

## DEALING WITH LOW SELF ESTEEM

STUDENT COUNSELLING

### WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

If you would like to make an appointment to see a counsellor to learn more about this topic, please contact the counselling service on your campus.

Distance students can contact any one of the campuses. Please tell the receptionist if you need an urgent appointment.

### CONTACT DETAILS

#### ALBANY

Health and Counselling

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (09) 443 9783

Email: [Studenthealth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:Studenthealth@massey.ac.nz)

#### MANAWATŪ

Student Counselling Service

Turitea Campus, Palmerston North

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

Phone (06) 350 5533

Email: [s.counselling@massey.ac.nz](mailto:s.counselling@massey.ac.nz)

#### WELLINGTON

Student Counselling Service

Hours 8.30am - 5.00pm

Monday - Friday

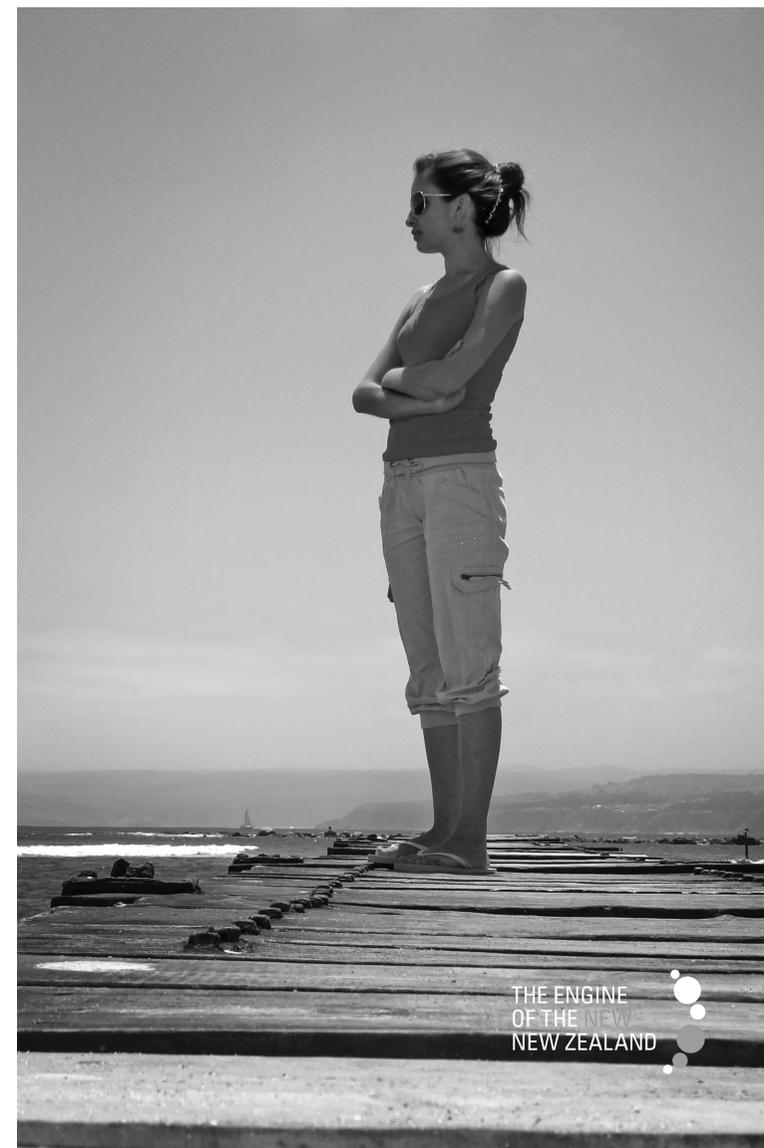
Phone (04) 801 25 42

<http://crow.massey.ac.nz>

<http://health-counselling.massey.nz>

**STUDENT COUNSELLING SERVICES**  
SKILLS – INSIGHT - SUPPORT

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## WHAT IS LOW SELF ESTEEM?

Low self-esteem is about not valuing ourselves as human beings. It may also be called low self-image. Many of us have had the experience of feeling that we haven't been "good enough" in a specific situation, particularly if we face rejection, or criticism. However, some people find it hard to value themselves even when outwardly things are going well and this is a persistent rather than passing state.

### SIGNS OF LOW SELF ESTEEM

These vary. Some people do not believe they are likeable, attractive, or successful, even when presented with information which is contrary to these negative beliefs. Self-esteem issues may lead to an endless round of comparisons with others leaving one feeling lacking across a range of attributes. Low self-esteem can also have a detrimental effect on relationships if one partner depends greatly on the other to maintain their self-image.

### HOW DOES LOW SELF-ESTEEM COME ABOUT?

Early experiences can impact greatly on the beliefs we have about ourselves. For example abuse, neglect, or abandonment can foster beliefs which influence self-esteem throughout life. However, low self-esteem can occur in the absence of serious childhood trauma. It may arise from ambivalent or critical parenting, or as a result of later life experiences. Identifying a "cause" is not necessary in order to obtain help.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP?

The good news is that there are things that can be done to improve feelings of self-worth. There is some evidence from research that during the process of counselling, improvement in self-esteem can occur. Counselling provides the opportunity to re-evaluate negative beliefs about ourselves which are formed early in life. New coping strategies can also be learned during counselling sessions. For instance, developing assertiveness skills and a greater awareness of individual needs can have a positive effect.

### CHANGES THAT CAN RESULT FROM IMPROVING SELF ESTEEM

The most important development from improved self-esteem is self-acceptance. This means being able to live with our strengths and weaknesses and coming to terms with previous behaviours.

Having a strong sense of self and/or cultural belonging has consequences for the individual alone and in relationships. When people value themselves they tend to improve self-care and make sure physical and emotional needs are met. It is important for an individual to be able to look after themselves before they embark on a permanent relationship. It is an advantage to choose a partner from a position of strength, rather than need.

Other important decisions and challenges in life are made easier when self-esteem is good. When people value themselves it is also less likely that they will do things which might be damaging to themselves or others.

### WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOU NEED HELP WITH SELF-ESTEEM?

Talk to one of our counsellors, or to your GP. There are also many excellent self-help books available, including those listed below;

- Overcoming low self-esteem, a self-help guide in using cognitive behavioural techniques, Melanie Fennell, (Basic Books 2009).
- Stress, self-esteem, health and work. Simon L. Dolan. (Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).
- Managing low self-esteem. Windy Dryden, (Whurr, 2003).
- Self Esteem. Matthew MacKay & Patrick Fanning (New Harbinger Publications, 2000).
- Self-esteem: the puzzle of low self-regard. Roy F. Baumeister (Ed) (Plenum Press, 1993).
- The Self-esteem workbook Glen R. Shiraldi (New Harbinger 2001).
- The Self-esteem companion. Matthew MacKay & Patrick Fanning (New Harbinger Publications 2005).

