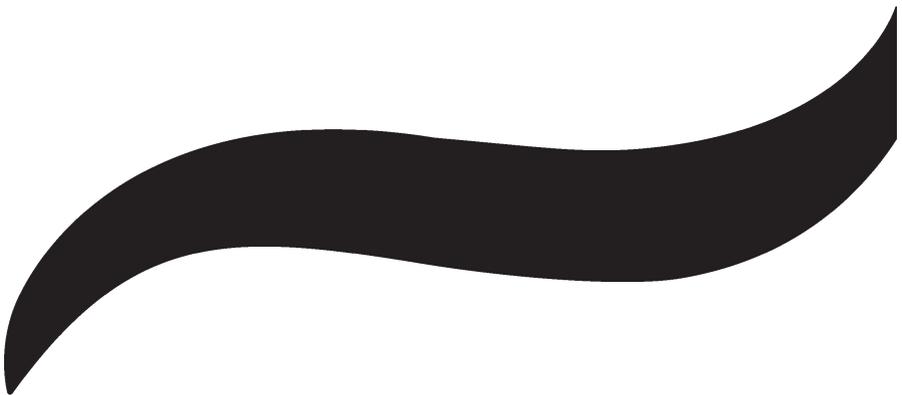


Improving Your Self-Esteem

Information for clients



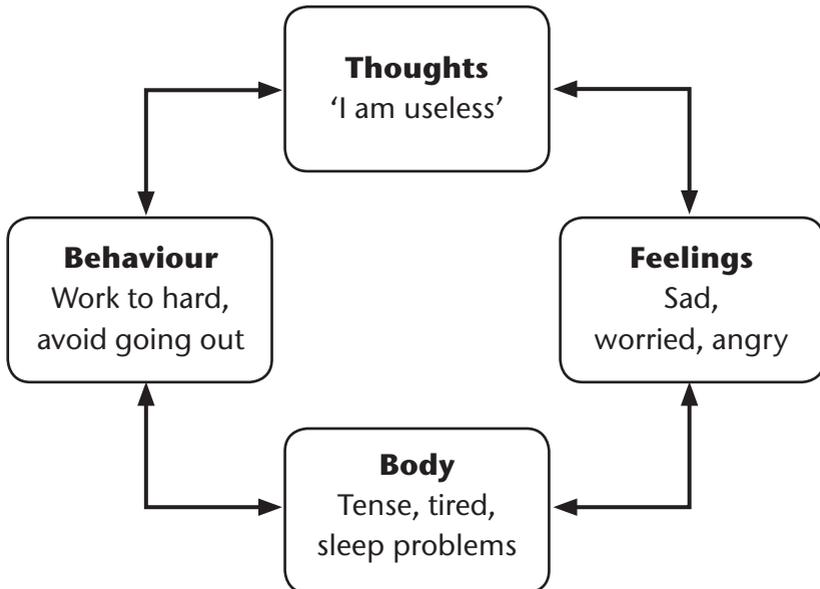
WHAT IS SELF-ESTEEM?

Self-esteem is how we see ourselves and value ourselves as people. Most people’s ideas about themselves come from their life experiences and from messages they have received from others about the kind of person they are. If these are mostly negative, people can often develop negative beliefs about themselves. These negative beliefs can lead to low self-esteem.

HOW LOW SELF-ESTEEM CAN AFFECT YOU

Low self-esteem can affect your:

- ❖ **Thoughts**, for example, blaming yourself, being hard on yourself
- ❖ **Feelings**, for example, sadness, worry, anger
- ❖ **Body**, for example, sleep problems, feeling tired, tense muscles
- ❖ **Behaviour**, for example, avoiding going out, trying to please everyone



It can have an impact on many areas of life:

- ❖ Relationships with others
- ❖ Work or school
- ❖ Self-care
- ❖ Leisure or recreational activities

It may also be a consequence of other problems:

- ❖ Stress
- ❖ Panic
- ❖ Relationship problems
- ❖ Pain or illness

HOW TO BREAK THE VICIOUS CYCLE

Challenging your thoughts

Some beliefs that maintain low self-esteem:

- ❖ A human being must be perfect
- ❖ People should always help each other
- ❖ Others are always right
- ❖ I'm not good enough or skilled enough or wise enough
- ❖ Men should never cry
- ❖ If I don't do extremely well, I'm no good at all
- ❖ If I make a mistake I'll never forgive myself
- ❖ When they see how bad I am they will reject me
- ❖ Never burden other people with your problems
- ❖ You can't help yourself, it's the way you are

Sometimes if you hold to these beliefs you can have negative thoughts about yourself. In order to challenge negative thoughts you must learn to question them. Don't just accept them as fact. Try recording your thoughts. Some of the following questions could help you to find an alternative point of view:

- ❖ What is the evidence to support this thought?
- ❖ What is the evidence against this thought?
- ❖ What would someone close to me say?
- ❖ What is the worst that could happen?
- ❖ What is the best that could happen?
- ❖ What is realistically most likely to happen?
- ❖ How else can I view this situation?

It is also important to learn to accept and value your good qualities. When we have low self-esteem we tend to focus on negative aspects of ourselves and things that happen. Ignoring the positives will keep your low self-esteem going. It will stop you having a balanced view which takes account of your strengths and weaknesses.

You can start with creating a 'positives' notebook.

- ❖ Think of all your positive qualities and write them down. Note your skills, talents, achievements and experiences, no matter how small. These could be, for example: funny, good cook, friendly, helpful. If you find this difficult ask a friend to help you.
- ❖ Keep a daily record of any situation that shows off your good qualities:

Example: Monday - Helpful - took Grandma shopping

- ❖ Read your notebook at the end of each day to review what you have recorded.

Your aim is to become aware of the positive things that you do without needing to record them.

RELAXATION & REWARD

When we are stressed, our muscles tense up and our body system speeds up. Relaxation helps us to slow down.

If we can learn to turn on the bodily feelings of relaxation we can turn off the symptoms of tension. You can't experience relaxation and tension at the same time. Slowing down can be done in a number of ways:

- ❖ Everyday relaxation (try to set aside at least 30 minutes per day) - for example listening to music, having a bath, going for a walk.
- ❖ Exercising - exercise helps reduce the stress hormones that build up in the body. This in turn helps to reduce tension and you feel better.
- ❖ Relaxation exercises - see booklet 'A guide to relaxation'.

When things go right or you have tried something new, reward yourself. You could watch TV, read your favourite book or have a relaxing bath. Remember how important it is to look after yourself. Be sure to get enough sleep, eat well, plan fun activities and make time for things you enjoy.

OVERCOMING AVOIDANCE

You may feel it's easier in the short term to avoid doing things or seeing people. But in the long term it's better not to. If you avoid things you will never know whether you could have: coped, done them well, or even enjoyed them.

Avoidance may feel like a solution because it makes you feel better. But it can be unproductive for the following reasons:

- ❖ It can make the problem worse
- ❖ It creates new problems
- ❖ It interferes with your life

For these reasons it is better to **face** difficulties rather than avoid them. Try breaking difficult tasks or situations into small steps, for example:

Task : Do a presentation at work (seems overwhelming)

Step 1 : Write notes about what you would like to say

Step 2 : Draw up presentation slides

Step 3 : Practise making a presentation to one person

Step 4 : Practise making a presentation to friends/family

Step 5 : Carry out a presentation at work

This leaflet may not help everyone with low self-esteem. You may find that your beliefs about yourself are so strong that you cannot begin to use the skills detailed here. If this is the case, you may be suffering from depression.

Symptoms of depression can include:

- ❖ Feeling sad, low in mood or empty most of the day, nearly every day
- ❖ Little interest or pleasure in things you previously liked to do
- ❖ Appetite is much greater or much less than usual and you have lost or gained weight
- ❖ Having trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- ❖ So agitated, restless or slowed down that others have begun to notice
- ❖ Feeling tired and lacking energy
- ❖ Feeling worthless or excessively guilty about things you have done or not done
- ❖ Difficulty in concentrating and making decisions
- ❖ A desire to harm yourself or feeling that you might be better off dead

If you have had five or more of these symptoms for two weeks or more, you should contact your GP for further help.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT:

Useful Contacts

For information on mental services, supports, opportunities or self-help information call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133

For further information on mental health and well-being, visit Lanarkshire's Elament website: www.elament.org.uk

Remember, should your problems persist or you feel you need help urgently please contact your GP. The following organisations can also prove useful in and out of hours.

- ❖ **Breathing Space** - 0800 83 85 87
(Mon - Thu, 6pm - 2am; Fri 6pm - Mon 6am)
www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk
- ❖ **Samaritans** - 116 123 (24hrs) www.samaritans.org
- ❖ **NHS24** - 111 (Out of hours) www.nhs24.com
- ❖ **Healthy Working Lives** - 08452 300 323 (Local),
0800 019 2211 (National),
www.healthyworkinglives.com
- ❖ **Childline** - 0800 11 11 (24hrs) www.childline.org.uk
- ❖ **NHS Inform** - 0800 22 44 88 www.nhsinform.co.uk
- ❖ **Parentline Scotland** - 0808 800 22 22
www.children1st.org.uk/parentline
- ❖ **National Debt Line Scotland** - 0808 808 4000
www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/scotland
- ❖ **National Domestic Abuse Helpline** - 0800 027 1234

WHAT IS WELL CONNECTED?

Well Connected is a new programme in Lanarkshire, sometimes referred to as social prescribing or community referral. It makes it easier for us and people we know to take part in and benefit from activities and services that we know improve our well-being which means how we feel about ourselves and our lives. There are a number of Well Connected areas available to us and we can benefit from more than one:

- ❖ Physical activity and leisure opportunities
- ❖ Volunteering
- ❖ Employment
- ❖ Arts and culture
- ❖ Benefits, welfare and debt advice
- ❖ Learning opportunities
- ❖ Stress Control Classes in communities
- ❖ Health Walks
- ❖ Mindfulness Classes.

For information on any of the above call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133
- ❖ Visit: www.elament.org.uk/self-help-resources/well-connected-programme.aspx

HEALTHY READING

All public libraries have a healthy reading section making it easier to access mental health and well-being leaflets, books, CDs, DVDs and web-based support. All libraries across Lanarkshire have resources to help us get the most from life such as living life to the full, sleeping better and becoming more confident or overcoming and coping with mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, stress, dementia and panic. There are also resources for all ages including supporting young people, adults and older people as well as items on positive parenting. Simply pop into your local library.

GUIDED SUPPORT:

Stress Control Classes

Stress Control classes will help develop skills and techniques to manage common issues caused by modern day living such as stress, anxiety or low confidence.

The classes are delivered in local community facilities and consist of six sessions lasting 90 minutes each. We will not need to speak about our issues during the class. Just sit back and listen about helpful stress control techniques. Feel free to bring someone along with you for support. To find your nearest class and book a place, call **0300 303 0447**.

Living Life to the Full - Online Course

Living Life to The Full is a free web-based life skills course that aims to help us tackle and respond to issues/demands which we all meet in our everyday lives. It will explore issues such as understanding why we feel the way we do, problem solving, noticing and challenging unhelpful thoughts and behaviours and anxiety control. You can register for the course at **www.lltff.com** and complete as many or as few modules as you wish.

If you feel you need additional help, the Living Life to The Full course is also available with support from self help coaches (via Action on Depression Scotland). To find out more visit **www.aod.lltffionline.co.uk**

Living Life: Guided Self Help and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - Telephone Support

Living Life is a free telephone support service for people suffering from low mood, mild to moderate depression, symptoms of anxiety or a combination of both. Trained Self-help coaches and therapists will guide us through a range of workbooks over a series of telephone sessions. For more information or to make a telephone appointment, call **0800 328 9655** (Mon–Fri 1–9pm).

NHS Lanarkshire - for local services and the latest health news visit www.nhslanarkshire.org.uk
NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line: 0300 3030 243

NHS inform - The national health information service for Scotland. www.nhsinform.co.uk
Tel No: 0800 22 44 88

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line on 0300 3030 243 or e-mail info2@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk



www.patientopinion.org.uk

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