

THE SELF CONCEPT INVENTORY EXERCISE

(adapted from the book *Self Esteem* by McKay & Fanning, with kind permission of Patrick Fanning)

If your stress has become a disorder, and caused a shift in thinking so that you have a negative bias and a gloomy view, it is likely that the way you view yourself is distorted in a negative way – that you are filtering out awareness of your positive qualities, and only seeing and magnifying what you see as weaknesses or flaws.

Low self esteem prevents a clear view of yourself, and will result in your feeling bad (emotionally and physically), and developing self-limiting behaviours (eg avoidant or self sabotaging behaviour).

- Do you have a negative opinion of yourself and your future?
- Is it possible you over-emphasise what you perceive as your flaws?
- Do you filter out awareness of positives?
- Do you constantly compare and rate yourself against others?

If the answer to most of these is yes, this 5 part 'self-concept inventory', will help you to to *accurately* assess your particular balance of strengths and weaknesses – in order to recognise and value the person you *actually* are, and to help to change your negative self-talk...



1

First exercise: Write down as many words or phrases you can to describe yourself in the following areas:

1. Physical appearance – include descriptions of your height, weight, facial appearance, quality of skin, hair, style of dress, as well as descriptions of specific body areas such as your neck, chest, waist and legs.
2. How you relate to others – include descriptions of your strengths and weaknesses in intimate relationships and in relationships to friends, family and co-workers, as well as how you relate to strangers in social settings.
3. Personality – describe your positive and negative personality traits.
4. How other people see you – describe the strengths and weaknesses that your friends and family see.
5. Performance (work or school or other) – include descriptions of the way you handle the major tasks.
6. Performance (in life's everyday tasks) – descriptions should be included in such areas as hygiene, health, maintenance of your living environment, food preparation, caring for your children, and any other ways you take care of personal or family needs.
7. Mental functioning – include here an assessment of how well you reason and solve problems your capacity for learning and creativity, your general fund of knowledge, your areas of special knowledge, wisdom you have acquired, insight, and so on.
8. Sexuality – how you see and feel about yourself as a sexual person.

When finished, go back and put a + by items that represent strengths or things you like about yourself, and put a - beside items that you consider weaknesses or would like to change about yourself. Don't mark items that are neutral, factual observations about yourself.

2

Second exercise: New page... 2 columns... One to list the minuses, the other to review and revise.

On the left write down each ‘-’, leaving several lines / space between each item. On the right, review and revise each statement carefully – take your time.

- Eliminate pejorative language.
- Use ‘accurate’ language (go a bit ‘Spock’ here, distance yourself, confine yourself to the facts, be purely descriptive).
- Use specifics rather than generalisations, eliminate ‘everything / always / never..’ completely, and so on. (Maybe you only do some things on some occasions?)
- Find exceptions or corresponding strengths (eg if you label yourself stupid because you’re not interested in exploring politics, you might counter it with ‘but I love to read true life stories and I think deeply about behaviour and psychology..’).

3

Third exercise: New page – write down your list of strengths. Include special qualities or abilities – compliments you’ve been given. Remember little successes – remember what you’ve overcome and what you’ve cared about. Include any prizes/awards/achievements.

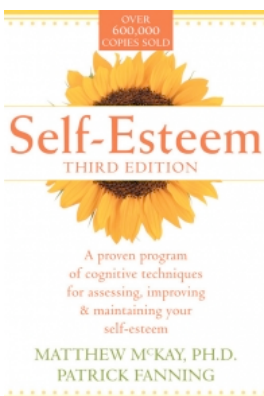
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Fourth exercise: New page – go over your strengths one more time! Rewrite them in complete sentences. Get rid of negatives and back handed compliments.

5

Fifth exercise: New page – make a new self-description Use what you’ve learned in the other exercises to describe who you really are. **You’ve been spending years focusing on your negatives, now give equal time to your strengths!**

Tips: always aim for **unconditional self-acceptance**, and unconditional other / world acceptance remember: **nothing is good or bad, thinking makes it so... work on acceptance and living in the present**, it could change your life... See more like this on my blog at iVeronicaWalsh.wordpress.com



This exercise is outlined in much greater detail in the book ‘Self Esteem, by McKay and Fanning’, which I highly recommend – it is a ‘proven program of cognitive techniques for assessing, improving and maintaining your self esteem’.

“Since its first publication in 1987, **Self-Esteem** has become the first choice of therapists and savvy readers looking for a comprehensive, self-care approach to improving self-image, increasing personal power, and defining core values. More than 600,000 copies of this book have helped literally millions of readers feel better about themselves, achieve greater success, and enjoy their lives to the fullest.”

It is available from www.newharbinger.com / <http://www.newharbinger.com/self-esteem>