
THE

SELF-ESTEEM HANDBOOK



How To Boost Your Self-Esteem
and Heal Your Mind, Body, and Soul

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The Self-Esteem Handbook

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About the Author

My name is Jason Wittman. I am a mentor coach and certified addictions counselor in a private practice in Los Angeles, CA, although I work with clients by phone and Skype all over the world. I have a master in Counseling Psychology from Cornell University. All of that is not the reason to read this book. There are many professionals with more degrees, licenses, and fancy credentials than I. Few can match my life and professional experience. Few are as dedicated to the success of their clients and will walk that extra mile with them. Even fewer are actually living the life they are suggesting to their clients. I talk the talk AND I walk the walk. My suggestions in then eBook are things I actually do and have produced success for lots of my clients!

I started out my life as a loser. Well, actually not a loser because no one is a loser, but they just think and act as if they were one. If you are reading this, you probably will relate to lots of the [rest of the story](#), which you can find on my website. Skipping to end of it, I have mastered the ability to do all the getting on living stuff that one needs to do to really and truly love myself, which is another way of saying that my self-esteem/love is at a high enough level where is a positive force in my live rather than the big thing that dragged me down.

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This is why I am uniquely qualified to guide others through this process of enhancing their self-esteem. Not only have I walked the walk but I also have developed the tools to make that walk a lot shorter and less painful for my clients.

After reading through this eBook, if you think you would profit by working with me, please call or email me to schedule a free, confidential, brief exploratory session at jason@s4autom.com or 213-804-4408.

Introduction



Attaining a high degree of Self-Esteem/Love is not usually the number one priority of recovering people and most others who are looking to improve the way they function in the outside world and feel in their inside one. It is also usually not very high on the list of priorities for rehab programs. It is the almost invisible giant that is the root cause and driving force behind most addictive behavior and other behavioral and emotional problems. High self-esteem/love is the solid foundation that all other personal development has to be built on for the achievements to be long lasting. Without a high degree of self-esteem, recovery from addictions will eventually fail or at the least, will be switched to another addiction or obsession. This eBook will show you practical steps to developing self-esteem/love. It will also explain what it is and how to build it to a point where it will assist you to win in life.

Self-esteem/love is very different from self-confidence. For most people, the two concepts are used synonymously and even sometimes hyphenated as in, self-esteem/self-confidence. I used to think that until I started really exploring the subject. I discovered that they are very different, are both important and need very different techniques and tools to master them.

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Some working definitions:

- Self-confidence is one's evaluation of how well one can do things, how well they can perform.
- Whereas Self-esteem/love is one's evaluation of one's being. How much one likes, loves, cherishes and accepts themselves, AS IS.
- It is possible to have high self-confidence and have little or no self-esteem/love, which can be a source of confusion and frustration to high achievers and performers who do not understand why they can produce at such a high level and still feel like a fraud inside. That dichotomy can cause enough pain that they adopt addictions and sometimes suicide to cope with it.

So boosting your self-esteem/love is the way to become a fully healed and integrated human being. People often come at the idea backwards, because they confuse self-confidence, how one evaluates the ability to do things, with self-esteem, how one evaluates one's being or internal love. They use confident people as role models and think that by copying the way those people act, walk, dress and talk, they will build their esteem. Actually, doing all of that will boost their self-confidence though it will have little effect on esteem which can only come by changing inside thinking. Fundamentally, all radical change begins from within. They can actually do damage to an already frail self-esteem by comparing the self-confident appearing outsides of others with their own inside feelings. That comparison is always a losing proposition.

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With great self-esteem/love, all those behaviors that one engages in to cover up the hurt of little or no self-esteem/love, including putting oneself down, being arrogant and narcissistic and the excessive use of drugs and alcohol, will greatly decrease and eventually disappear.

When you are able to attain a high degree of self-esteem/love, your life will become so much easier. This is because you will stop beating yourself up, which is what people do when they feel unworthy. Because you will be able to tell yourself and truly believe you are Ok, the need to depend on other to validate you will decrease. Your emotions and reactions will be less volatile because you will have little need to defend you insides from criticism.

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Your ability to love yourself and others is all that really matters. How to get there is another matter entirely. For this, you have to find out who you are and love yourself unconditionally. Welcome to my world. Let me be your guide so it can be yours too.

Chapter 1 - Finding the Self



Finding the self is a mystical concept that has been around since ancient times. The 'self' has been described by many names, such as the soul, the oversoul, the atman, the monad, the "I AM" presence, the Christos, the illumined one, and so on. Labels aside, it can be described as who you truly are without any of the social behaviors and attitudes that you have downloaded since birth. It can be 'found' by shedding illusion and letting go of all the fronts that we put up to hide from the rest of the world what we think and feel is the truth about ourselves.

The entire process of childhood and socialization is essentially learning how to conform to the norm that our peers, parents and the rest of our worlds prescribe to be an accepted member of their communities. As such, we learn how to behave in such a way that we can be accepted. Being part of a group, family or tribe is the single most important social norm. This dates back to a time where non-conformity would have gotten us thrown out of the tribe - likely to starve or freeze to death. Pleasing others is ingrained deep within us, because we spent a lifetime conforming and attempting to fit in by keeping our outside appearance and actions ones that would fit into and be approved of by those we interacted with. When those outside abilities are out of sync with the inside feelings, our self-esteem/love suffers.

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Because most cultures are focused on how children act and achieve while paying little attention to teaching how to like and love themselves, children never learn the lessons about how to nurture their inner being. As you are about to learn, this is totally an inside job.



How to Develop and Enhance Self-Esteem/Love

Because I started out my journey of life with little self-esteem/love, I spent my teens and most of early adulthood feeling “less than.” This resulted in lots of co-dependencies and various compulsive behaviors all of which did lots to assist me to navigate fairly successfully through life and to avoid dealing with those hurt feelings of having little self-worth and little to assist me to learn to like me.

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It wasn't until I was out of the military and back in Cornell University for a master's in counseling - psychology did I start working on my inner game to increase my self-esteem. Through a somewhat painful process of trial and error, I eventually learned how to like myself. Here are the methods that I used to move me to a place where, now, I truly love myself, AS IS.

The Mirror Exercise

This is one of the most powerful techniques to build self-esteem. I have been practicing this technique for many years and it has been the most important tool to my developing a high level of self-esteem. Its simplicity belies its power. Just do it as I present it and you will be pleasantly surprised by its effectiveness.

The exercise:

From now on, **every time** you see your reflection in a mirror, **you must**:

1. Smile even if you don't want to. Fake a smile if necessary.
2. Say one verifiably nice thing about yourself. That nice thing must be something that you 100% believe is true. Avoid affirmations, which are fundamentally a lie that you tell yourself enough time until your inner mind believes it is true. It must be one that you know, without a doubt is true about yourself. It can be something external, such as your good looks (if you really believe that they are superb) or, preferably, an internal quality such as your being a loving person, highly intelligent, etc. That's it, other than....
3. If you use the mirror to beat yourself up, you must come up with two nice things for every nasty one!

This exercise accomplishes a couple of things. It very effectively builds self-esteem and because repeatedly smiling upon seeing one's face will make the face become a trigger to a smile, it becomes an automatic recovery tool for when you are in a down state or a funk. It is impossible to feel bad and smile at the same time, so that smile will break that down state, giving you an opportunity to move to a better state. By repeatedly telling yourself positive things about you, you are training the inner mind to like and appreciate you for your qualities.

Take the Win

There are opportunities to reinforce self-esteem that are regularly missed. What is even worse is that those opportunities are converted into negative reinforcers of lousy self-feelings do to inappropriate responses. I could have subtitled this section as, how to use compliments to reinforce good self-esteem. For people who are in the habit of putting themselves down, their usual responses when given a compliment is to negate it. For example, when complimented on the beautiful tie or other pieces of apparel, they have to tell how they got it on sale or at a thrift shop or when thanked for providing some special service or consideration, they respond with “Oh, it was nothing.”

The only appropriate answer to compliments is “Thank You!” They are not complimenting the manufacturer of that clothing; they are complimenting your tastes and your choices of clothing. To take the win, just acknowledge it with a “Thanks.” The same goes for compliments about things you do or did. Just say “thank you.” That makes the compliment yours.

Compare and Despair Rabbit Hole

One of the easiest ways to beat yourself up is to compare your insides with someone else’s outsides. It is a good example of the follies of attempting mind reading. The reason that this is a disastrous endeavor is that what you observe about other people is what they want you to see. It does not necessarily match the way they feel. Assuming that their appearance or the things they own or tell you they are doing reflect their feelings about all those goodies, accomplishments or, most important, themselves is pure folly. All you know is what you observe. You are ignorant of any of the back stories. That apparently very successful entrepreneur might be upside down in debt attempting to keep that enterprise afloat and be on the verge of suicide though he appears to be happy, successful and content. To then compare that assumption with your own feelings is a great way to instantly feel bad and less than.

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When you compare your insides with someone else's outsides, you always lose!

— **The world famous Anon**

If you understand the law of opposites this folly becomes even more apparent. The law of opposites is that what people must keep telling you or showing you about themselves is most probably the opposite of the way they feel about themselves. The bully is usually a wimp inside. The bully keeps people far enough away to never see the wimpishness or other failings.

I call this a rabbit hole because the more you try to evaluate your being by comparing you with other folks' outsides the more you will come out feeling like a loser and sink into that pit of despair. Winners compare themselves today with themselves yesterday or some period ago. They use each win to positively reinforce good feelings about themselves.

More Techniques and Methods

If you truly practice the techniques outlined, above, you will be well on your way to really and truly liking yourself. There is an [article on my website](#) that describes other effective techniques. [The actual link, if you are reading this in print is listed in Chapter 9 below] My experience, though, is that if you religiously practice that mirror exercise, you will be well on your way to building a dynamite self-esteem/love.

Chapter 2 - Self-esteem/love and the Shadow



Doing the exercises in chapter 1 will probably be all you need to be well on the road towards lots of self-esteem/love. This section is a more academic exploration of the subject. It is interesting and will offer some additional hint to refine your thinking.

Enhancing self-esteem/love is a lifelong practice that has to be fully attended to in order to bring about its full effects. One of the fundamental nature of the universe is that we have but one thing in our power, which is our attention. And whatever we turn our attention to, we attract towards us.

Whatever we put our attention on simply grows bigger, so we must be careful where we place our attention. There is a constant battle in life between the positive parts of ourselves and the negative. Building self-esteem/love is all about accentuating the positive and letting go of the negative.

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There is a Cherokee tale about a conversation between a grandfather and his grandson. He was explaining this constant tug of war that goes on within a person:

“There are two wolves inside of us. There is an evil wolf and a good wolf. The evil wolf is anger, sorrow, greed, envy, regret, self-pity, guilt, false pride, lies, arrogance and self-hate. The good wolf is joy, humility, love, hope, peace, serenity, kindness, generosity, benevolence, empathy, truth, compassion, faith and self-love.”

The grandson thought for a while and asked, “Which one wins?”

And the grandfather replies, [“The one you feed the most!”](#)

Shadow work is a critical piece of the puzzle in terms of self-realization and empowerment. According to Carl Jung, enlightenment can only happen through shadow work:

“One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious”

As I will discuss later on, one of the most effective ways of bringing the dark parts to light is via a process developed by the 12 Step programs. It is the 4th and 5th Steps, taking a written inventory of all that accumulated stuff that is in the domain of the evil wolf and then in the 5th Step, putting all of that to rest by reading the writing to another person and releasing it to the Universe. Until this is done, one’s view of the world and new experience will be through a filter of nastiness..

Uncover, Discover, Discard

— That Anon guy again

All About the Shadow

Therapist Carl Jung said that everybody has a shadow-self which needs to be integrated. The less that the person integrates the shadow and expresses it openly, the blacker and denser it will be. That shadow-self will often project its own failings onto other people, where we notice things in others that we hate about ourselves. In other words, our weaknesses and irritation can be the best tools for looking inside. Everybody can be used as a mirror for our own development. When we detest somebody else, it is a clue to the areas of our own makeup that could probably use a readjusting.

What you see in others is a reflection of what you have within yourself but do not want to deal with. As a result, when somebody bothers you, it is easier to project your own failings onto them and criticize. German author Hermann Hesse wrote,

“If you hate a person, you hate something in him that is part of yourself. What isn’t part of ourselves doesn’t disturb us”

So the takeaway here is that we can get clues to the parts of us that could use a bit of positive realignment by paying attention to the things we dislike the most about others. If we do not do the work to uncover and deal with our negativity, our dark side, the evil wolf wins!

Chapter 3 -Building Self-Esteem/love



Day to Day Exercises

Getting into responsible, productive routines help to free up your time and energy and will assist in cutting stress but giving you more time to focus on issues that really need your attention. Most people have heavy stress from either energy drainers or from work and relationships. The best scenario, if at all possible, is to simply exit toxic relationships or environments.

One of those toxic environments can be the work one. Many people are afraid of leaving a job they hate and pretend that they have to stay there to pay the bills. But nothing is worth having your energy drained and living like a zombie with no purpose or intention. What happens is that they are pretending to be who they are not, which is the polar opposite of authenticity. It is real hard to like oneself feeling like a phony.

There are many self-esteem/love enhancement exercises you can do,. Here are 5 more of the most effective:

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1. The transition between waking and sleeping hours and from sleeping and waking are a prime time to directly influence your inner mind to significantly master your thoughts and emotions. In that space, turn your thoughts as positive as possible. That period of time is basically the same type of trance state that occurs during hypnosis, it is a time when the inner mind is most open to reprogram in its thinking.
2. The use of a self-hypnosis mp3 program that is designed to reprogram the inner mind with positive self-esteem/love messages is a quicker way of accomplishing the mission than the previous suggestion. The problem with exercise #1 is that most people do not have the skill to develop the kinds of positive messages that will quickly and effectively produce change. [see the Resources guide at the end of the eBook]
3. Keeping a gratitude journal is perfect for appreciating what you are and all that you have accomplished. For folks who have been in the habit of beating themselves up and avoiding recognizing their wins, regularly writing gratitude lists is an effective tool to turn that habit around as it is one of the major ways to feed the good wolf. Putting these wins down in writing goes a long way towards owning the win.
4. Put yourself first with vacations, massages, extreme sports, concerts, whatever it is that you want to do. You deserve supreme enjoyment, and it is what you are here for. Sadly, most people think that life is supposed to be a painful chore and create stress for themselves. Be nice to yourself! Remember that until you get it for yourself, you have nothing to give to others,
5. Stay out of other people's business at all costs. There are three kinds of business. There is my business, other peoples' business and God's or the Universes' business. The only business we need to focus on is our business. The other two are none of our business! Without focusing on your own self-development, you will never develop.

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The legendary, pioneer Life Coach, Thomas Leonard suggests that for your own inner development you must become incredibly selfish! He goes on to explain that selfish is different than stingy. It simply means that before you can give to others you must get for yourself. In romance, if you have not developed great self-love, you will have little or no love to be able to flow into your partner. Most relationship fights originate from partners who are trying to suck love out of each other when they hardly have enough internal love for him/herself. Once folks develop inner wellbeing by selfishly working on their selves, they can give to others. Only those with little to share or give, stingily horde what they have.

The tale of the two Rolls Royce licence plates: I live in Los Angeles where there are more Rolls Royces than any place other than London. I once saw licence plates on two Rolls. The first had a license plate holder that said, "My other car is a Rolls!" which is a holder that people with junkers use as a joke, but this guy was rubbing in his wealth. The other Rolls' plate read, "I WHS 14 U 2" Now this is someone who probably has enough internal comfort that he is willing to hope others can prosper too,

Creating a Positive Environment to Feel Good at All Times



One of the most important and overlooked parts of being able to find the self is being unashamed about feeling good. This entails doing activities that feel good to you as much as possible. There is a tendency to believe that you must suffer much to ‘achieve’ happiness. It is more the case that unhappiness has to be ‘unlearned’ from past conditioning.

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It is quite alright to feel good, and everybody is worthy of self-esteem/love, respect, and appreciation. Any limitation that society places upon you or that you put on yourself can only affect you if you accept those limitations. If you want to master self-esteem/love, then you have to love yourself and treat yourself with respect. This entails saying no to toxic relationships, setting boundaries, thinking positive thoughts, journaling, getting exercise, and, of course, continually working on the internal processes to enhance your self-esteem/love. Your first responsibility is to yourself and to make sure you are as happy as you can be.

Chapter 4 - Alternative Self-esteem/love Strategies



Here are some more strategies to enhance your self-esteem/love:

1. Doing Esteemable Acts

This is one of those long recognized “good things” to do. In the Jewish religion, these acts are called Mitzvahs. They define a mitzvah as an act or deed that deserves a blessing. Now they frame mitzvahs and things to please God. More practically, these are acts that generate internal good feelings and greatly contribute to enhancing self-esteem.

There are two types of estimable acts, ones the recipient know about and ones done anonymously. Although both are worth doing, the second type, the anonymous ones, seem to benefit self-esteem the most. Most likely that is because they are totally without any chance of recognition or secondary gain from the recipient so they are an absolutely pure good deed.

1. Psycho-semantics

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Psycho-semantics are words that have a very different emotional or meta-message (the underlying message) than their dictionary definition. Emotionally they carry way more weight than one would think.

Try – The first and most important of these words is “try.” Although “try” is used with the general understanding that it is an attempt that will be carried through to completion, its meta-message is that the inner mind already knows that there will be little action attached to the attempt. The chance of success or even starting is very low.

When you hear yourself saying that you will “try” to do something, your inner mind is already discounting any chance of successful completion of the task. This one will be dead on arrival. When your friend tells you he will try to call you, don’t hold your breath. It is not going to happen. If he really wanted to call you, he would have said, “I will call you on Tuesday of next week.

I have banished “try” from my vocabulary when used as a synonym for “attempt.” It is OK to “try” on a new pair of shoes, but to “try” to clean my desk is a sign to me that I already know the negative outcome.

Should vs. Could – “Should” carries lots of emotional weight. Regardless of whether it is used as self-talk or by others about a suggested course of action for you, its meta-message is that if you do not do what is suggested, you are a bad person and ought to be ashamed. If you are already full of shame, “shoulds” can be counted on to reinforce those negative feelings.

The better choice is “could” because “could” has little or no emotional weight. It just suggests a choice, do it or not, it’s just a choice. If it fails to get done or meets with a mediocre result, it will be judgement-free and just feedback. If doing it is important enough, you will just make another choice.

Must or Have to vs. Could or Choose to – These fall into the same area as “should” the meta (underlying) message is that not only do you have little choice but if you fail to do it or fail to achieve having done it, you are a bad person. Using “could” or saying, “I choose to” takes the emotional weight off of the thought.

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1. Positive Self-Talk

Most people with low self-esteem are in the habit of putting themselves down. This is the habits of habits and there is a whole article [<http://stage2recovery.com/the-habit-of-habits/>] on my website devoted to overcoming it. Suffice to say, negative self-talk is one of the most effective ways of maintaining a negative opinion of oneself. Some examples of negative self-talk include:

- Mislabeling positive experiences and accomplishments. I remember listening to a person sharing about a perfectly chaotic day he just had. He labeled himself as, “I was so crazy today!” and then went on to describe all the crazy things that happened and the difficult people and situations he had perfectly handled and exquisitely navigated through. Instead of labeling the day as a crazy one, he called himself crazy. By mislabeling his skillful performance, he missed an opportunity to give himself some good props and take the win.
- Using negative outcomes and poor choices to beat up oneself. Have you ever said to yourself, “How stupid was I (or that)!” or “God, am I dumb!” or something similar? These are self-putdowns that reinforce loser feelings. The truth is that we learn through trial and error. Winners understand that what is labeled as failure is in fact just feedback. Pure and simple, it just failed to work. No blame or shame, just a learning experience so that by better crafting the next attempt, there could possibly have a better outcome.
- Dismissing and down-playing compliments. This was already covered in the “Take the Win!” section, above.

Eliminating all negative self-talk will go a long way towards building a great self-image, especially if it is replaced with positive self-talk by giving oneself mini-compliments, maxi-compliments using the mirror exercise, and making sure to always take the win by just saying, “thank you!

Many of us were raised with the idea that self-praise indicates a lack of humility. My Mother used to say, “Self-praise stinks!” anytime we gave ourselves credit or compliments. What a terrible thing to teach a kid! That robs a person of the basic tool for building self-esteem. If I am prohibited from recognizing my worth, I am beholden on others to tell me I’m OK. If the only way to get those good feelings is when others tell me or throw bits of praise, there is little opportunity to build internal self-love/esteem and is a perfect setup for codependency.

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Religions preach humility and 12-Step programs talk about busting/smashing the ego. Both of those concepts are misinterpreted as a prohibition for self-praise. Those concepts are about bragging about one's abilities and obsessively needing to "one-up" everyone, which are actually activities that people with low or no self-esteem engage in to cover up how bad they feel about themselves. That is very different from being able to recognize and accept one's positive values, achievements and accomplishments in a way that avoids putting down or trampling on others.

There is an old Buddhist saying that "If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him!" What is meant is that the Buddha, being an enlightened soul, has achieved total self-love and acceptance and has no need for any recognition or praise from others. If you met the real Buddha on the road, you would not know he was the Buddha because he has no need to tell you. Therefore if you meet someone on the road who tells you he is the Buddha, he must be an imposter.

People with high self-esteem and self-love have little or no need for external recognition of their essence, therefore they can be understated in their dealings with others. Of course, props from others are nice, but only as a bonus. Actually, the ego that 12-Step programs refer to when they say there is a need to "smash the ego" is actually the bravado and bragging that are poor attempts to cover up and compensate for low self-esteem. The bully is really a wimp inside. The way to smash that ego and to be humble is to build up a strong, positive evaluation of one's self. Humility has little to do with subjugating one's self to others but rather being comfortable enough in one's skin to have the luxury of being able to support others in their journey towards self-love.

Chapter 5 - Creating Winning Environments

Chapter 5 - Creating Winning Environments



Creating Environments that are Conducive to Developing Self-Esteem/Love

While this is secondary, making sure that your external environments are supportive of the new you or at least neutral will allow you to stay focused on your internals. There is an old saying that when you are knee deep in alligators it is very hard to remember that your original mission (why you are there) was to drain the swamp. All the externals that I am about to discuss are the alligators that will have you working overtime to stay focused on your internal development if you continually have to deal with them.

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Your Immediate Surroundings

Are you living in a cluttered, disorderly environment? Is your room, your house and work area supportive of you. If not, you might want to throw out some of your old stuff or do a garage sale. This is very therapeutic and should serve to clean the mind. Creating a safe, clean, and organized environment also becomes another win.

Your Immediate Relationships

You also want to rid yourself of any toxic relationships that you have. Toxic relationships in the home or workplace will sap your energy like nothing else. They are part of the problem when they contribute to your angry, fearful, or shame. This negativity is counterproductive to the development of esteem and love. If you are in those emotions, it is real difficult to work on liking yourself. Eventually, as you build a rock solid self-esteem, you will be able to better deal with these external alligators without losing yourself in the drama.

In any case, it is best to get rid of toxic relationships and to establish a community of people who are loving, compassionate, and kind. Keep all aspects of the inner and outer environments as positive as possible. Although building self-esteem/love is an inside job, that job becomes a lot easier when the outside environments are in good shape. Having to split one's attention between slogging through a cluttered, run down and chaotic world while working on enhancing the inner one, fails as the best set-up for a wonderful outcome. Here are some practical ways to make sure that your personal environments, your health, your attitude, your thinking patterns and your immediate surroundings are at least neutral or part of the solution.

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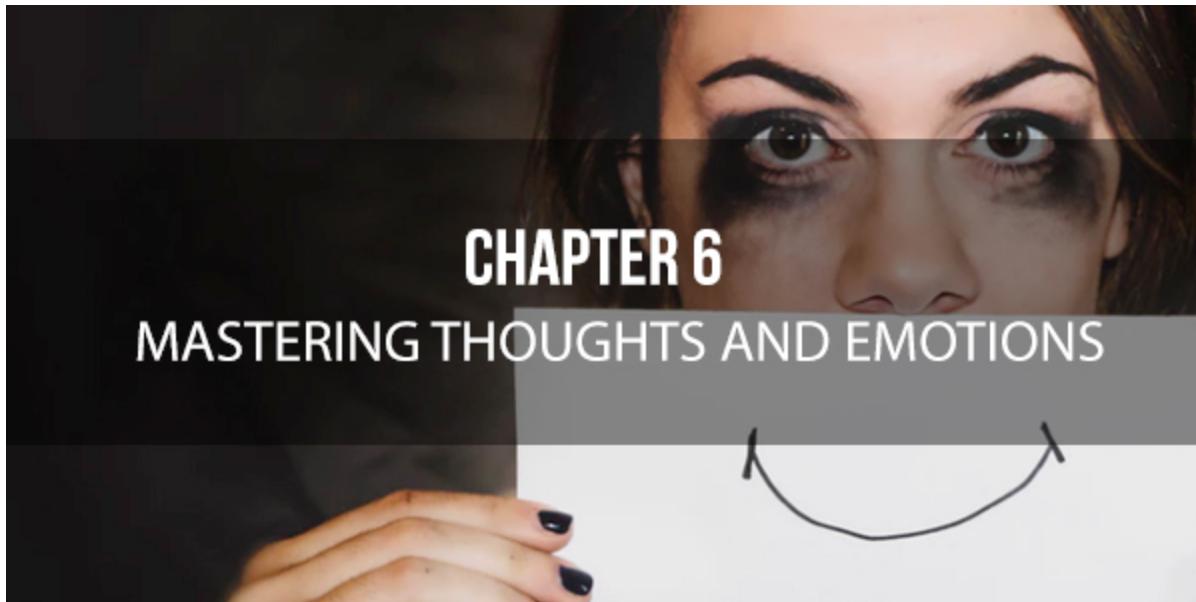
1. Put Your Health First - Always put your health and well-being first. A stress-free mind in a healthy body is most important. This will also involve a certain amount of discipline. Exercising regularly eating responsibly, produces wonderful physical wellbeing and that can be a great win to self-esteem/love. Although one can have dynamite self-esteem/love regardless of your physical health and fitness, feeling healthy and knowing that the body is being respected and nourished will certainly make that esteem enhancement job easier.
2. Save Money – One can be poor and still have great self-esteem/love. The problem with money or lack, thereof is that the mismanagement of available funds at all levels of wealth is an invitation for the dark shadow of self-hate to do its work. So being a responsible guardian of ones finances is important. Anxiety and stress over money takes up a lot of mental and emotional resources.
3. Build Competence - Although this has a lot more to do with boosting self-confidence, making sure that you have done the footwork to assure that you are regularly performing at a level of competence will also be a boost to self-esteem. Understand, though, that if you use great performance as the main tool to the development of self-esteem/love, you are running the risk of ending up with high self-confidence while still having low self-esteem. It is very dangerous when the insides have not kept pace with amazing outside performance. This is the world of many rock stars and super athletes who internally can't understand why they are getting so much praise and are never satisfied with their performance. Their internal conversation is something like, "If they ever figure me out, I'm toast!" That is a setup for developing using addictions and even suicide as coping tools.
4. Pace Yourself - attempting to do too many things at once is a setup for failure and burn out. This is not a race. This needs to be envisioned as a long term process. Changing internal thinking takes lots of repetition and consistency. The inner mind will eventually grasp whatever we do regularly as the way things are and after that it will automatically produce the desired results. Keep it simple and focus on doing one thing at a time. Although you will probably be pleasantly surprised with your progress, understand that slow and steady will do a much better job of producing a win.

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5. Meditation - Meditation allows the mind to reorganize itself without having to pay attention to controlling the body. Whether the meditation is a resting one using a mantra or some sort or a moving one like Thai Chi, yoga or solo jogging, the body is doing some repetitive action which frees the mind to free associate and reorganize itself. Most successful folks do one of these activities for at least 30 minutes per day.
6. Inner Assessment – It is a daunting task to work on self-esteem/love when one has to slog through an emotional minefield of resentment, anger, guilt, fear and lots of negative past history. I have found that the best tool to assist in the process of clearing out most of that crap is the 4th and 5th Steps of the 12 Step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous. You do not need to be a member or even an alcoholic or addict to use these tools. The 4th Step is a writing exercise of making an inventory of all the above and the 5th Step is reading that inventory to a trusted other person. What this process does is allow the mind to put all those feelings and emotions in the “completed” category. Until that is done, the inner mind which only knows “completed” or “still in progress” actions and events, will view all this past stuff as if it happened this morning and still needing to be dealt with instead of letting it go as completed past history.

I have made doing this process easier. There is a [4th Step guide on my website](#) that will walk you through the process. This process can be difficult for some people who have made a career out of avoiding dealing with these things. I guarantee you that to go through this process will make the goal of building self-esteem/love way, way easier. It is well worth the effort! For many who go through this exercise, once it is completed they experience great relief and good feelings, sometimes for the first time ever.

Chapter 6 - Mastering Thoughts and Emotions



The quality of your thoughts will determine the nature of your reality and thought is really just a habit. If you can really change your thoughts you will be able to control what you experience. Even if you end up in a negative environment, you can still control your reaction to it. Moreover, a negative environment is most likely only negative because you have some kind of negative belief surrounding it, which you can change.

Mastering Thoughts

Thoughts gather momentum and tend to perpetuate themselves. And so, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer is due as much to thoughts of poverty perpetuating themselves and thoughts of riches perpetuating themselves than to any kind of structured inequality. The inner mind always operates on what it perceives as being normal and natural, so being raised in an environment where any belief is consistently iterated and practiced will become the standard operating thinking of the inner mind.

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The primary reason that people have trouble mastering their thoughts is due to having little understanding of the workings of the inner mind. Doing the work I have already outlined to reprogram their inner mind to master your thoughts to serve you is an ongoing, lifelong process. Doing so reaps great rewards.

Mastering Emotions

Some events can generate immensely negative reactions due to previous trauma. This can be very difficult to deal with without doing the discover, uncover and release process of the 4th Step that I have previously described. Once that process has been done, the Inner Mind views past trauma as completed action that no longer needs reacting to. Without doing this process, the Inner Mind views the trauma as if it happened this morning so it is still included in how it reacts to current events. But reality is perception, and you need to change your mental and emotional lens to see things from the perspective of the higher self - who you really are:

“We do not see things as they are, we see them as we are” (The Talmud)

A Note on Limiting Beliefs

Beliefs deserve to be examined. They are often mentioned but rarely explored in detail. A belief is simply a thought that has been repeated over and over again. Eventually, it becomes accepted as a fact, even in the face of contrary evidence. It is the same process that allows affirmations to become part of the inner mind’s operating system. An important part of personal development is to critically examine beliefs to determine if they are limiting options, reinforcing prejudices, and generally keeping folks stuck by suppling excuses to avoid change, like “but we have always done it that way!” The Alcoholics Anonymous folks recognized this by including the 6th and 7th Steps about eliminating what they called Character Defects. Sometime this process can be difficult because most of these beliefs have some sort of secondary payoff attached to them. An example of that could be gossiping about others keeps the focus off of the gossiper.

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Limiting beliefs are often the biggest obstacle to new states of awareness. For example, you might have read all of the material but deep down do not feel you are worthy of a partner. There are a wide number of erroneous beliefs such as “resources are scarce and we must compete” and “you have to work hard to get rich”. These beliefs are quite inaccurate. All beliefs need to be scrutinized. It is very difficult to evolve without changing limiting beliefs. Engaging in the process of uncover, discover, discard and reeducate is how one gets their belief system to work for them

Chapter 7 - The Power of Habits



The power of habits is huge! A mature understanding of habits and how to use them is fundamental to becoming a fully whole and integrated human being. Because your habits are the primary determinant of who you are and who you become:

“Repetition of the same thought or action develops into a habit, which, repeated frequently enough, becomes an automatic reflex” (Vincent Norman Peel)

What you do every day will change who you are. Because habits are things we do or think automatically, the outer (formally called conscious) mind just carries them out with little or no awareness. Once we are consciously aware of those negative habits the next steps are to do a contrary, positive habit longer and more repetitiously often than the old one until the inner mind understands that this is the standard thinking.

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The Inner Mind

Consider that more than half of all of your daily activities are automatic. You do not put any conscious awareness into them. Habits are a way for our brains to conserve energy over time, and they are vital to our functioning. Imagine if you had to calculate every step to work beforehand, how to make your breakfast, open the front door, take each step to the car, start the ignition, drive in busy traffic etc.

Thankfully, our inner mind takes care of all of it. The outer mind is only capable of remembering between 5-9 facts at a time. The rest is passed to the inner mind for processing. The most effective way to change a habit is to do a more useful and responsible one more. It takes the inner mind a minimum of 30 days to understand that this is the new habit is what is normal and natural. Once the inner mind gets that message, it will automatically do that thought or action forever. Caution though, if you do that old habit, even a few times later on, it takes way less time for the inner mind to go back to the old thinking or behavior because it starts thinking, "Oh, I guess we are going back to the old way!" This is why it is critical that for those who are quitting smoking to refrain from sneaking even a puff from a cigarette for at least the first 90 days.

How to Master Habits

Most everything that you do is no more than a habit. Some habits are incredibly deeply ingrained. The longer that a habit is put in place, the harder it is to replace. Think of the example of a person who has been smoking for 30 years, constantly used to taking smoking breaks with friends and smoking at home. This brings up the second reason why habits are sometimes hard to break. There are usually secondary payoffs when doing the habit. When smoking or drinking are a vehicle for social interaction both because it is a group activity and that they take the edge off of social interactions, the fear of losing those secondary payoffs can be the overwhelming reason for self-sabotaging the plans for change.

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It takes about 14 days for the body to get used to a different kind of diet. In drug rehabilitation, the first 14 days are the most difficult, and after this, the physical dependence part of the habit will be pretty much over. This is because the body is physically dependent on the drug and has adapted to its presence. After 14 days, it will have adapted to functioning without the drug. However, this is only the physical side of things.

Scientific studies have established that it takes 4 to 6 weeks for a new habit to become ingrained. After 4 weeks, it is likely that the person will continue doing it afterwards. So if you really want to master a habit, the 14 day and 45-day marks are the most important. After these points, it will become a lot easier. Once a habit has been installed, it just becomes second nature. It does not really matter what it is. This is the beauty of habits once you understand them and use them to your benefit.

Of course, the ultimate habit that you want to maintain is positive thoughts. The minute you find yourself thinking of a negative thought, change it to something positive. This will only happen if you continually make the effort to monitor your thoughts and when you notice that they are negative, gently change the self-talk to positive. Over time, even this will become second nature, and negative thoughts will have become a thing of the past.

Some suggestions for mastering new habits

-Affirmations are one of the ways to enhance self-esteem, as long as they are done correctly. However, it should be borne in mind that the affirmations need to be believable. If the affirmation is too far from where you are, then it won't be believed and will just remind you of what you are not. The affirmation also needs to be in the present tense and as a positive statement rather than in the negative. "I am not poor" is reinforcing poverty, while "I am rich" reinforces riches. The reason for this is that the mind automatically drops the "not" out of what it hears. This is a proven law of the mind. When you say, "I'm not afraid," the inner mind hears, "I am afraid!" This is a difficult task because English is commonly spoken in negatives and double negatives.

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-Consider turning off your WiFi at night and reducing technology usage before sleep. The time just prior to sleeping and just upon waking is one where you have access to the theta state while still conscious. If you can try to manifest a positive emotion in these states, your day and night will run much more smoothly.

I have found that morning is the best time to complete a task or engage in a positive habit. Studies have demonstrated that attention and drive are highest in the morning and tends to wane as the day goes on. So start your day off as well as you possibly can.

The worst thing that you can do is roll out of bed, look at your emails, shower, grab a slice of toast, and head to work. When you are looking at your emails you are basically downloading stress first thing in the morning. The morning time is sacred and you need to keep some space there for relaxation. Sadly, most people are stressed about work and do not even give themselves the morning to relax. Of course, remember the six Ps (Previous Planning Prevents Pee Poor Performance) if you plan ahead and get to bed earlier, there will be that extra time available in the morning.

More suggestions on making habit change stick

Whatever kind of habit change you adopt, remember to stick with it for at least 4 weeks and to consciously substitute it for the old habit. Over time, as the inner mind gets the message that this is the new way of doing or thinking, it will become second nature to you. Incorporate your habits one at a time so you do not get overwhelmed. Habits are very difficult to break out of once they become ingrained. They are engrained so strongly in the brain that they can even survive brain damage. On the other hand, this can be a good thing if you adopt positive habits. As per Warren Buffett:

“The chains of habit are too light to be felt until they are too heavy to be broken”

As difficult as habits may be to break, if you stick with it, the benefits can be phenomenal which will trigger the urge to tackle other change. One habit after the next can be broken, from the smallest to the biggest. As with most things in life, starting with easier ones that will produce quicker wins will reinforce your confidence that these are doable tasks.

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You can use the power of habit to find your true self and establish unshakable self-esteem and the best of these habits to practice is the mirror exercise that I previously described. If you smile and say one verifiable thing about yourself every time you see your image in a mirror, you will be well on the way to building great self-esteem/love.

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Chapter 8 – Books and Other Resources



There is an extensive list of books that are my favorites on getting-on-living skills and knowing oneself. You can access it by clicking on this link: <http://stage2recovery.com/suggested-readings/>

My website links: the counseling private practice: <http://stage2recovery.com> and <http://steppingintorecovery.com/>

Parenting of Teens Coaching: <http://theparentscoach.com/> and “tips from the parents’ coach” blog: <http://theparentscoach.com/blog/>

My 4th Step Guide: <http://stage2recovery.com/my-fourth-step-guide/>

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This is not one of my websites though think it is good enough to mention here. It is by Paul Ogunkoya and it is a compilation of lots of self-esteem material. You might like to check it out: <http://www.self-esteem-school.com>

Conclusion



Finding out who you really are and generating self-esteem/love for yourself is the most rewarding experience that you can have and is beyond the understanding of those who have not experienced it. That is the solid foundation that when the rest of one's life is built on it will make the achievements and successes unshakable and allow one to enjoy having their insides truly match their outsides!

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