-esteem. Being confident in yourself and your abilities allows you to know that you can rely on yourself to manage different situations. This self-trust means that you feel comfortable and confident navigating many different things you might encounter in life, which can play an important role in your overall well-being. Finding ways to gain confidence in yourself and your abilities can be helpful. Acquiring and practicing new skills is one tactic you might try. This may even help reduce feelings of anxiousness as research connects a lack of confidence with higher anxiety levels, especially when under stress. People who have low self-esteem often feel that they have little control over their lives or what happens to them. This can be due to the feeling that they have little ability to create changes in themselves or in the world.Because they have an external locus of control, they feel powerless to do anything to fix their problems. Research has found that in situations where people have little control over what happens, having higher self-esteem can help relieve some of the negative effects of this loss of control, which ultimately benefits mental health. If you feel like you have no control over your life or situation, finding ways to improve your self-esteem may be helpful for your well-being. Social comparison can sometimes serve a positive function and enhance a person's sense of self. But comparing yourself to others can also damage self-esteem. People with low self-esteem may be more likely to engage in what is known as upward social comparison, or comparing themselves to people who they think are better than themselves. Upward social comparison isn't always bad. For instance, these comparisons can be a source of information and inspiration for improvement. When people are left with feelings of inadequacy or hopelessness, however, it can inhibit self-esteem. Social media can also play a role in such comparisons, contributing to low self-esteem. If you often compare yourself unfavorably to people on social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram, your self-esteem may take a hit. When a person has low self-esteem, they may struggle to ask for what they need. Trouble asking for what you need can be caused by feeling embarrassed. Or you may feel that a need for assistance and support is a sign that you are incompetent. Because their self-regard is low, someone with low self-esteem might also feel that they don't deserve help. They don't prioritize their own desires, so they struggle to assert themselves when they are in need. Even after making a decision, people who have low self-worth often worry that theyve made the wrong choice. They doubt their own opinions and may defer to what others think instead of sticking to their choices. This can lead to a great deal of second-guessing and self-doubt. This makes it harder for people with low self-esteem to make decisions about their lives. A 2017 study published in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology found that low self-esteem is directly correlated to not being able to accept or capitalize on compliments from others. Positive feedback is often met with suspicion and distrust. Complimentary words do not align with their beliefs about themselves, so people with self-esteem issues may feel that the other person is being flippant or even cruel. Because they dont have a positive opinion about themselves, people who have low self-esteem find it difficult to accept compliments from others. Low self-esteem causes people to focus on their flaws rather than their strengths. Rather than build themselves up with positive self-talk, they always seem to have something negative to say about themselves, engaging in negative self-talk instead. When things go wrong, people with low self-esteem often blame themselves. They find fault with some aspect of themselves, whether it is their appearance, their personality, or their abilities. Because they lack confidence in their abilities, people with low self-esteem doubt their ability to achieve success. Because they fear failure, they tend to either avoid challenges or give up quickly without really trying. This fear of failure can be seen in behaviors such as acting out when things go wrong or looking for ways to hide feelings of inadequacy. People with low self-esteem might also make excuses, blame external factors, or try to downplay the importance of the task. Low self-worth can cause people to feel that there is little chance that the future will be any better than the present. These feelings of hopelessness can make it hard for people with low self-esteem to engage in behaviors that will bring about positive changes in their lives. Self-sabotage is a common way of coping with such feelings. By finding obstacles to prevent success, people with low self-esteem are able to find something else to blame for not achieving their goals or finding greater levels of happiness in their lives. The ability to set boundaries is often established early in life. Children with caregivers who show them that they are respected and valued are better able to create good boundaries in adult relationships. They are also more likely to have a more positive view of themselves in general. People with low self-esteem can have a difficult time setting boundaries with others. They may feel guilty or fear that people will stop liking them if they try to establish or maintain a boundary. A lack of healthy boundaries can create problems when others don't respect a person's space and time. The lack of respect not only adds to the person's stress levels but may also make them feel less valued. People-pleasing is another common symptom of low self-esteem. In order to gain external validation, people who don't feel good about themselves may go above and beyond to make sure that others are comfortable and happy. Pleasing others often involves neglecting their own needs. The person with low self-esteem winds up saying yes to things they may not want to do and feeling guilty about saying no. Research suggests that there are numerous effects of low self-esteem. For instance, having lower levels of self-esteem is linked to a number of mental health issues, including: Low self-esteem may even play a role in the development of certain mental health conditions, such as depression. Research has also shown that people with low self-esteem are more likely to be at risk for suicidal thinking. Another effect of low self-esteem is that you may find it more difficult to achieve your goals and form healthy, supportive relationships. It might also make you more sensitive to criticism or rejection. Where someone with high self-esteem is likely to be able to shake off negative feedback, someone with poor self-value might take it more personally. This can also make people with self-esteem issues more likely to give up when faced with challenges or obstacles. Research has found that people with low self-esteem often engage in behaviors that are designed to help preserve their limited self-worth. Actions such as acting sad or sulking are used to garner support from others. Unfortunately, these behaviors tend to backfire. Instead of getting the support and encouragement they desire to help boost their self-esteem, the person often ends up generating negative reactions from other people. What causes lower self-esteem in some individuals? Several factors could be at play, some of which include: Some studies connect high amounts of social media use with lower self-esteem in adolescents. However, others warn that social media use, in general, doesn't always have this effect. Instead, it's more a matter of the purpose behind its use. Specifically, social media can have negative effects if it is used as a way to measure your popularity or likeability. But if you use social media to share your interests with like-minded individuals, its impact can be more positive. Physical health and appearance are additional factors contributing to low self-esteem. For instance, one study found that having missing teeth or untreated dental decay negatively contribute to self-esteem.Low self-esteem often stems from many causes. Five common factors that play a role include negative self-talk, mental health disorders, poor coping skills, rumination, and low resilience to stress. Building or fixing low self-esteem often takes time. But there are things you can do to help protect your mental well-being while taking steps to improve your self-regard. Spend a little time each day focusing on positive, hopeful thoughts. Notice the little things that you are good at and allow yourself to feel proud of them. Also, think about times in the past when you made it through something really difficult. Remind yourself that even though you might not feel your best right now, you have the ability and strength to get through it. Poor self-esteem can sometimes leave you feeling like you dont deserve care and consideration. Work on reminding yourself that you need care and look for things that you can do to show kindness to yourself, no matter how small they may be. One way to practice self-care is to spend some time doing something that you enjoy. Go for a walk, chat with a friend, or engage in a hobby. Caring for yourself also involves regularly making time to rest and relax, giving your body and mind time to recoup and regroup. Investing in your own care and comfort isnt an indulgence or reward you have to earnits absolutely vital to both your physical and mental health. If you have low self-esteem, it can be helpful to share your struggles with someone who offers unconditional support. This might be a friend or family member, but it can also be a healthcare provider, therapist, teacher, or clergy member. Having a network of caring people who value you and want you to value yourself can be beneficial as you work toward improving your self-esteem. If you are dealing with low self-esteem, there are several things you can do to help improve how you feel about yourself.Think positivelyTreat yourself wellPractice self-acceptance and forgivenessGet support from friends and loved onesDo things that bring you joyFeel good about your achievements and progressActively challenge negative thoughts and self-criticism Start paying attention to the automatic negative thoughts you have each day. When these negative thoughts take hold, work to actively identify cognitive distortions, such as all-or-nothing thinking and jumping to conclusions. Then, replace these distortions with more positive thoughts. If you tend to ruminate over your mistakes or failures, learn how to forgive yourself and move on. Doing so can keep you focused on the things you can do better in the future instead of the negative things that have happened in the past. Let go of the idea that you need to be perfect in order to have value. If this is how you feel, it can be helpful to work on accepting who you are today. Self-acceptance doesn't mean that you don't have goals or things that you might want to work on changing. But it's important to recognize that you are worthy of love and esteemfrom yourself and from othersexactly as you are right now. Spend time thinking about the things you have accomplished and the things you are proud of. Allow yourself to appreciate your worth and your talents without making comparisons or focusing on areas you'd like to improve. You dont need to be better in order to value yourselfbut learning to value yourself can help you work toward your goals. It can be helpful to think of yourself as you would a friend. How would you treat someone you care about who was in the same situation? In many cases, you may find that you would give them understanding, patience, empathy, and kindness. Show yourself the same unconditional support instead of beating yourself up. Here are a few additional things you can do to help boost your self-esteem:Do something that makes you feel good.Stay physically activeexercise can help improve mood.Think about something you are good at.Keep a gratitude journal.Challenge negative thoughts.Spend time with people who make you feel good about yourself.Volunteer to help others.Remember that everyone makes mistakes.Celebrate your accomplishments, both the big and the small achievements. Self-esteem plays an important role in your ability to pursue goals, develop healthy relationships, and feel good about who you are. While everyone struggles with their confidence once in a while, low self-esteem can affect your ability to feel happy. It can even make you more susceptible to mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. If you are experiencing symptoms of poor self-esteem, help is available. Consider talking to a healthcare provider or mental health professional to learn your treatment options. A therapist can help you change the thought patterns that contribute to low self-esteem and boost your confidence and opinion of yourself and your abilities. Raising your self-esteem may take some time and effort. But over time, you can learn to better see and appreciate yourself for who you are. We all have times when we lack confidence and do not feel good about ourselves.But when low self-esteem becomes a long-term problem, it can have a harmful effect on our mental health and our day-to-day lives. Self-esteem is the opinion we have of ourselves.When we have healthy self-esteem, we tend to feel positive about ourselves and about life in general. It makes us better able to deal with life's ups and downs.When our self-esteem is low, we tend to see ourselves and our life in a more negative and critical light. We also feel less able to take on the challenges that life throws at us. Low self-esteem often begins in childhood. Our teachers, friends, siblings, parents, and even the media send us positive and negative messages about ourselves.For some reason, the message that you are not good enough is the one that stays with you.Perhaps you found it difficult to live up to other people's expectations of you, or to your own expectations.Stress and difficult life events, such as serious illness or a bereavement, can have a negative effect on self-esteem.Personality can also play a part. Some people are just more prone to negative thinking, while others set impossibly high standards for themselves. If you have low self-esteem or confidence, you may hide yourself away from social situations, stop trying new things, and avoid things you find challenging.In the short term, avoiding challenging and difficult situations might make you feel safe.In the longer term, this can backfire because it reinforces your underlying doubts and fears. It teaches you the unhelpful rule that the only way to cope is by avoiding things.Living with low self-esteem can harm your mental health and lead to problems such as depressionand anxiety.You may also develop unhelpful habits, such assmoking anddrinking too much, as a way of coping. To boost your self-esteem, you need to identify the negative beliefs you have about yourself, then challenge them.You may tell yourself you're "too stupid" to apply for a new job,for example, or that "nobody cares" about you.Start to note these negative thoughts and write them on a piece of paper or in a diary. Ask yourself when you first started to think these thoughts.Next, start to write some evidence that challenges these negative beliefs, such as, "I'm really good at cryptic crosswords" or "My sister calls for a chat every week".Write down other positive things about yourself, such as "I'm thoughtful" or "I'm a great cook" or "I'm someone that others trust".Also write some good things that other people say about you.Aim to have at least 5 positive things on your list and add to it regularly. Then put your list somewhere you can see it. That way, you can keep reminding yourself that you're OK.You might have low confidence now because of what happened when you were growing up, but we can grow and develop new ways of seeing ourselves at any age. Here are some other simple techniques that may help you feel better about yourself.Recognise what you're good atWe're all good at something, whether it's cooking, singing, doing puzzles or being a friend. We also tend to enjoy doing the things we're good at, which can help boost your mood.Build positive relationshipsIf you find certain people tend to bring you down, try to spend less time with them, or tell them how you feel about their words or actions.Try to build relationships with people who are positive and who appreciate you.Be kind to yourselfBeing kind to yourself means being gentle to yourself at times when you feel like being self-critical.Think what you'd say to a friend in a similar situation. We often give far better advice to others than we do to ourselves.Learn to be assertiveBeing assertive is about respecting other people's opinions and needs, and expecting the same from them.One trick is to look at other people who act assertively and copy what they do.It's not about pretending you're someone you're not. It's picking up hints and tips from people you admire and letting the real you come out.Start saying "no"People with low self-esteem often feel they have to say yes to other people, even when they do not really want to.The risk is that you become overburdened, resentful, angry and depressed.For the most part, saying no does not upset relationships. It can be helpful to keep saying no, but in different ways, until they get the message.Give yourself a challengeWe all feel nervous or afraid to do things at times. But people with healthy self-esteem do not let these feelings stop them trying new things or taking on challenges.Set yourself a goal, such as joining an exercise class or going to a social occasion. Achieving your goals will help to increase your self-esteem. Talking therapies like counselling or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can help.You can refer yourself for talking therapies on the NHS. If you prefer, you can talk to a GP first and they can refer you.You could also find a private therapist. Make sure they're registered with a professional body. In this audio guide, a doctor helps you to replace negative thoughts with more positive thinking. Animated video explaining self-referral to talking therapies services for stress, anxiety or depression. Includes British Sign Language (BSL) translation. Previously, I wrote about the ways that low self-esteem manifests in female relationships. This week I will do a brief overview of the infinite places from which low self-esteem originates how your history and primary caregiver relationships shaped your opinion of yourself and how other external factors contribute. Here is a brief inventory of the sources of low self-esteem and how these feelings manifest: 1. Disapproving Authority FiguresIf you grew up hearing that whatever you did wasnt good enough, how are you supposed to grow into an adult with a positive self-image? If you were criticized no matter what you did or how hard you tried, it becomes difficult to feel confident and comfortable in your own skin later. The shame forced on you for perpetually "failing" can feel blindingly painful. 2. Uninvolved/Preoccupied CaregiversIts difficult to motivate yourself to want more, strive for more, and imagine that you deserve more when your parents or other primary caregivers didnt pay attention as if your greatest achievements werent worth noticing. This scenario often results in feeling forgotten, unacknowledged, and unimportant later. It can also leave you feeling that you are not accountable to anyone, or you may believe that no one in the here and now is concerned about your whereabouts, when that's actually a carry-over feeling from the past. Feeling unrecognized can result in the belief that you are supposed to apologize for your existence. 3. Authority Figures in ConflictIf parents or other caregivers fight or make each other feel badly, children absorb the negative emotions and distrustful situations that have been modeled for them. It's scary, overwhelming, and disorganizing. This experience can also occur when one parent is deeply distraught or acts unpredictably around the child. When you were subjected to excessive conflicts between authority figures, it can feel as if you contributed to the fights or to a parents painful circumstance. Intense conflicts are experienced as extremely threatening, fear driving, and you may believe you caused it. This feeling of being tainted can be carried into adulthood. 4. Bullying (with Unsupportive Parents)If you had the support of a relatively safe, responsive, aware family you may have had a better chance of recovering and salvaging your self esteem after having been taunted and bullied as a child. If you already felt unsafe at home and the torture continued outside home, the overwhelming sense of being lost, abandoned, hopeless, and filled with self-loathing pervaded your everyday life. It can also feel like anyone who befriends you is doing you a favor, because you see yourself as so damaged. Or you may think that anyone involved in your life must be predatory and not to be trusted. Without a supportive home life, the effects of bullying can be magnified and miserably erode quality of life. 5. Bullying (with Over-Supportive Parents)Conversely, if your parents were overly and indiscriminately supportive, it can leave you feeling unprepared for the cruel world. Without initial cause to develop a thick outer layer, it can feel challenging and even shameful to view yourself as unable to withstand the challenges of life outside the home. From this perspective, you may feel ill prepared and deeply ashamed to admit this dirty ugly secret about you, even to your parents, because you need to protect them from the pain they would endure if they knew. Instead, you hid the painful secret of what's happened to you. Shame can cloud your perspective. Eventually it can seem as if your parents opinion of you is in conflict with the worlds opinion of you. It can compel you to cling to what is familiar in your life, because it's hard to trust what's real and what isn't. You may question the validity of your parents' positive view of you, and default to the idea that you are not good enough or are victim-like and should be the subject of ridicule. 6. Bullying (with Uninvolved Parents)If your primary caregivers were otherwise occupied while you were being bullied and downplayed your experience, or they let you down when you needed their advocacy, you might have struggled with feeling undeserving of notice, unworthy of attention, and angry at being shortchanged. When the world feels unsafe, the shame and pain are brutal. These feelings could also be evoked if parents were in transitional or chaotic states so that what happened to you wasnt on anyones radar. If theres chaos at home, it can be hard to ask for attention or to feel like there is room for you take up space with your struggles. Instead, you may retreat and become more isolated and stuck in shame. What Is Self-Esteem? Take our Self-Esteem Test Find a therapist near me 7. Academic Challenges Without Caregiver SupportTheres nothing like feeling stupid to create low self-esteem. If you felt like you didnt understand what was happening in school as if you were getting further and further behind without anyone noticing or stepping in to help you figure out what accommodations you needed you might have internalized the belief that you are somehow defective. You may feel preoccupied with and excessively doubt your own smartness, and feel terribly self-conscious about sharing your opinions. The shame of feeling as if you aren't good enough can be difficult to shake, even after you learn your own ways to accomodate for your academic difficulties. 8. TraumaPhysical, sexual, or emotional abuse may be the most striking and overt causes of low self-esteem. Being forced into a physical and emotional position against your will can make it very hard to like the world, trust yourself or trust others, which profoundly impacts self-esteem. It may even feel like your fault when it couldn't be less your fault. Obviously, in these scenarios, there is so much going on at one time that you might need to check out, dissociate, go away. It can make you feel like nothingness. In an effort to gain control of your circumstances, in your head you may have convinced yourself that you were complicit or even to blame. You may have found ways to cope with the abuse, to manage the chaos in ways that you understand are unhealthy, so you may ultimately view yourself as repulsive and seeringly shameful, among a zillion other feelings. 9. Belief SystemsWhen your religious (or other) belief system puts you in a position of feeling as if you are perpetually sinning, it can be similar to the experience of living with a disapproving authority figure. Whether judgment is emanating from authority figures or from an established belief system in your life, it can evoke shame, guilt, conflict and self-loathing. Many structured belief systems offer two paths: one thats all good and one thats all bad. When you inevitably fall in the abyss between the two, you end up feeling confused, wrong, disoriented, shameful, fake, and disappointed with yourself over and over again. 10. Society and the MediaIts no secret that people in media are packaged and airbrushed into unrealistic levels of beauty and thinness. Its an epidemic thats only getting worse. Now, males and females alike feel they cant measure up to whats out there. Maybe the seeds of low self-esteem are sown elsewhere, but now society and the media make imperfections so immediately accessible, there is no relief from feelings of inadequacy. As media access is available younger and younger, kids are subjected to these unfair comparisons earlier and earlier. Of course, each of these sources of low self-esteem merits an infinite number of posts. It is, however, most important to understand that experiencing any of these early circumstances doesnt mean you must be bound by them as an adult. They will be woven into your fabric and absorbed into your sense of yourself in different ways over time, but there are many paths to feeling that you are better prepared, less fragmented, and more confident moving forward. As an adult, when you examine your history, you can begin to see that in some cases the derision or intense negative messages you encountered werent necessarily meant for you. Rather, they flowed from the circumstances of the people who delivered them. That perspective can help you to dilute the power of the negative messages about yourself you received and formed. Furthermore, understanding that you are not alone in your experience can help decrease the extent to which you feel isolated and shameful. There are some circumstances you may have suffered that may be impossible to understand. You cant and arent expected to understand, empathize or forgive in these circumstances. What matters most is continuing to find ways to feel as ok and as safe as you can in your own life right now. The more you understand the sources of your low self-esteem and can put them into context, the more you can use your self-understanding to begin the process of repairing self-esteem. ---Twitter: @DrSuzanneLFB: facebook/DrSuzanneLachmann beginning of content While we all criticise ourselves from time to time, if you often think badly about yourself you may have low self-esteem. Low self-esteem may be caused by experiences