



Head to Heart
Restoration Ministry

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The Act of Self-Nurturing

- 1 Self-Talk:** I tell myself I am lovable, valuable and capable
- 2 Self-Picturing:** I see myself as lovable, valuable and capable
- 3 Self-Talk and Self-Picturing Result:** I feel lovable, valuable and capable
- 4 Self-Behavior:** I act lovable, valuable and capable

Nurturing the self involves changing negative self-talk to positive self-talk, creating or remembering positive pictures/images of self, acting positively toward self, and the experiencing positive feelings toward self. We could call this self-talk, self-picturing, self-behavior and self-feeling.

Self-Talk

“For as a man thinks within himself, so he is.” Proverbs 23:7

Any statement that expresses self-doubt, self-hate, or self-negating must be challenged in order to develop self esteem.

Exercise 1: Complete the following, “I wish my mom would have said to me...” “I wish my dad would have said to me...,” or any variation.

Exercise 2: Make the following statements, “I am somebody to God!...I am a sinner – but I’m somebody to God!...I am a blue-collar worker... but I’m somebody to God!...I am stubborn and resist change...but I’m somebody to God!...etc.

Exercise 3: Translate negative self-statements like I should, I must, I have to, I can’t to I want, I will, I choose, I’ll give it my best try. Destructive shoulds can move from guilt to responsibility, punishment to correction, and ought to is.

Set achievable expectations for yourself and separate your personal worth from your behavior, value yourself even when your behavior needs changing or correction, support your own power to control yourself and make choices that determine your life, affirming your ability to meet physical and emotional needs while being sensitive to the needs of others, and relinquishing your love of power (control, manipulation, competition) to your power of love (approving, accepting, nurturing).

The following list of affirmations from Pamela Levin, used for therapeutic self-talk are in developmental order, beginning with what children need to hear at birth.

In the early months of life, children need to know that they have a right to exist and that their parents are glad that they were born.



I am glad that you were born.

It is okay for you to be here.

You have a right to be fed, touched and nurtured.

I am glad that you are you.

Welcome to our house.

I like you.

As children grow older, other messages become important to their self-esteem, such as:

You have the right to explore.

It is okay to be curious.

You can get attention without acting naughty.

It is okay for you to try things, to touch, smell, taste, listen, look.

As children become more mobile they need to hear:

It is okay to have your own mind.

You can try things and have my support.

It is okay for you to feel what you feel and ask for what you need.

You can think and feel at the same time.

It is okay to imagine things; wishing does not make them come true.

School-age children need to sense from their parents:

You can have friends and family too.

It is okay to have your own ideas.

You can be healthy and still have needs to be taken care of.

Learning to do things your way is okay with me.

It is okay for you to disagree.

Teens need permission to grow into adults.

It is okay to sprout wings.

You can feel sexual without feeling guilty.

It is okay to be on your own.

You can be responsible for your own life (feelings, needs, values, behavior.)

It is okay for you to grow and have a place among adults.

You can leave home and still have a place to come back to.

You are welcome here.

Exercise 4: Ask yourself the following, In the statement above and list of permissions or affirmations, which ones do I wish my parents had said to me? Which ones awaken feelings in me?

Exercise 5: Which messages am I giving to myself? Which messages do I need to begin giving to myself?

Exercise 6: Which messages am I giving to my spouse, children, clients, friends? Which ones do I need to begin giving the people I serve?



Self-Picturing

Self-image is a person's mental self-portrait. How people see themselves is a reflection of what the most "significant others" in their lives say to them and how they treat them. My parents act as a mirror to myself.

Self-concept is an illusion. It is based on the answers to three questions:

Who do I think I am?

Who do you think I am?

Who do I think you think I am?

My memory of who I am in my parents' view influences me today either positively or negatively.

Think you are or think you are not; either way you'll be right. What is true in a person's mind will be true in that person's behavior, feelings and relationships.

Exercise 7: Describe yourself as an animal. Can you describe the positive characteristics of the animal or only the negative?

Exercise 8: What do you see when you look in a mirror? How do you see yourself?

Exercise 9: Describe three qualities you see in yourself? Please finish this sentence positively: "I see myself as..." "What I like about myself is..."

Exercise 10: Think about and finish these sentences: "I want to be..." "My ideal self looks like..." Tell me how you would like to look.

Developing a positive self-image results in less worry about what others think; less shame, guilt, and fear; fewer negative comparisons to others; more honesty about what a person wants; and less pleasing of others at unwanted personal expense.

Self-Behavior

How we treat ourselves is a response to how we picture and talk to ourselves. You are more than your behavior. Focus on your inner qualities and de-emphasize performance.

Exercise 11: Answer the following questions, "How do I treat myself?" "How do I take care of myself?" "What have I done for myself this week?" "Do I treat myself as well as I treat my spouse, children, family, etc.?"

Exercise 12: What is the transaction of how you treat yourself? Does it resemble writing a letter, or is it more like sending a bill? Is it more like passing a law or sentencing a prisoner?

When we are loved and cared for, we develop both self-love and love for others. How you respond is the way



in which you were treated.

Exercise 13: Answer the following questions, “How do you wish your mom/dad would have treated you?” “Make a list of what you missed out on as you were growing up.” “Are you willing to treat yourself in the affirmations and experiences you wish you had received from your parents?”

The more I take good care of myself, the less resentment and anger I feel towards myself, my parents, my friends, and God, and the more loving I become towards myself and others.

Exercise 14: Answer the following questions, “How are you stopping yourself from getting what you want?” “What are you doing that is robbing you of your desires?” “What do I need in order to treat myself better?” “What can I do to be good to myself?” “Is there a better way for me to take care of myself today?”

If I rely solely on my performance for self-esteem, I’m vulnerable to a lowered self-image, critical self-evaluation, and rejecting feelings when my performance does not match my ideal view or expectations of myself. Consequently, my self-esteem needs a more constant source than my behavior.

If my self-esteem is grounded in my relationship with Jesus I take my performance in stride. If I believe that the level of my performance reflects my worth I become depressed, sad, angry, scared, competitive, helpless or hopeless when I evaluate my performance as unacceptable.

Theologically, we reject the belief that in salvation by works. Yet, psychologically, many of us act as though salvation were humanly achieved.

We achieve our spiritual adequacy through God’s unceasing love. We do not become sufficient, approved, or adequate; rather we are declared to be such!

Exercise 15: Write the following scriptures on note cards and place them in an area that you will see them daily. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13; “Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus...I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3: 12, 14; “I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:6

Content taken from:

David E. Carlson, *Counseling and Self-Esteem* (Dallas, Word Publishing, 1988), 152-165