

Success Ingredient #6: Self-Esteem

Great persuaders enjoy healthy self-esteem. Studies show that high self-esteem strongly influences your success and your ability to persuade, lead, and influence. When your self-esteem (the measure of how much you like yourself) is unhealthy, it tends to trigger anxiety, worry, and fear. Egotism and pride (seemingly high self-esteem) usually reveal low self-esteem. When people exhibit this outward behavior, it is a false front to convince everyone (including themselves) that they are powerful and important. In other words, those who appear to have the highest self-esteem often have the lowest. The truth is, when we have a healthy self-esteem, we don't need to prove our worth to anyone. Worth is innate and has nothing whatsoever to do with external achievements and attainments, no matter how great they may be.

What about low self-esteem? My research has shown that 85 percent of Americans rate their self-image as good to excellent, a statistic that clearly demonstrates the Wobegon Effect. We often try to deny that we struggle with self-esteem, even when it is apparent to others. The fact is we all suffer from low esteem in some aspect of our lives. It is key to realize that it's an unproductive focus, because it's tough for us to be objective in such matters. We constantly make irrational and illogical comparisons, like rating our weaknesses against other people's strengths.

We decide that we don't measure up, so we look for inadequacies in others to make us feel better about ourselves. One study found that the majority of people with low self-esteem generally do not see themselves as worthless incompetent losers. Instead, they evaluate themselves neutrally, rather than either positively or negatively.

The short list of symptoms attributable to low self-esteem includes the following:

- Inability to trust
- Gossiping
- Scarcity mentality
- Avoidance of rejection
- Resentment of others

- Aggressive behavior
- Concern with who is right
- Unwillingness to take risks
- Compares self to others
- Inability to take criticism
- Defensiveness
- Avoidance of potential failure
- Tendency to tear others down
- Procrastination
- Inability to accept compliments
- Quick to take offense

How does self-esteem affect persuasion? Self-esteem is like a mirror of what's going on inside. If you have a hard time maintaining a healthy and balanced degree of self-respect, you're going to have a hard time persuading others. You've got to persuade yourself first! It is only when you are truly happy and comfortable with yourself that you will you be able to influence others. You will find happiness will cause you to be generous, upbeat, open-minded, and just more pleasant to be around.

How do you boost your self-esteem and stop beating yourself up? The best advice I can give you is to watch your self-talk and stop comparing yourself to others. We are constantly bombarded by advertising messages telling us how we should look, dress, and smell, what we should eat, and what we should drive. We can never measure up to these standards because they are false hopes or expectations. We cannot expect exaggerated and misleading images and portrayals to be our guides. Stop using phantom measuring sticks. *You* are in charge of your life. *You* decide what matters in your life. *You* decide who and what you're supposed to be.