



VELSOFT

Career Development Training

Building Your Self-Esteem and Assertiveness Skills

Self-Study Guide

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>How to Use This Guide</i>	1
<i>Session One: Course Overview</i>	2
Learning Objectives	2
Pre-Assignment	3
<i>Session Two: What Is Self-Esteem?</i>	5
Defining Self-Esteem	5
Origins of Low Self-Esteem	6
Putting Things in Perspective	8
<i>Session Three: Improving Self-Esteem</i>	9
Stop Spreading Negative Messages	9
Making Connections	11
Throw out Perfectionism	12
<i>Session Four: Building Self-Esteem</i>	13
Building Confidence in Others	13
Exercise: Creating Positive Impressions	15
Making Connections	16
<i>Session Five: Increasing Our Self-Esteem</i>	17
Assessing Internal Factors	17
Exercise: Building Up and Tearing Down	17
Making Connections	18
<i>Session Six: Esteemed Confidence</i>	19
Techniques that Work	19
<i>Session Seven: The Power of Thought</i>	31
Exercise: Identifying the Situations	31
Exercise: Flip it Around	34
Case Study: Tyrone's Thinking	35
Discussing Tyrone's Thoughts	36
Making Connections	37
<i>Session Eight: Ask for What You Want</i>	39

What Do You Want?	39
Making Connections	40
Case Study: Marlene's Story	41
<i>Session Nine: Create What You Want.....</i>	<i>42</i>
Identifying Dreams and Setting Goals	42
Making Connections	43
<i>Session Ten: A Personal Action Plan.....</i>	<i>45</i>
Starting Point	45
Where I Want to Go	45
How I Will Get There	46
<i>Summary.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Recommended Reading List.....</i>	<i>48</i>

How to Use This Guide

This self-study guide is designed and laid out in a manner that will direct student learning much in the same way that an instructor would. This workbook is comprised of several modules called *Sessions*. Each session focuses on a major concept in the course.

Several times throughout the course of the guide, it is suggested that you take the opportunity to internalize what you have learned by taking advantage of the many self-reflection exercises titled Making Connections.

The Making Connections sections are intended as open-ended questions that allow you to apply the skills learned in the current session in the framework of your personal experience. It is used to help you incorporate what you've just learned into your own practice.

For the purpose of keeping track of your own progress, the guide also incorporates a Pre-Assessment, which is a reflective exercise designed to give you an idea of your current skills.

Following that, you are asked to complete the Pre-Course Assessment. The Pre-Course Assessment will be used in conjunction with a Post-Course Assessment at the end of the course to highlight the progress you've made.

In the final Session you will be asked to complete your Personal Action Plan; a sort of road map that will help you incorporate your new skill-set into your daily routine.

Session One: Course Overview

Healthy self-esteem is essential for growth and achieving success. Of all the judgments you make in life, none are as important as the one you make about yourself. Without some measure of self-worth, life can be painful and unrelenting. In this course you will discover some techniques that can dramatically change how you feel about yourself, and how you approach the world to get the things that you want.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Recognize that you have worth, and are worthy of happiness
- Develop techniques for eliminating unhealthy thought patterns and replacing them with supportive patterns
- Learn how to turn negative thoughts into positive thoughts
- Learn how to make requests so that you get what you want
- Set goals that reflect your dreams and desires, and reinforce healthy patterns

What do you want to get out of this course? Use this opportunity to write down your personal learning objectives.

Pre-Assignment

You are likely taking this course because you feel that you have low self-esteem, or because you feel you have a healthy amount of self-esteem but could benefit from some knowledge about how to sustain your self-esteem. Perhaps someone has told you that your self-esteem is low or that you lack confidence, even though you do not feel that way personally.

Let's take a moment to think about what you have done so far and where you would like to go.

What are your reasons for taking this course?

I have tried the following techniques to increase my self-esteem:

Technique	Level of Effectiveness

How effective were the techniques that you have already tried? Write one of the following letters next to each technique that you listed above.

- a. Somewhat effective
- b. Moderately effective
- c. Very effective

What barriers have you encountered in maintaining a satisfying level of self-esteem?

Session Two: What Is Self-Esteem?

There are times when we all suffer from low self-esteem. Perhaps you've been overwhelmed with stressors that you are having difficulty managing, or you are having a hard time being heard at home or at work.

In this session, we will review your pre-assignment and define self-esteem. This will help us learn more about it before moving on to how to raise those levels to where we want.

Defining Self-Esteem

While some texts and teachers will tell you that self-esteem and confidence are different, they do admit to an overlap while trying to keep them separate. We're inclined to agree with the dictionary (Oxford, in this case), which defines self-esteem and self-confidence as practically the same: your perception of your abilities and your beliefs about yourself.

Characteristics of low self-esteem can include the following:

- Social withdrawal
- Bouts of sadness
- Anxiety and/or emotional turmoil
- Lack of social skills (e.g., meeting people easily, making small talk, establishing relationships quickly and easily)
- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Difficulty accepting compliments
- Focusing on negative things or ideas (in other words, pessimism)
- Self-neglect
- Excessive focus on what other people think of you
- Treating yourself poorly, but not other people
- Lack of confidence in trying new things
- Reluctance to indulge your desires
- Reluctance to trust your own opinions, or share them with others

Can you recognize any of these characteristics in yourself?

Exercise: Self-Esteem and Confidence

Do you agree that self-esteem and confidence are essentially the same thing? If so, or if not, explain your reasoning.

Origins of Low Self-Esteem

In older versions of a course like this, you were likely to find a chain of activities that helped you to “think positively,” as a way to convince yourself that you could effectively talk yourself into higher esteem. Many of these courses, however, were short on **how** to shift our thinking and develop an understanding and belief that we are valuable.

If anything, some of those old courses actually irritated people with low self-esteem, who found that thinking they were “special,” “great people,” and “wonderful,” over and over again became annoying and was akin to being hit over the head repeatedly with a frying pan. You cannot use superficial means to increase your self-esteem, and people with low self-esteem understood this.

Conditioned Behavior

You've probably heard the sentiment that bullies and criminals behave the way they do because they have low self-esteem. We now know that the two are not always linked, and that people with very high levels of self-esteem can be bullies and criminals. The research we have compiled actually shows that people who have genuinely low self-esteem tend to treat themselves badly, not other people.

What we do know is that low self-esteem is something that is conditioned in us. This past conditioning may come from parents in childhood, a teacher, a boss, or a sibling who constantly puts us down. (Sorry, parents, but that's the way it is!) This also explains why school-based efforts to improve self-esteem based on positive reinforcement are not effective, because the root of the problem has to do more with who is in our environment reinforcing these feelings. As well, you simply cannot just tell someone to feel better and have it happen!

Changing the Conditioning

People with low self-esteem have been conditioned (or brainwashed, if you prefer) to think of themselves as having limited value. When they begin to question their old demeaning conditioning, and replace it with conditioning that is equally strong and values them as a person, a healthier sense of self begins to emerge. When that valued sense of self is reinforced, high self-esteem develops.

Contrary to what you may have heard over and over again, people with low self-esteem can actually be very sure of themselves, and that's the problem. Their sureness reinforces their conviction that they are worthless or somehow inadequate.

Strong self-esteem comes as a result of a healthy living and thinking, and creating it takes time. It's not something you can teach to someone and then expect that the next day, they will wake up feeling completely different. Developing healthy self-esteem starts with creating a foundation that supports a new way of life, and then building it. Developing healthy self-esteem starts with creating a foundation that supports that way of life, and then building it.

Putting Things in Perspective

Now, let's take a look at some common myths about self-confidence.

True or False: Every time we are about to grow or change, there will be some kind of difficulty or challenge that we must face.

The answer here is **true**. If there were not some kind of challenge or difficulty to expect, we would have probably done it already.

True or False: If we are afraid to do something then we probably shouldn't do it.

The answer here is **false**. While fear might make us think twice, or examine the situation and remove anything dangerous from the environment, fear can also be a sign of us getting ready to deal with something really important and doubting our ability to succeed. Working through the fear means we will get what we desire.

True or False: Most of the reasons people come up with to avoid change are not real roadblocks, but roadblocks in their thinking.

This is **true**. We can talk ourselves out of just about anything.

True or False: Human beings have the power to change the way they think.

This is **true**, and we will discover some ways to do this in the course.

True or False: Excuses usually take the place of real fears and concerns that we must take seriously.

This is **false**. Excuses can stem from all kinds of reasons, although they can include fear and concerns that we must take seriously.

Session Three: Improving Self-Esteem

At the time that your self-esteem was being eroded, you probably established patterns that became normal. Think of how you react to seeing yourself in a mirror or store window, or how you respond when someone pays you a compliment or gives you a gift. These reactions are all patterns.

In this session, we'll start working with some new patterns that will help us to increase our self-esteem. We will focus on two areas in particular: negative messages and perfectionism.

Stop Spreading Negative Messages

If low self-esteem starts with people who make negative comments about us that we believe, then it's time we stop listening to them and create our own internal dialogue instead of reflecting someone else's ideas.

Imagine yourself as a two year old. Most two year olds are very confident individuals and they do not suffer with negative self-talk that contributes to their self-esteem. Think of a two year old who sees something they want, and then does whatever they can think of to get it. They know what they want and how to go after it.

To realign your thoughts about yourself, and to create patterns that help to increase your self-esteem, we'll offer several tips throughout the course. They might sound childish and simplistic, but instead, think of it as re-conditioning yourself to enter that determined, confident state.

Generalizations

Low self-esteem can make us generalize a truth and apply it to everything. "I'm one day late on this deadline," becomes "I am always late. I can't get anything done. I am such a loser." Make sure you stop yourself from making these generalizations. You were a day late on that deadline. This means that you'll probably want to rearrange some things to make sure this doesn't impact other projects and make them late, not that you are always late or can never get anything done.

Negative and Negating Comments

Do you tend to **make negative comments about yourself to other people**? We see people with low self-esteem do this frequently. When being thanked for something, they say “It’s nothing,” even though it is something remarkable. When they are given a compliment, they say “Oh, this is so old. I can’t believe you noticed it,” even when it isn’t.

When **someone thanks you or pays you a compliment**, say “You’re welcome,” or “Thank you.” No other words are needed. Remember, you are replacing old patterns that do not serve you with positive messages that do. Be fair to yourself, and also respect them in their thanking you or paying you a compliment. **Consider that what they say is probably true.**

Avoid making negative or self-demeaning comments about yourself on social networks. How often have you seen status updates such as “I am so stupid,” or “I can’t believe I did that!?!” We also see photos online of people who have been drinking heavily, using drugs, or somehow portraying a negative image. Look at those images. Do they serve your positive self-esteem patterns? If not, remove them, and then stop making those comments. In addition, rise above and don’t comment or acknowledge other people’s negative messages. Remember that they do not serve you.

Making Connections

Changing Your Language

In the session so far, we've talked about keeping ourselves from perpetuating negative messages. Change the following four negative messages into positive ones.

“I’m one day late on this deadline,” becomes “I am always late. I can’t get anything done. I am such a loser.”

Positive message:

When being thanked for something, I say “It’s nothing,” even though it is something remarkable.

Positive message:

When I’m are given a compliment, I say “Oh, this is so old. I can’t believe you noticed it,” even when it isn’t.

Positive message:

“I am so stupid,” or “I can’t believe I did that?!”

Positive message:

Throw out Perfectionism

Life is not measured by percentages or letter grades that we got in school. Stop thinking that you have to do everything perfectly, and accept “good enough” as a new pattern. When self-esteem is in low supply, we often try to compensate in other areas. Our desks and offices must be perfect. Our homes must look clean and dusted at all times. The food we prepare has to be exceptional in both preparation and presentation.

But **life is not perfect, nor does it have to be**. Think of the value of taking a brisk walk and getting some fresh air instead of trying to maintain a high level of expectation for everything, like keeping a perfect home or getting to the gym for 90 minutes five days a week. There is plenty of value to keeping order about things, but there is very little benefit that comes from having a perfect household or office or workout schedule.

Once we get out of school, **life is really measured as “pass/fail”** rather than a grade. Accepting this will help you avoid distorted thinking that requires everything to be perfect.

Exercise: Creating Healthy Patterns

Do you have suggestions on creating healthy patterns instead of striving for perfection?

Possible answers might be:

- *Forget rushing to clean the house, and take some time to spend with my children, pets, or loved ones.*
- *Instead of preparing a meal and serving everything from serving dishes, serve straight from pots and pans.*
- *Dedicate time once a week for cleaning up, instead of feeling like it has to be perfect all the time.*

Session Four: Building Self-Esteem

Sometimes we can help ourselves by turning our attention to others. While we don't advocate ignoring yourself in order to help others, we'd like you to think about the benefits of considering the success of other people.

In this session we'll explore the impact we can have on other people and reframing their perceptions as a way to help ourselves.

Building Confidence in Others

A great way to help ourselves is by helping others. One part of healthy self-esteem you can start working on is to become so comfortable with who you are that you can forget about you, and concentrate on the other person. Have you ever been with somebody who was so unsure of themselves they made you feel ill at ease?

Exercise: Putting Others at Ease

Do you have some ideas for putting others at ease?

Examples may include:

- *Making them comfortable*
- *Paying them a genuine compliment*
- *Asking a few questions about their interests*
- *Listening, and not monopolizing the conversation*

Presenting Yourself Well

Although we are often taught not to, human nature is to make judgments about the people we meet. People typically determine seven things from our appearance:

1. Income
2. Education Level
3. Social Position
4. Sophistication
5. Success
6. Moral Character
7. Trustworthiness

Being aware of this list allows us to consider the way we present ourselves. What kind of image are you trying to project? Does what you wear and your image influence people around you? For example, if you are heading out to get groceries but feeling down, you might be tempted to go shopping in a pair of baggy old sweatpants, torn jeans, or even pajama bottoms.

Questions to consider:

- While this might be what I want to wear, is it the image that I want to project?
- Does this behavior serve me in building my self-esteem, or does it actually negate some of the things that I am trying to do to build myself up?

When we present a confident image (even when we don't feel that way on the inside), it will help us be perceived as confident, and create the kind of positive energy that helps to boost our self-esteem. (Have you ever heard the saying, "Fake it 'til you make it"?)

Exercise: Creating Positive Impressions

Take a moment to list some things that you might do that could create a bad impression. Then, list some things that you can do to create a better impression.

Things We Do To Create Bad Impressions	Things We Can Do To Create Better Impressions

Our Thoughts on Creating Impressions

Here is how we might have answered the questions in the previous exercise.

Bad impressions could be created from:

- Being grouchy or surly
- Bad breath
- Chewing gum
- Clothes dirty, torn, rumpled, stained, too tight
- Jacket sleeves that are too long, pant legs that are too long, shirt sleeves that are too short, shirts/blouses that are too tight, clothes that are too loose
- A voice that is too soft or too loud, too uncertain, or too boastful
- Playing with your hair, your earrings, or your moustache or beard

You could create a better impression by:

- Smiling
- Having a pleasant expression on your face when you meet others
- Not chewing gum in a setting where you want to look professional
- Making sure your fingernails are clean and manicured (men and women), meaning not too long or with chipped nail polish
- Ensuring clothes are neat, clean, and appropriate
- Shoes should be polished and not run down at the heels

Making Connections

Choosing Your Actions

Spend about three to four minutes choosing your own actions for making a positive impression on others. They should be things you can be aware of and try to change in the next 21 days. Write them in the space below.

(You can also write these actions as part of your action plan in the last session of the course.)

Session Five: Increasing Our Self-Esteem

While there are things that we can do externally to help boost our self-esteem, it is the internal changes that are most imperative to changing the patterns that reinforce our self-esteem, whether it is low or high.

In this session, we will discuss practical steps we can take to make an impact on the things that internally influence our self-esteem.

Assessing Internal Factors

A few minutes ago you did some brainstorming about how to make a positive first impression and you chose a few things you will be aware of for the next twenty-one days. However, these were, for the most part, external things. Now let's spend a bit of time brainstorming some internal things.

Exercise: Building Up and Tearing Down

Use the space below to list some things that we do to tear ourselves down, and ideas that you have for building yourself up.

Things We Do To Tear Ourselves Down	Things We Do To Build Ourselves Up

Our Thoughts on Building and Tearing

This is how we answered the questions in the previous exercise. Your responses may be similar, or quite different.

Things we do to tear ourselves down:

- Constantly criticize our own actions
- Take the remarks other people make as personal attacks on us
- Tell ourselves we are stupid, or don't deserve better
- Compare ourselves to others and feel they are smarter, better, more attractive, etc.
- Believe others are out to get us
- Tease and torment others in an effort to make them feel badly, too

Things we do to build ourselves up:

- Forgive ourselves for our mistakes
- Be kind to ourselves and recognize that we won't always be perfect
- Use positive self-talk
- Compare yourself to yourself alone. Everybody is different and we each have our own talents and strengths.
- Believe that others are doing their best to get along, just like us
- Do a kind act every day with no thought of a reward

Making Connections

Where Am I?

Take a moment and answer this question. Do I resist change and cling to the security of my present lifestyle, or am I open to new ideas and new ways of doing things?

If you see all your faults and recite them to yourself when you look in the mirror, your self-esteem takes a beating. If you can look in the mirror and say to yourself, "I like my hair today," or, "I have a friendly looking face," you are working on patterns that can build your self-esteem.

Session Six: Esteemed Confidence

There are researchers and doctors who posit that self-confidence and self-esteem are quite different, but we don't think this is the case. They're very hard to separate, and can be treated together.

In this session we will present some additional methods for building esteem within yourself, which sounds a lot like building self-confidence. As you are working through the material, try to record the ideas that appeal to you so you can implement them.

Techniques that Work

Self-confidence can be discussed in terms of being successful at an activity because you have been successful at similar activities in the past. Can we project self-confidence even when we don't feel self-confident? Yes, there are several things we can do.

Technique One: Pretend You Are Confident

Imagine yourself to be a confident person. Get that image in your mind and act it out. Project confidence. Stand up straight, dress better, and try to play the part. This is a concept used by peak performance coaches (as well as athletes) to help people improve. Visualize yourself as confident and successful to help you to do things confidently and to achieve success. When you feel your confidence slipping, visualize success and use positive words to build yourself up.

Exercise: Technique One

Pretend you are confident. Visualize your success and use positive words.

I agree with this idea. Yes ☐ No ☐

Using only positive language, explain why you agree or disagree.

Brainstorm some ways that you can implement this idea in order to break away from old habits and establish new, healthy patterns.

Technique Two: When Your Positive Self-Talk Doesn't Listen

Sometimes we can be so hard on ourselves that we will actually argue with the voice in our head and can't get the positive message track to enter our consciousness. One helpful way of breaking this pattern is to interfere with it. When you catch yourself listening to negative self-talk, play music that inspires you. Sing or hum along. It is much more difficult for those negative messages to persist through music. The music can even be the positive message you need at that time.

Exercise: Technique Two

When your positive self-talk doesn't listen, interfere with your thoughts.

I agree with this idea. Yes ☐ No ☐

Using only positive language, explain why you agree or disagree.

Brainstorm some ways that you can implement this idea in order to break away from old habits and establish new, healthy patterns.

Technique Three: When You Meet People, Look Them in the Eye

Confident people look others in the eye. People who aren't confident don't, unless it is a cultural restriction. (In some cultures it can be considered rude to look people directly in the eye. Make sure that you know your audience.)

Exercise: Technique Three

When you meet people, look them in the eye.

I agree with this idea. Yes ☐ No ☐

Using only positive language, explain why you agree or disagree.

Brainstorm some ways that you can implement this idea in order to break away from old habits and establish new, healthy patterns.

Technique Four: Dance

While this one might get you gasping (for confidence and air!), this is a great way to build yourself up. We know that the benefits of physical exercise are great, but did you ever think to let yourself go within a class of other likeminded people who are all learning at the same time?

Often, you can take a class (or even two or three) before you have to pay the fee, and then you can decide whether you are more of a salsa, flamenco, or ballroom kind of person. If you don't have a partner, don't worry because lots of times there are other dancers who are on their own. Or, take a class in line dancing! Whichever you decide, dance (or yoga, or guitar lessons for that matter) will force you to focus on something that you can enjoy.

Exercise: Technique Four

Dance. Join a class, and let yourself go.

I agree with this idea. Yes ☐ No ☐

Using only positive language, explain why you agree or disagree.

Brainstorm some ways that you can implement this idea in order to break away from old habits and establish new, healthy patterns.

Technique Five: Know Your Stuff

Your confidence can't be all a front. While you are looking people directly in the eyes, standing straight, and otherwise acting as if the world were your oyster, you also have to know what you are doing. If you are prepared and sure of your facts, you've got a better chance of projecting confidence.

Exercise: Technique Five

Know your stuff. Prepare yourself.

I agree with this idea. Yes ☐ No ☐

Using only positive language, explain why you agree or disagree.

Brainstorm some ways that you can implement this idea in order to break away from old habits and establish new, healthy patterns.

Technique Six: Rehearsal is the Best Confidence Builder

Rehearsing can be as simple as writing out a speech or your intended conversation with someone and practicing it in front of the mirror. Do a role-play with a trusted friend or colleague as the interviewer before you interview for a new position. To tackle your underlying fear of failure, include imagery with your rehearsal. Imagine yourself succeeding.

Exercise: Technique Six

**Rehearse. Role-play. Imagine yourself succeeding.
Rehearsal is the best confidence builder.**

I agree with this idea. Yes ☐ No ☐

Using only positive language, explain why you agree or disagree.

Brainstorm some ways that you can implement this idea in order to break away from old habits and establish new, healthy patterns.

Technique Seven: Every Day, Remind Yourself That You Have Done Some Things Well

Rather than dwell on the things that didn't work or the things that didn't go well, focus on what you did accomplish. Give yourself a mental pep talk at the beginning or the end of every day.

Exercise: Technique Seven

**Every day, remind yourself that you have done some things well.
Focus on your accomplishments.**

I agree with this idea. Yes ☐ No ☐

Using only positive language, explain why you agree or disagree.

Brainstorm some ways that you can implement this idea in order to break away from old habits and establish new, healthy patterns.

Technique Eight: Read Inspiring Biographies and Autobiographies

Build a file of stories that inspire you. Remember that our capacity far exceeds our usual level of performance. Accept the fact that you will have ups and downs just like everyone else. Experiencing them through reading will help that concept to ring true in your mind.

Exercise: Technique Eight

Read inspiring biographies and autobiographies.

I agree with this idea. Yes ☐ No ☐

Using only positive language, explain why you agree or disagree.

Brainstorm some ways that you can implement this idea in order to break away from old habits and establish new, healthy patterns.

Technique Nine: Be Thankful

No matter how bad your circumstances, there is probably somebody worse off than you. Build excellent support around you. There are a lot of excellent people out there to spend your valuable time with. However, relationships are fragile. You must be prepared to devote some time to them.

Exercise: Technique Nine

Be thankful. Build support around you and devote some time to these relationships.

I agree with this idea. Yes ☐ No ☐

Using only positive language, explain why you agree or disagree.

Brainstorm some ways that you can implement this idea in order to break away from old habits and establish new, healthy patterns.

Technique Ten: Push Yourself to Accomplish Short-Term Goals

There is no greater way to build confidence than to get things done. Push yourself to get at least three things accomplished each week that move you closer to your goals.

Exercise: Technique Ten

Push yourself to accomplish short-term goals.

I agree with this idea. Yes ☐ No ☐

Using only positive language, explain why you agree or disagree.

Brainstorm some ways that you can implement this idea in order to break away from old habits and establish new, healthy patterns.

Technique Eleven: Do Something for Yourself Every Week

You deserve it. Find a way to celebrate what you have accomplished or overcome, and give yourself some kind of tangible reward for your efforts.

Exercise: Technique Eleven

Do something for yourself every week.

I agree with this idea. Yes ☐ No ☐

Using only positive language, explain why you agree or disagree.

Brainstorm some ways that you can implement this idea in order to break away from old habits and establish new, healthy patterns.

Session Seven: The Power of Thought

We can get caught unexpectedly in the power of a negative thought, and so having an understanding of the kind of thinking that generates those thoughts is important.

In this session, we'll review what kinds of negative thoughts we can encounter, as well as the definitions of those thought patterns. You will have the opportunity to think about how you can turn those negative messages into positive ones.

Exercise: Identifying the Situations

What are some of the situations that make you feel inferior or low on self-esteem?

Do these situations occur when you feel criticized? Unloved? Rejected? Unsuccessful?

Exercise: Negative Thoughts

What are you thinking in these situations?

What are you telling yourself?

What positive messages could you send yourself instead?

Controlling Your Thoughts

Do you think that you can't control your thoughts?

If you think about getting into a new car at a car dealership, do you imagine the new car smell? Or imagine the feel of the seats or steering wheel? I bet you do.

Not convinced? OK. Try this exercise.

Think about a lemon. Think about holding it in your hand and rolling it around. Now if you've never tasted a lemon this might be hard, but we are pretty sure most of you have tasted a lemon. Think of cutting that lemon open and looking at the sections inside the fruit. Look at the juice as it wells up; now visualize yourself holding the lemon, tipping your head back and squeezing that beautiful juice into your mouth.

Are you salivating? That is the power of thought, and as you just demonstrated, you have the power to control your thoughts.

Exercise: Flip it Around

Think of a situation and your negative thoughts that are associated with it. Then think of a more positive message you can give yourself.

Situation	Negative Thoughts	Positive Thoughts

Case Study: Tyrone's Thinking

Read through this case study, then answer the following questions.

Case Study

Tyrone was laid off from work, along with several other employees, because of a business slowdown. He felt bummed out, worried, angry, and guilty, and he became quite depressed. He kept thinking, "I'm a born loser. I'm letting my family down."

Discussion Questions

How do you think these thoughts made Tyrone feel?

Can you see where his thinking is distorted or inaccurate?

What thoughts would you suggest he think instead?

Your responses will probably include:

- *Tyrone's thoughts made him feel worse.*
- *His thoughts were irrational since he was laid off because of a slowdown, not something he had done wrong.*
- *He could replace these thoughts with more positive ones such as, "I'm a good worker. I'll find another job."*
- *These new thoughts could give him a more positive outlook and make him easier to live with.*

Most bad feelings come from illogical thoughts; when you change these distorted thinking patterns, you can change the way you feel.

Discussing Tyrone's Thoughts

Here are some ways that Tyrone's thinking was distorted.

- **All or nothing thinking:** He's looking at himself in black and white categories, because he sees himself as a total loser.
- **Overgeneralization:** He's lost his job but he's generalizing to his entire self.
- **Mental filter:** He's dwelling on this bad event and letting it discolor his entire view of life, much like a drop of ink can discolor a whole glass of water.
- **Discounting the positives:** He's overlooking his many good qualities.
- **Magnification or minimization:** He's blowing this negative event out of proportion.
- **Emotional reasoning:** Tyrone reasons from how he feels. He feels like a born loser so he believes he really is one.
- **"Should" statements:** He may have the belief that he should always be successful at things and never fail. He may also believe that if he is a good person and tries hard, life should always go smoothly.
- **Labeling:** He's labeling himself as a born loser instead of trying to learn from the situation or thinking about the best way to find a new job.
- **Blame:** He's automatically blaming himself for getting laid off. In point of fact, lots of people at his plant were laid off due to that slowdown. Tyrone's employment record has been excellent.

Making Connections

Avoiding Traps

Do you recognize any of the thinking traps that Tyrone fell into? List them here.

How might you avoid or get out of these traps in the future?

Removing the Distortions

What are some of the negative thoughts or distortions that whirl about in your head?

How do they make you feel?

How can you change them to more positive thoughts, and how will these positive thoughts make you feel?

Session Eight: Ask for What You Want

Do you ever feel like low self-esteem gets in the way of you assertively going after the things that you need or want? Part of presenting yourself confidently comes from knowing how to approach what you say with some finesse.

In this session, we will discuss how to get what you want. We'll also give you some ideas on how to deliver your questions with panache. At the end of the session, you'll have an opportunity to apply what you have learned to a case study.

What Do You Want?

Our biggest hurdle is figuring out what we really want. Often, we just take the easy route and ask for money, in the belief that surely, if we have all the money we could possibly want, everything else would be ours for the taking. However, we all know that isn't exactly how it works. Money doesn't buy happiness, although it does make the search a little easier.

One of life's fundamental truths is, "Ask and you shall receive." Kids can ask for what they want, whether it's an ice cream cone or a new toy. As adults, we seem to lose our ability to ask for what we want, and we really struggle when it comes to asking for or accepting help. This is strange if you think about it, because the world responds to those who ask.

Ask Assertively and Effectively

There are many different asking strategies. We can create future abundance in our lives just by mastering the art of asking assertively.

There are three reasons why we don't ask for what we want.

- We believe that it's not right to ask.
- We lack confidence.
- We fear rejection.

Some people don't enjoy the rewards of asking because they don't ask effectively. Here are some ways to ensure that you get results when you ask.

Ask Clearly

Be precise. Think about your request. Take time to prepare; maybe even write out what you want and practice. Words are powerful so choose them carefully.

Ask with Confidence

You are more apt to get what you want if you speak up and sound confident, rather than hesitate and sound unsure of yourself. The worst that can happen is that you will be denied, but it probably won't put you in a worse situation than before. Or, if this route is closed, look for another.

Ask Creatively

What can you do to make sure you make an impact, and to make certain your request doesn't get lost in the crowd? How could you make your request stand out? How can you make your request fun? Schedule some time every month to dream up new and different ways to ask for what you want.

Ask Sincerely

When you really want help, people will respond. Be willing to be vulnerable, and tell it the way it is, lumps and all. Don't worry if your presentation isn't perfect; ask from your heart.

Help Others

We live in a world of reciprocal relationships and energy. When you give, you get. When you are ready to lend someone a hand, do so. The more you can help others, the more likely that someone will be available to help you when you need it. Be giving of your time and accepting of theirs.

Making Connections

Your Heart's Desire

Think of something that you truly want from others, or something that you could use help with. Write it down and start the ball rolling by asking today!

Practice asking for this with a supportive friend. This will help you feel the difference in your approach and start setting up a new pattern of confident asking.

Case Study: Marlene's Story

Read through this case study then answer the following question.

Case Study

Marlene, an office manager in a busy organization, managed a staff of twelve people. Over and over as a child she had heard her parents say, "Don't ask such dumb questions," and, "What makes you think you know anything about that?" She was made office manager because for years she was a first class worker who never raised her voice and got along well with everybody in the department. She didn't feel she had management ability but didn't know how to turn down the promotion.

After being promoted, Marlene found her world falling apart. She disliked giving orders and couldn't face on-the-job conflicts. She couldn't bring herself to tell her employees what she thought when they voiced an opinion different from hers, even though she felt she was right. She also found it impossible to criticize their below-standard work, even though it was getting worse under her management.

Her self-talk included, "I'm stupid," and "I can't make decisions." Thus she did stupid things that resulted in her staff thinking less of her. Because she took a long time to make decisions, she was seen as wishy-washy.

Marlene uncovered her childhood messages and her negative self-talk while she was doing exercises similar to the ones you have just done. She decided to do something about her perception of herself, and to gain control over her internal and external image.

Discussion Question

What steps would you suggest that Marlene take to begin changing her negative self-image?

Session Nine: Create What You Want

Part of the reason that people can struggle with getting healthier is that it is a vague goal. Targets like “more self-esteem” and “more confidence” sound really good, but unless we get really clear in how to get what we feel is important, we may never get there.

In this session, we’ll explore the power of getting what you want out of life by setting goals. We’ll share how you can create goals with the SPIRIT acronym and encourage you to set some goals for after this course.

Identifying Dreams and Setting Goals

Identifying Your Dreams

One of the things that we can easily overlook when our self-esteem is low is to give some thought to what we want and how we are going to get there. Right now we’re going to take some time to think about our own hopes and dreams, and from that, set some concrete goals that will help us to make these pattern changes that help us to change our thinking.

SPIRIT Goals

If the goal is quite large, it needs to be broken down into several small, achievable goals that will help you get where you want to go. Good goals should have SPIRIT!

Specific

Be specific about what you want or don’t want to achieve. The result should be tangible and measurable. “Talk to people” is pretty ambiguous; “Talk with two of my co-workers each day” is specific.

Prizes

Reward yourself at different points in the goal, particularly if it’s long-term. If your goal is to set up a meeting with a new colleague, for example, you might purchase a special treat for yourself afterward.

Individual

The goal must be something that you want to do. If your spouse wants you to lose 20 pounds but you think you look fine, you’re not going to want to work towards the goal.

Review

Review your progress periodically. Does the goal still make sense to you? Is it still giving you energy and something you find motivating? Are you stuck? Do you need to adjust certain parts of it?

Inspiring

Frame the goal positively. Make it fun to accomplish. You could make a poster of the end result, frame it, and post it on the wall.

Time-Bound

Give yourself a deadline for achieving the goal. Even better, split the goal into small parts and give yourself a deadline for each item.

Making Connections

My Own Goal Setting

What area(s) of life do you want to set goals in?

Ideas to get you started:

- *Career (responsibilities or a specific position, or maybe even your own business)*
- *Income*
- *Relationships (marriage, children, family, friends, colleagues, customers)*
- *Things to learn*
- *Hobbies to take up*
- *Volunteer activities or charities to support*
- *Recreational activities*
- *Home, vehicles, or other possessions to purchase*
- *Places to travel to*
- *Spiritual*
- *Health (examples: lose 20 pounds, exercise more frequently)*
- *Educational*
- *Behaviors and habits to develop or change*

Write down a goal for yourself. Choose any goal. Use the SPIRIT acronym to help you frame it.

[illegible]

Here's an example SPIRIT goal to help you if you need it:

Being brave and connecting with people at work.

I am a confident person. I am becoming stronger every day, and I will continue to do that as I purposely meet and have a conversation with at least two colleagues at work each day for a two week period. As a reward to myself after two weeks I am going to ...

Session Ten: A Personal Action Plan

Now that you have completed this course on **Building Your Self-Esteem and Assertiveness Skills**, how will you use the things you have learned? Creating a personal action plan can help you to stay on track, and on target. When you take responsibility for yourself and your results, you get things done.

In this session, you will be asked questions to help you plan your short-term and long-term goals. This final exercise is a way for you to synthesize what you've learned and put it into practice.

Starting Point

I am already doing these things well:

Where I Want to Go

I want to improve these areas:

I have these resources to help me:

How I Will Get There

As a result of what I have learned in this course, I am going to...	My target date is...	I will know I have succeeded when...	I will follow up with myself on...

Summary

Congratulations! You have completed the course “Building Your Self-Esteem and Assertiveness Skills.”

In this course, we started by defining self-esteem and confidence. We looked at where our low self-esteem comes from and how we can change it. We discussed negative and positive self-images. We also discussed different methods and techniques for building and increasing our self-esteem and our confidence. We explored the power of our own thinking and how what we think affects what happens to us. We also looked at how and if we ask for what we want. We reviewed two case studies, Tyrone and Marlene, and suggested ways that they can change their thoughts and actions. Finally we looked at ourselves; our thoughts, goals, and actions. At this stage in the course you identified your dreams, and set your own goals for the future.

In closing:

- Self-esteem grows by succeeding at one fearful action at a time, by developing skill, and by working with the belief that you can learn to do the things that feed your dreams. Those dreams, when you write them down, become your goals.
- Remember that being confident in one area of work, or at work, does not always mean you will be confident in all areas of life. When you try something new, you may lack confidence until you learn that skill needed and you get good at it. Keep trying. Everything comes with practice!

Recommended Reading List

If you are looking for further information on this topic, we have included a recommended reading list below.

Book, Howard, and Stephen Stein. *The EQ Edge*. Wiley, 2006.

Carnegie, Dale. *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Pocket Books, 1998 (Reprint).

Dyer, Wayne. *Everyday Wisdom*. Hay House, 2005.

Fanning, Patrickl, and Matthew McKay. *Self-Esteem*. St. Martin's Paperbacks, 2010.

Hamilton, Cheryl, and Cordell Parker. *Communicating for Results*. Wadsworth Publishing, 2007.

Kemp, Sid. *Perfect Solutions for Difficult Employee Situations*. McGraw-Hill, 2004.

Lamott, Ann, and Geneen Roth. *When You Eat at the Refrigerator, Pull Up a Chair*. Hyperion, 1999.

Sherfield, Robert. *The Everything Self-Esteem Book*. F+W Media, Inc, 2003.