

Spreading Hope, Spurring Action, Supporting Families, Saving Lives!

*“What lies behind us and
what lies before us are tiny
matters compared to what
lies within us.”
– Ralph Waldo Emerson*



Mental Health Matters: A Monthly Blog Post from the Director

Loving Ourselves is Important to Our Mental Health

February is a month when many of us turn to thoughts of sweet chocolates, flowers and love. If, however, we don't have these things in our lives, a significant other, or family and friends to share them with, we can turn instead to negative thoughts resulting in low self-esteem.

From UK-based nonprofit, **Teenage Minds**, we read, “Although low self-esteem is not categorized as a mental health condition in itself, there are clear links between the way we feel about ourselves and our overall mental and emotional well-being.”

Buddha wrote: “You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.”

But for someone who suffers from low self-esteem, negative feelings abound, such as believing one is not worthy of love, happiness or success. The Psychcentral.com/blog titled *How does low self-esteem negatively affect you?*, suggests that low self-esteem can lead to:

Poor Relationships: As humans we strive to interact with others...negative relationships ultimately equal negative feelings and a negative perception of ourselves.

Addiction. Psychological studies indicated that low self-esteem in childhood and early adulthood can be a predisposition to addiction later in life.

Depression and anxiety. Low self-esteem tends to work in a vicious cycle with other mental health conditions like depression and anxiety. Stigma can perpetuate the feeling that they have somehow failed.

According to Anne Gold's blog on NAMI's website, *Why Self-Esteem is Important for Mental Health*,

“When we learn to love ourselves, we strive for a better life—a happier relationship, a more fulfilling career, or recovery from addiction. The key is to challenge and adjust...negative thoughts into more positive ones.” She recommends learning to value and care for both our physical and mental health, including a healthy diet, exercise and meditation. She also notes that relationships are important to self-esteem. “Feeling loved and supported is a wonderful way to start increasing self-esteem. If you don’t have any immediate friends or family, consider joining a support group or even volunteering. Helping others is a great way to help yourself.” [Check out MHA's volunteer opportunities here.](#)

Also contributing to low self-esteem can be the way we view “perfection” through an unrealistic prism of Instagram and other social media accounts. Self-esteem can be tied to body image; a healthy body image and self-esteem are a big part of our well-being.

The article, *Body Image, Self-Esteem and Mental Health* at Here to Help, reports that body image is mental and emotional: it’s both the mental picture that you have of your body and the way you feel about your body when you look in the mirror. “Healthy body image is more than simply tolerating what you look like or ‘not disliking’ yourself. A healthy body image means that you truly accept and like the way you look right now...Self-esteem is how you value and respect yourself as a person—it is the opinion that you have of yourself inside and out. Self-esteem impacts how you take care of yourself, emotionally, physically and spiritually.”

Tips on how you can encourage a healthier body image:

- Treat your body with respect.
- Eat well-balanced meals and exercise because it makes you feel good and strong, not as a way to control your body.
- Find a short message that helps you feel good about yourself and write it on mirrors around your home to remind you to replace negative thoughts with positive ones.
- Be aware of how you talk about your body with family and friends. Do you often seek reassurance or validation from others to feel good about yourself? Do you often focus only on physical appearance?

www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/body-image-self-esteem-and-mental-health

In order to improve our self-esteem, we have to practice self-love. Here are eight simple ways to put yourself first:

1. **Catch more zzzs.** Start paying as much attention to your sleep routine as you do other parts of your day. It’s not just about how much sleep you get, it’s the quality that matters.
2. **#Doyourthing.** Self-love starts with doing what you love. Not feeling like you’re good at anything can have a negative effect on your self-esteem, but what if you’re just not taking the time to show everyone what you’re made of? Doing what you love helps to alleviate stress.
3. **Quit the self-criticizing.** If you’re always thinking ‘oh no, I should have said that’ or ‘I wish I was better at this’, it’s time to have a little faith in yourself and quit the criticism. It’s time to love yourself for who you really are and be proud of the things you’re good at.
4. **Talk it out.** Even if it feels like the smallest worry or silliest thing to feel stressed about, bottling it up is only going to make you feel worse. Talking about your feelings is a simple act of self-love.
5. **Get moving.** You don’t have to be a gym rat for this one—incorporating any form of exercise into your everyday routine leaves your mind feeling positive and ultimately happier.
6. **Less of the lattes.** If caffeine and high in sugar foods are a regular part of your diet, it’s time to rethink. Self-love begins with what you eat and drink. Up your water intake each day so you feel hydrated and swap sweets for healthy snacks like nuts, seeds, fruits.
7. **Digital re-think.** Changing the way you engage with social media and the online world may be just what you need to give your mind a little rest. Constantly looking at other people’s filtered lives on social media can lead to you comparing yourself to others. Limit yourself to social media use to a set time each day. Follow and engage with the accounts that are going to inspire you and make you feel good about yourself as well as give you a sense of community.

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/8-simple-ways-practise-self-love

“If only you could sense how important you are to the lives of those you meet; how important you can be to people you may never even dream of. There is something of yourself that you leave at every meeting with another person.” - Fred Rogers

My wish for all of you is to be able to see how wonderful, unique and special you are on Valentine's Day and everyday!

Work on being in
love with the
person in the
mirror who has
been through so
much but is still
standing.

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Mental Health America of Central Carolinas promotes mental wellness through advocacy, prevention and education in Mecklenburg and Cabarrus Counties.



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