

Ask Louanne

The Collegian's Advice Column
by Dr. Louanne Barton
Personal Counselor



Self-esteem: The foundation of what we do or don't do

Dear Louanne,

I am a sophomore, and the past year at Behrend has been rewarding. Classes have been okay, and I have made the best friends of my life. But recently, I have had a problem that changes all this. It's my self-esteem. I don't believe in myself, or anything I do. I feel I shouldn't be in college. I don't do any work because I think it isn't right anyway. And sometimes, I just hate myself. There doesn't seem to be any way to change this. It has made my friendships worse too. I don't know what to do. Maybe I am exaggerating this. But I do know that I feel really bad.

Signed,
Worthless

Dear Worthwhile Person,

Thanks for your letter. You have really hit at the core of emotional wellness. I feel that self-esteem is the foundation of everything we do or don't do. Low self-esteem is actually a process of judging and rejecting ourselves, and that can result in enormous pain. This is a classic chicken-egg question. Self-esteem grows out of our life circumstances, but circumstances are strongly influenced by our self-esteem. Low self-esteem results in taking fewer social, academic, and career risks. The result is less success in relationships, in school, and on the job which only reinforces feelings of low self-esteem.

We do have the power to change the way we perceive ourselves. The basis for self-esteem begins in early childhood and is strongly influenced by our parents' style of child-rearing. If our early experiences were negative we may have been programmed with negative judgmental tapes which we continue to replay in our minds as adults. We can rewrite those distorted scripts. First we need to identify the critic, develop a rebuttal, and carry on an inner dialogue. In other words it's healthy to "Talk to Yourself". It isn't easy. It takes hard work and persistence. I have a good book I can loan you if you'd like to learn more: *Self Esteem* by McKay and Fanning.

Louanne

Send your letters to:
Louanne Barton, Counseling Center
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AT THIS POINT, YOUR ALMA MATER DOESN'T MATTER.



You're smart enough to know
the difference between
perestroika and glasnost.



And you're still smoking?