Self-Esteem

What is Self-Esteem?

- Self-esteem is a way of thinking, feeling, and acting that implies that you accept, respect, and believe in yourself.
    - When you accept yourself, you are okay with both the good and not so good things about yourself.
    - When you respect yourself, you treat yourself well in much the same way you would treat someone else you respect.
    - To believe in yourself means that you feel you deserve to have the good things in life. It also means that you have confidence that you can make choices and take actions that will have a positive effect on your life.
- Part of self-esteem is knowing that you are important enough to take good care of yourself by making good choices for yourself. For example, choosing nutritious food for your body, exercising, giving yourself time to relax, etc.
- Self-esteem doesn't mean you think you are better or more important than other people are, it means that you respect and value yourself as much as other people.
- Self-esteem needs to come from within and not be dependent on external sources such as material possessions, your status, or approval from others.
- Having self-esteem also means you don't have to put other people down to feel good about yourself.

Signs of Low and High Self-Esteem

* Signs of low self-esteem
    - Lack of confidence
    - Negative view of life
    - Perfectionistic attitude
    - Mistrusting others inappropriately
    - Blaming behavior
    - Fear of taking appropriate risks
    - Feelings of being unloved and unlovable
    - Dependence on others to make decisions
    - Fear of being ridiculed
    - Distorted view of self and others

* <u>Signs of high self-esteem</u>
- Confidence
- Self-direction
- Non-blaming behavior
- Awareness of personal strengths
- Ability to make mistakes and learn from them
- Ability to accept mistakes from others
- Optimism
- Ability to solve problems
- Independent and cooperative attitude
- Feeling comfortable with a wide range of emotions
- Ability to appropriately trust others
- Good sense of personal limitations
- Ability to set boundaries and say no
- Good self-care

Causes of Low Self-Esteem

- Nobody is born with low self-esteem; it's something that is learned. It is the result of filtering opinions, comments, looks, suggestions, and actions of those around us through a person's own feelings and self image.
- Some possible early causes of low self-esteem:
  - Overly critical parents (never good enough, feelings of inferiority or self criticism)
  - Significant childhood losses (abandonment, insecurity)
  - Parental abuse, alcoholism, neglect, or rejection (unreliable family atmosphere resulting in lack of trust, insecurity, inadequacy or worthlessness, anger, guilt, denying feelings)
  - Parental overprotectiveness (lack of confidence)
  - Parental overindulgence (feelings of being cheated and insecure because life does not continue to provide what they learned to expect as a child)
- Some possible later contributors to low self-esteem:
  - Negative or controlling personal relationships
  - Negative experiences on the job
  - Messages from society
- Even if low self-esteem had its roots in childhood, you can learn to identify and challenge the assumptions you consciously or unconsciously have about yourself.
  - Take notice of and become more consciously aware of your needs.
  - Acknowledge the importance of self-nurturing and self-care activities and take appropriate steps in that direction.
  - Recognize and take pride in your accomplishments.
  - Focus on problem solving.

* **Everyone is different. Learn to be satisfied with who you are. Don't wish you were someone else. Instead be the best YOU can be.**