



Spend time finding out who you are. This means focusing on what you really like, not what you feel you should like, and working out what makes you happy in life and what doesn't. Forget about fitting in with friends and being cool – girls in the know work out what they're about and stick to it.



So What is Self-Esteem?

Self-esteem is about how much you value yourself and how important you think you are. It's not about being big-headed (that very loud girl who seems so confident is probably quite scared on the inside). It's simply about how you choose to rate yourself.

It's about knowing you're a good person, not worrying about being perfect, and believing you're as worthy as anyone else out there. It's important in life because it's the basis of your confidence and it powers the way you choose to live your life. Get good self-esteem and you'll have:

- ☀ confidence to try new and scary things
- ☀ a strong belief in yourself so that when things go wrong you don't crumble
- ☀ the ability to make good choices about your health and body
- ☀ the knack of keeping your problems in perspective
- ☀ lots of respect for who you are, even if it's different from everyone else
- ☀ a strong belief that you're a great person who deserves good things.



But if you've got low self-esteem, this could be you:

- ☀ you don't like yourself
- ☀ you put yourself down all the time
- ☀ you can't imagine why anyone would ever fancy you
- ☀ you worry your friends won't like you if you don't agree with them
- ☀ you feel lonely even in a crowd
- ☀ you hate yourself every day

- ☼ you feel no one understands or knows the real you
- ☼ you feel you can't be yourself even with friends and family
- ☼ you secretly wish you were someone else
- ☼ you think you have nothing to offer the world.



'I want to think I can do something, but whenever I try something new, I hear a voice in my head saying, "You're rubbish – what makes you think you can do that?"'

Katie 

So what happens to change us from cute babies without a care in the world to people who hate ourselves and our bodies? Well, it all comes down to what we believe about ourselves. For example:
*I'm pretty. I'm shy. I'm rubbish at school.
I'm ugly. I'm clumsy.*

These beliefs aren't just made up in our heads but are often based on what we experience in life – the things we're told about ourselves by friends, our families, teachers and sometimes our enemies.



Things like:

*You have a bad temper. You're rubbish at sports.
You're selfish. You're not as pretty as your sister.*

The problem is that often these labels are not true, but they stick like glue and are hard to peel off. They eat away at our confidence and have us believing the worst about ourselves. But the truth is that people say things for all kinds of reasons – for a joke, or because they're in a bad mood, or because they are really talking about themselves. Sometimes they're even trying to be nice: *You're the clever one, aren't you?*

The way to bust the beliefs other people push on you is to question every label someone throws your way. Ask yourself: is what they're saying really true? If it's not true, you can tell them straight away that they're wrong. If you're not feeling quite that brave, you can still just decide inside that they're wrong and you won't take any notice of what they're saying. Remember:



1. You know yourself better than anyone else does.
2. You have the right to say, 'No, you're wrong about that'.

3. You can come up with a new belief / label about yourself any time you want.
4. You don't have to believe what others say about you.
5. Just because you aren't good at one thing doesn't mean you're rubbish at everything.



Quick Fix

Think of a label someone has tried to stick on you. Did you believe them? Was the label true? If not, replace it with your own new label, which describes the real you.



It's a good idea to have a special notebook to write down your ideas, so you can keep track of what you're aiming for, and how you're making your life more fabulous!



THE GIRLS IN THE KNOW SELF-ESTEEM RULES

Ask yourself these questions: Am I being too mean to myself? Am I being my own worst enemy? If the answer is yes, decide **RIGHT NOW** that from today you're going to be your own best friend.

You can start by following the Girls in the Know Self-Esteem Rules.

Rule One – Remember the good stuff!

Stop focusing on the bad stuff and start noticing all the good things about yourself. This can be anything from being kind to having a brilliant sense of humour, from being great at school work to having excellent taste in music.

To get you started, write down a list of twenty good things about yourself. For example:

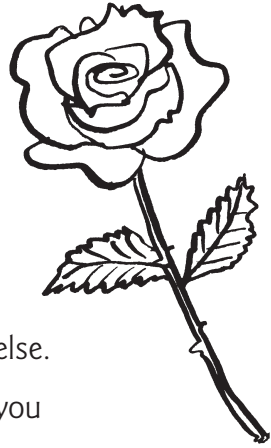
- ☀ I'm funny.
- ☀ I'm a nice person.
- ☀ I'm good in a crisis.
- ☀ I have a lot of interests.
- ☀ I'm good at being silly.
- ☀ I help out at home.
- ☀ I am good fun.
- ☀ I'm a good listener.
- ☀ I make friends laugh with my emails and texts.
- ☀ I have great hair.
- ☀ I have lovely skin.
- ☀ I can do a handstand.
- ☀ I am tidy.



- ☼ I am good at art.
- ☼ I am happy with my own company.
- ☼ I have good taste in music.
- ☼ I always see the good in others.
- ☼ I am not mean.
- ☼ I am a good shoulder to cry on.
- ☼ I am positive.

Every time something gets you down, or you feel useless or unattractive, reel off three things from your list:

- one trait to remind yourself you're a good person.
- one trait to remind yourself you're as worthy as anyone else.
- one trait to remind yourself you deserve to be happy.



Quick Fix

If you can't think of twenty good things about yourself, ask your best friend or your mum to help you. Sometimes other people are much better at spotting our great traits than we are.

Rule Two – Silence your negative voice

This is about how you speak to yourself. We all have a nasty little voice inside our heads which puts us down, tells us we can't do things and laughs at us when we want to try something new. It might be saying, 'There's no way you'll be picked for the team', or maybe, 'You'll make a fool of yourself if you join the drama group', or, 'You don't seriously think you're thin enough to wear that skirt?'. This voice is actually your mind's safety mechanism, which is there to stop you doing anything which might end in failure or embarrassment.



The trouble is, if you listen too hard to this little voice, you'll be cutting yourself off from all kinds of experiences which could make you feel great and grow stronger. People with truly fabulous lives are the ones who risk trying new things. If they don't succeed every time, so what? They try something else!

So the next time you're about to do something and a voice pops into your head saying, 'Don't be silly

– you can't do that/be that/try that' – turn round and ask 'Why not?'

Watch out, though: questioning your voice can make it get even louder, and you might find that more and more scary scenarios start running through your head. But don't give in to it! Keep asking, 'Why not?' until the voice gets quieter and quieter and you find the courage to go for whatever you want. Remember, courage isn't about feeling brave, but about being brave when you feel scared.



Quick Fix

Think of a time recently when your negative voice stopped you doing something you wanted to do. Try challenging it and see what happens. Maybe it's not too late!

Rule Three – Be whoever you want to be

This means being who YOU want to be, not who others say you are, or who your teachers think you can be, or who your parents would like you to be. These people may all want the best for you, but to feel happy you need to be true to yourself. That's not about trying to fit in with the crowd, and definitely not being what others want you to be so they like you.

It can be hard to stand up and say, 'THIS IS WHO I AM' when you're an adult, never mind when you're young. But don't panic: your decision to be yourself doesn't have to be as open as this. You can make it a secret decision and start living it in small ways day by day. For instance, if a friend's gossip about other people gets you down, decide you won't join in. You don't have to slate her for doing it, just refuse to get drawn in. Or, say you want to change your look, you don't have to tell the world – just start choosing clothes which are closer to your ideal, and see if you can have a different haircut.



Finally, remember you can change who you are and who you want to be at any time in your life. So what if last year you were the Queen of Nasty, or Little Miss Frightened, or the Rebel Girl? This year you can be whoever you want to be!

