WHAT IS SELF ESTEEM?

Self-esteem is related to your opinion of yourself. High self-esteem is a good opinion of yourself, and low self-esteem is a bad opinion of yourself. The causes of low self-esteem can be deeply rooted in a person’s past, sometimes stemming from childhood experiences. Low self-esteem can result from or contribute to other conditions including, but not limited to, abusive relationships, body image issues, eating disorders, depression, and anxiety.

HOW CAN I HELP?

Remember, you can’t solve the situation for your friend. But here are some things you can do that are helpful for both of you:

• **YOU CANNOT ARGUE SOMEONE BETTER.** Telling your friend how great they are will not improve their personal self image. Instead, you can start by letting your friend know that you’ve noticed how hard they are on themselves. Drawing attention to your friend’s negative thinking may help them recognize their low self-esteem and enable them to share their experiences.

• **LISTEN AND BELIEVE.** Try not to offer solutions or interrupt. Because they see others as critics, people with low self-esteem are usually afraid to share their stories. Listening to your friend without giving advice or judgment will enable your friend to realize that not everyone is looking negatively towards them.

• **OFFER TO HELP YOUR FRIEND FIND APPROPRIATE RESOURCES.** Ask your friend in what ways you can help. For example, they may ask for your help in searching the web for information, or ask you to accompany them on their first visit to a counselor. Be clear about setting your limits in terms of what you can and can’t do. Setting limits supports and empowers both of you.

• **FIND SOME OUTSIDE SUPPORT FOR YOURSELF WHILE YOU HELP YOUR FRIEND.** Helping a friend in crisis can be difficult. It’s possible for you to have strong emotional reactions to the situation as well. The following resources are good places to go for more information and help for both of you.
RESOURCES

- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) (530) 752-0871 | caps.ucdavis.edu
- The House Peer Counseling (530) 752-2790 | thehouse.ucdavis.edu
- Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex Asexual Resource Center (530) 752-2452 | lgbtcenter.ucdavis.edu
- Student Recruitment and Retention (530) 754-6836 | thecenter.ucdavis.edu
- Cross Cultural Center (530) 752-4287 | ccc.ucdavis.edu
- Women's Resources and Research Center (530) 752-3372 | wrrc.ucdavis.edu

You can find more resources on other How To Support A Friend handouts, as they apply to your friend's situation.

BOOKS from the WOMEN’S RESOURCES AND RESEARCH CENTER LIBRARY

- Be Full Of Yourself!; The Journey From Self-Criticism To Self-Celebration (Lynn) 1997
- The Confidence Factor; How Self-Esteem Can Change Your Life (Briles) 1990
- The Confident Woman; Learn The Rules Of The Game (Shaevitz) 1999
- Don’t give it away: a workbook of self-awareness and self-affirmation for young women (Vanzant) 1999
- How to say it for women: Communicating with Confidence and Power Using the Language of Success (Mindell) 2001
- In the Company of My Sisters: Black Women and Self-esteem (Boyd) 1993
- Self-esteem: tools for recovery (Hall) 2001

If you’d like to read more about self-esteem, visit the WRRC Library, where these books, and others are available. You can also browse the library catalog online at wrrclibrary.ucdavis.edu