

3. Becoming More Confident

Confidence depends on having a healthy level of self-esteem and being able to employ skills to help us perform in challenging situations.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the concept we have about ourselves. We are not born with negative beliefs, but these often develop because of life experiences.

Low self-esteem can lead us to believe we are not as good as others, or we must behave in a certain way to maintain the approval of significant people. Because of such beliefs, we adopt biased ways of thinking and behave in unhelpful ways.

Behaviour Associated with Low Self-Esteem

- **Playing down** our achievements, or not even noticing them.
- Focusing on what's gone **wrong**, rather than being pleased about what went well.
- Being **self-critical** and **comparing** ourselves unfavourably to others.
- Imagining that others think and feel **negatively** about us.

Raising Self-Esteem

To feel better about ourselves we need to recognise and celebrate our positive qualities.

- Write a list of your **positive qualities** and some evidence for each. Read the list every day and add new items.
- At the end of each day, think about **three good things** that have happened, rather than dwell on what went wrong.

- **Reward** yourself for achievements and successes however small.
- Become a better friend to yourself.
 - [Use STOPP, a simple skill to help encourage a kinder self-perspective.](#)
- **Connect** with people who love and believe in you.

Develop new skills to raise your confidence

- Good self-confidence comes from healthy living, so **stop thinking** and **start doing**.
 - Challenge yourself but set realistic goals so you don't set yourself up for failure with standards that make it impossible to succeed.
- [Visit the Resources section on the Student Counselling and Wellbeing website.](#)
 - Check out the booklist and self-help materials in the confidence and self-esteem section.
- [Look out for Groups and Workshops on related topics through the Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service, Library, and Leeds University Student Union.](#)
- Try something **new**.
 - Get out of your comfort zone and start practising.
 - If we lack confidence, we often avoid situations we feel anxious in, but this reinforces our belief we can't succeed, and our confidence remains low.
 - New experiences possess the potential for new successes.
- **Lower** your expectations.
 - Set yourself small, specific, achievable goals you can succeed at, rather than vague, over ambitious ones that are unrealistic.