

## Esteem Issues Module

**Beliefs Related to SELF:** Self-esteem is the belief in your own worth, which is a basic human need. Being understood, respected, and taken seriously is basic to the development of self-esteem.

### Prior Experience

Negative	Positive
<p>If you had prior experiences that represented a violation of your own sense of self, you are likely to develop negative beliefs about your self-worth. The traumatic event may seem to confirm these beliefs. Prior life experiences that are associated with negative beliefs about the self are likely to be caused by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Believing other people's negative attitude about you</li> <li>- An absence of empathy and responsiveness by others</li> <li>- The experience of being devalued, criticized, or blamed by others</li> <li>- The belief that you had violated your own ideals or values</li> </ul>	<p>If you had prior experiences that served to enhance your beliefs about your self-worth, then the traumatic event may disrupt those beliefs (your self-esteem).</p>

#### Examples of Negative Self-Esteem (Self-Worth) Beliefs

- I am bad, destructive, or evil
- I am responsible for bad, destructive, or evil acts
- I am basically damaged or flawed
- I am worthless and deserving of unhappiness and suffering

#### Symptoms Associated With Negative Self-Esteem (Self-Worth) Beliefs

- Depression
- Guilt
- Shame
- Possible self-destructive behavior

## Resolution

If you previously believed that...	A possible self-statement may be...
<p>...you were worthless (or any of the beliefs listed above) because of prior experiences, the traumatic event may seem to confirm this belief. This can also occur if you received poor social support after the event. In order to improve your self-esteem and reduce the symptoms that often go along with it, you will need to reevaluate your beliefs about your self-worth and be able to replace maladaptive beliefs with more realistic, positive ones.</p>	<p>“Sometimes bad things happen to good people. Just because someone says something bad about me, that does not make it true. No one deserves this, and that includes me. Even if I have made mistakes in the past, that does not make me a bad person deserving of unhappiness or suffering (including the traumatic event).”</p>
<p>If you had positive beliefs about your self-worth before the traumatic event, you may have believed that “nothing bad will happen to me because I am a good person.” The event may disrupt such beliefs, and you may or what you did to deserve it (i.e., “Maybe I was being punished for something I had done, or because I am a bad person.”) In order to regain your prior positive beliefs about your self-worth, you will need to make some adjustments, so that your sense of worth is not disrupted every time something unexpected and bad happens to you. When you can accept that bad things might happen to you (as they happen to everybody from time to time), you let go of blaming yourself for events that you did not cause.</p>	<p>“Sometimes bad things happen to good people. If something bad happens to me, it is not necessarily because I did something to cause it or because I deserved it. Sometimes there is not a good explanation for why bad things happen.”</p>

**Beliefs Related to OTHERS:** These are beliefs about how much you value other people. In addition, a realistic view of others is important to psychological health. In less psychologically healthy people, these beliefs are stereotyped, rigid, and relatively unchanged by new information.

## Prior Experience

Negative	Positive
<p>If you had many bad experiences with people in the past or had difficulty taking in new information about people you knew (particularly negative information), you</p>	<p>If your prior experiences with people had been positive, and if negative events in the world did not seem to apply to your life, the event was probably a belief-shattering event. Prior</p>

<p>may have found yourself surprised, hurt, and betrayed. You may have concluded that other people are not good or not to be respected. You may have generalized this belief to everyone (even those who are basically good and to be respected). The traumatic event may seem to confirm these beliefs about people.</p>	<p>beliefs in the basic goodness of other people may be particularly disrupted if people, who were assumed to be supportive, were not there for you after the event.</p>
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<b>Examples of Negative Others-Esteem Beliefs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The belief that people are basically uncaring, indifferent, and only out for themselves</li> <li>➤ The belief that people are bad, evil, or malicious</li> <li>➤ The belief that the entire human race is bad, evil, or malicious</li> </ul>

<b>Symptoms Associated With Negative Others-Esteem Beliefs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Chronic anger</li> <li>➤ Contempt</li> <li>➤ Bitterness</li> <li>➤ Cynicism</li> <li>➤ Disbelief when treated with genuine caring compassion (“What do they really want?”)</li> <li>➤ Isolation or withdrawal from others</li> <li>➤ Antisocial behavior justified by the belief that people are only out for themselves</li> </ul>

### Resolution

<b>If you previously believed that...</b>	<b>Possible self-statements may be...</b>
<p>It will be important for you to reconsider the automatic assumption that people are no good, and consider how that belief has affected your behavior and social life in general.</p>	
<p>When you first meet someone, it is important that you do not form snap judgments because these tend to be based on stereotypes, which are not generally true for the majority of people you will meet. It is all right to adopt a “wait</p>	

<p>and see” attitude, which allows you flexibility in developing your perceptions about the other person and does not penalize the person whom you are trying to get to know.</p>	
<p>If, over time, this person makes you uncomfortable, or does things that you do not approve of, you are free to stop trying to develop the relationship and end it. Be aware, however, that all people make mistakes, and consider your ground rules for friendships or intimate relationships. If you confront the person with something that makes you uncomfortable, you can use that person’s reaction to your request in making a decision about what you want from that person in the future (i.e., if the person is apologetic and makes a genuine effort to avoid making the same mistake, then you might want to continue getting to know this person. If the person is insensitive to your request or belittles you in some other way, then you may want to get out of this relationship.) The important point is, like trust, you need time to get to know people and form an opinion of them. It is important that you adopt a view of others that is balanced and allows for changes.</p>	<p>“Although there are people I do not respect and do not wish to know, I cannot assume this about everyone I meet. I may come to this conclusion later, but it will be after I have learned more about this person.”</p>
<p>If those you expected support from let you down, don’t drop these people altogether at first. Talk to them about how you feel and what you want from them. Use their reactions to your request as a way of evaluating where you want these relationships to go.</p>	<p>“People sometimes make mistakes. I will try to find out whether they understand it was a mistake or whether it reflects a negative characteristic of that person, which may end the relationship for me if it is something I cannot accept.”</p>