

BRIAN TRACY'S

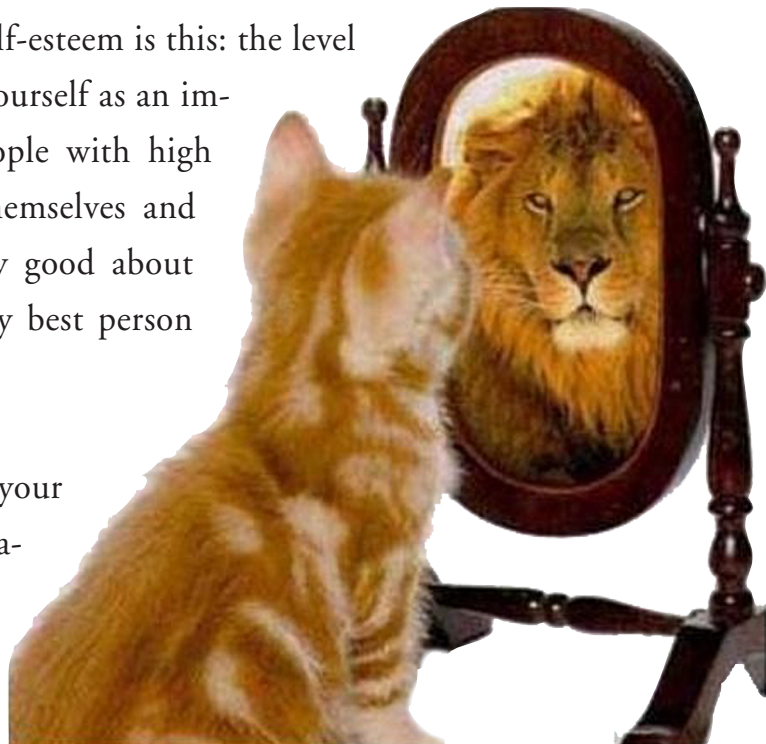
Cultivating Your Self-Esteem

Your self-esteem is probably the most important part of your personality. It precedes and predicts your performance in almost everything you do. It is the energy source or the reactor core of your personality, and how much self-esteem you have determines your levels of vitality, enthusiasm and personal magnetism. People with high self-esteem are more positive, more likable and more effective in every part of their lives.

Everything that you do or say or think will affect your self-esteem. Your job, therefore, is to keep your self-esteem high and positive on a continuing basis.

Probably the best definition of self-esteem is this: the level to which you respect and value yourself as an important, worthwhile person. People with high self-esteem feel terrific about themselves and their lives. When you feel really good about yourself, you tend to be the very best person you can possibly be.

Your level of self-esteem is really your level of “mental fitness.” It’s a measure of how healthy, hardy, and resilient you are in dealing



with the inevitable ups and downs of daily life. Your self-esteem determines how much peace of mind and inner contentment you experience. It is also closely linked to your health and levels of energy. People with high self-esteem are seldom sick and seem to have an inexhaustible flow of energy and enthusiasm that progressively moves them toward their goals.

How much you like and respect yourself also determines the quality of your relationships with people. The more you like and enjoy yourself, the more you will like and enjoy others, and the more they will like you. In fact, when your self-esteem is hurt in any way, the very first thing that is affected is the way you get along with people.

To perform at your best and to feel terrific about yourself, you should be in a perpetual state of self-esteem building and maintenance. Just as you take responsibility for your level of physical fitness, you need to take complete responsibility for the content and quality of your mind.

I have developed a simple formula that contains all the critical elements of self-esteem building, and you can use it on a regular basis to assure maximum performance.

This formula is comprised of six basic elements. They are: goals, standards, success experiences, comparison with others, recognition, and rewards. Let's take them one at a time.

How much you like and respect yourself is directly affected by your goals. The very act of setting big, challenging goals for yourself and making written plans of action to achieve them actually raises your self-esteem, which causes you to feel much better about yourself.

Self-esteem is a condition you experience when you are moving step-by-step toward the accomplishment of something that is important to you. For that reason, it's really

important to have clear goals for each part of your life and to continually work toward achieving those goals. Each progressive step causes your self-esteem to go up and makes you feel more positive and effective in everything else you do.

The second element in self-esteem building is having clear standards and values to which you are committed. Men and women with high self-esteem are very clear about what they believe in. The higher your values and ideals are, and the more committed you are to living your life consistent with those values and ideals, the more you will like and respect yourself, and the higher your self-esteem will be.

Lasting self-esteem comes only when your goals and your values are congruent—that is, when they fit into each other like a hand into a glove. Much of the stress that people experience comes from believing one thing and trying to do another. But when your goals and values are in harmony with each other, you feel a wonderful surge of energy and well-being, and that's when you start to make real progress.

Many people tell me that they are unhappy with their job because they can't seem to achieve success no matter how hard they try. I always ask them if they are doing what they really care about and believe in. In many cases, people realize that they are not happy with their job because it is the wrong kind of work for them. Once they change jobs and start doing something that they really enjoy, something that is more consistent with their innermost convictions, they start to make real progress and get a lot of satisfaction out of their work.

The third element in self-esteem building involves having success experiences. Once you have set your goals and standards, it is important that you make them measurable so that you can keep score of your small and large successes along the way. The very act of setting up a goal, breaking it down into smaller parts, and then completing those parts makes you feel like a winner and causes your self-esteem to go up. But remember that

you can't hit a target you can't see. You can't feel like a winner unless you clearly lay out the standards by which you are going to measure your success and then achieve those standards.

Let's say that you set a goal to sell a certain amount or earn a certain amount of income in a given year. If you break that down into monthly and weekly goals, and then you achieve the first of those goals, you will feel great about yourself. Each time you reach another milestone, your self-esteem and ability to perform will increase, and you will feel encouraged and enthusiastic about the next challenge.

The fourth element of self-esteem is comparison with others. Leon Festinger of Harvard University concluded that in determining how well we are doing, we do not compare ourselves with abstract standards, but, rather, we compare ourselves with people we know. To feel like a winner, you must know for sure that you are doing as well as or better than someone else. The more you know about how well the others in your field are doing, and the more favorably you compare with them, the more you will feel like a winner, and the higher your self-esteem will be.

Successful people continually compare themselves with other successful people. They think about them and read about them and study their performances, and then they work to surpass them one step at a time. Eventually, successful people reach the point where they compete only with themselves and with their past accomplishments. But this comes after they have moved to the top and left many of their competitors behind.

The next element for self-esteem is recognition of your accomplishments by people whom you respect. To feel really great about yourself, you need the recognition of people you look up to and admire, such as your boss, your coworkers, your spouse and people in your social circle. Whenever you are recognized and praised for any accomplishment by someone whose opinion you hold in high regard, your self-esteem goes up, along with your eagerness and enthusiasm to do even better on the job.

The final element of self-esteem involves rewards that are consistent with your accomplishments. You may work in a field where you receive financial bonuses, status symbols—larger offices, bigger cars—or even plaques and trophies for superior achievement. All of those symbols can have an incredible impact on raising your self-esteem and causing you to feel terrific about yourself.

If, however, your existing situation does not offer the tangible or intangible rewards that are necessary for you to build and maintain your self-esteem, you must create rewards for yourself. One of the smartest things you can do is to design a system for giving yourself rewards for both small and large accomplishments as you move progressively toward your goals. For example, people who do telephone prospecting will often treat themselves to a cup of coffee after every 10 calls. After 25 calls, they will reward themselves with a walk around the building or the block. After 50 calls, they will go out to lunch. Each of those rewards serves as an incentive that motivates them to repeat the performance. The end result is success, enthusiasm, and high self-esteem.

Whether or not your current environment provides the six elements of self-esteem building —goals, standards, success experiences, comparison with others, recognition, and rewards—you need to establish your own structure and take full responsibility for building yourself up on a regular basis.

Of course, it is possible to like yourself in the abstract, to think of yourself as a valuable and worthwhile person, but this tends to be a very shaky form of self-esteem that is easily knocked down by a negative experience or a temporary disappointment. The only real way for you to absolutely know that you are a valuable and worthwhile person is for you to make the effort, overcome the obstacles and pay the price to bring these elements into your life. When you have that foundation, you will experience a form of mental fitness and unshakable optimism that will sustain you through failure and propel you to success.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Tracy is Chairman and CEO of Brian Tracy International, a company specializing in the training and development of individuals and organizations.

Brian's goal is to help you achieve your personal and business goals faster and easier than you ever imagined.

Brian Tracy has consulted for more than 1,000 companies and addressed more than 5,000,000 people in 5,000 talks and seminars throughout the US, Canada and 80 other countries worldwide. As a Keynote speaker and seminar leader, he addresses more than 250,000 people each year.

He has studied, researched, written and spoken for 30 years in the fields of economics, history, business, philosophy and psychology. He is the top selling author of over 50 books that have been translated into dozens of languages.

He has written and produced more than 500 audio and video learning programs, including the worldwide, best-selling Psychology of Achievement, which has been translated into more than 20 languages.

He speaks to corporate and public audiences on the subjects of Personal and Professional Development, including the executives and staff of many of America's largest corporations. His exciting talks and seminars on Leadership, Selling, Self-Esteem, Goals, Strategy, Creativity and Success Psychology bring about immediate changes and long-term results.

Prior to founding his company, Brian Tracy International, Brian was the Chief Operating Officer of a \$265 million dollar development company. He has had successful careers in sales and marketing, investments, real estate development and syndication,

importation, distribution and management consulting. He has conducted high level consulting assignments with several billion-dollar plus corporations in strategic planning and organizational development.

He has traveled and worked in over 90 countries on six continents, and speaks four languages. Brian is happily married and has four children. He is active in community and national affairs, and is the President of three companies headquartered in Solana Beach, California.

Brian is the president of Brian Tracy International, a company that helps individuals and businesses of all sizes achieve personal and professional goals.

To learn more about Brian Tracy, please visit www.briantracy.com/AboutBrian.

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