

The Smart Social Skills Course

→ **Week 11: The Importance of High
Self-Esteem**

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The Importance of High Self-Esteem

Welcome to week 11!

This week we will explore something that may not be as obviously helpful for your social skills as for example learning to listen better or becoming a sharper conversationalist.

This week is all about self-esteem.

But why is self-esteem important when it comes to social skills and relationships?

You handle rejection much better.

If you go out on dates, to job interviews or to any kind of social gathering things it will not always go well. You will face rejection.

Now this could be something that holds you back from taking new chances for a long time.

Or you may feel bad about yourself for weeks.

But if you know how to keep your self-esteem up then it may still hurt. But likely a lot less. And you will get over it much faster, be able to learn from the situation and keep going.

You'll handle the fear of rejection much better.

One big fear for many is the fear of rejection. It could hold you back from striking up a conversation with someone you don't know. It could hold you back from going on dates, from going to parties and other social gatherings.

It can hold you back in your shell. It can hold you back from taking chances both personally and at work.

And that is no fun. I know from experience.

But with a better self-esteem, with the knowledge that you have effective techniques in your mental toolbox that will help you if things don't go as you hope this fear will decrease a whole lot.

You'll feel more deserving of good things. Including healthy and wonderful relationships.

As your self-esteem goes up, your sense of what you deserve in life goes up too.

You'll become more assertive naturally. You'll put up with less crap, drama and negativity from others. And from yourself.

Some relationships will change in your life. Some you may even leave behind.

And the relationships you form or transform will be of a higher standard because your own inner standards of what you deserve, accept and will not put up with will have changed for the better.

So as you can see, self-esteem is extremely important when it comes to improving your social skills, social freedom and the standard of the relationships in your life.

Now let's move on to how raise your self-esteem and keep it steady despite life's ups and downs.

Say stop to your inner critic and talk back.

So where do you start if you want to build and improve your self-esteem?

Let's start with your thoughts. With your inner dialogue. And with what one could call your inner critic.

Now, what is your inner critic?

It is that small or sometimes big voice that stabs or pokes you.

It drives you down a downward spiral or negative thought patterns and creates a bad day or week from one small misstep or conversation for example.

It is the voice that tells you that:

- He/she won't like you if you talk to him/her.
- No one really likes you for who you are.
- You always fail in relationships.
- You are worse or uglier than someone else.
- You are the one to blame for everything that goes wrong.

Those are just some common examples in social situations and relationships. The inner critic has a lot of rules and shoulds that it wants you to live up to.

Even if that would cause you to become someone that simply isn't you.

It is not always easy to understand that it is your inner critic, that it is that part of you that is pushing you down.

For many it has become such a normal part of the everyday inner dialogue as you get up in the morning, go to work or school, come home for evening activities and as you lie in bed at night and are going to sleep that you may not react to those inaccurate, distorted and negative statements that you are telling yourself about yourself.

So why do you have this voice inside of your head?

Because it helps you in life. Yes, the inner critic actually helps you.

It helps you to achieve things and to stay motivated. It helps you to fit in with the people in your world. It helps you to cope with many situations in life. It helps you to avoid many painful situations. It protects you from fear of failure, fear of success and fear of rejection.

It reduces anxiety. It makes you feel safer and more comfortable.

So there are many benefits that you derive from the inner critic. It gives you ways to cope with life. But these ways are not ideal and you can replace them with better and healthier alternatives.

Where does the voice of the inner critic come from?

Many of the shoulds and rules that form acceptable behavior in the eyes of the critic come from your parents, other people around when you were a kid, friends, media and society.

Now, everyone has an inner critic. I do too. It isn't something that you can magically eliminate.

But you can learn to manage your inner critic much better so it does not cause many problems at all. You can take back control over your life and disarm that inner voice as soon as it pops up instead of letting it walk right over you and restrict your journey in life.

So how do you talk back to your inner critic and stop it from pulling you down into self-doubt or negative thoughts about yourself?

Say Stop!

Whenever I get a negative and self-critical thought in my head one of the first things I often do is to say or shout this in my own head:

Stop!

Or, more often I use this one:

No, no, we are not going there!

Then I redirect my thoughts and focus on something more positive.

You can do the same when your inner critic pipes up and starts to want to drag you down or keep you on track with its own methods.

When you have the self-critical thought that you suck or that you will never have a good relationship or date again use your own stop-word or phrase right away.

In your mind, say or shout: Stop!

Or tell yourself something that makes your thoughts stop and helps you to interrupt this thought pattern before it grows into more thoughts and you get lost in a negative funk for the rest of the afternoon.

Try the two stop phrases I have mentioned. Or build a stop-word or phrase of your own that wakes you up and that stops the critic in its tracks. Then refocus your attention and mind to something more useful, optimistic and self-esteem boosting.

An example if your date didn't go as you had hoped would be to follow up with:

"Yes, the date I was on tonight didn't go as I had hoped. But I am still good as a person, I have several fine qualities and there many, many more people out there to meet. And by

meeting more people I am likely to find someone who I really click with. Now, what is one thing I can learn from this date?”

By using something very simple like a word or phrase over and over during this week whenever your inner critic tells you something about your work, health, body, relationships, finances or social skills you will start to form a new habit of stopping the critic before it can take hold over you.

It will take some time for the habit to stick but that is OK. Do the best you can, try to use your stop-phrase or word as often as you can, follow it up with focusing on something more positive and helpful for you and you will discover that after a while that your mind may start to say stop almost automatically and refocus when the critic pops up.

Find your more accurate self-image.

When you look at yourself, what do you see?

Do you see yourself just the way you are?

Probably not. I don't think anyone does. We filter the world and even our image of ourselves through our mind and thoughts. The view of ourselves is warped, like the image in a fun-house mirror.

Some people may have a self-image where they overestimated themselves and think they are much more important than they are.

Others, that are having low self-esteem, may not think very highly about themselves. Or at least parts of themselves.

This image may come from what your parents said and did, what your teachers and kids at school told you, what your friends and partners have let you know over the years.

It also comes from how you choose to look at yourself and choose to accept what you have heard about yourself. Nothing unusual about that, we have all done it.

But have you ever challenged your self-image? Maybe things aren't quite as you think.

To discover a more accurate image of yourself we will do an exercise. You can find it in the worksheet for this week.

Print it out and fill it in or use a pen and paper to answer the questions.

Do what you deep down think is the right thing.

One of the things that are not always easy to do in life is to do the right thing. What you think is the right thing. Not what your friends, family, teachers, boss and society thinks is the right thing.

What is the right thing? That's up to you to decide. Often you have a little voice in your head that tells what the right thing is. Or a gut feeling.

It might tell you to get up from the couch, stop eating those snacks and go to the gym instead. Sometimes you will put on your exercise clothes on and go. Sometimes you will not.

It might tell you to stop sulking and feeling like a victim with everything against you and instead look at the opportunities and take action. Sometimes you will. Sometimes you will not.

Many of the things that we have already explored and taken action upon in this course like being kind, truly listening and giving genuine compliments are things I believe most people would see as the right thing to do.

Doing what you think is the right thing promotes healthy self-esteem. You feel good about yourself when you do something good for yourself and/or for someone else. Over time you start to think more positive things about yourself more frequently. Your self-image changes.

As you go through this week, the rest of this course and beyond it just keep this in mind.

When you do not do the right thing it may not just affect someone in your life. It certainly affects you and how you think and feel about yourself too.

So if you sometimes don't feel like doing things to be a good person or to help someone out then focus on what you will get out of this. Focus on how it will help you to transform yourself and give you the three social benefits I described in the beginning of this guide.

That can be a powerful motivation to get going and to do the right thing. Even when you may not feel much like doing it.

The Action-Steps for This Week

Here's a quick summary of the action-steps to take this week:

1. Day 1: Do all the exercises in the worksheet to find your more accurate self-image.
2. The rest of the week: Start your mornings with reading through your new view of your strengths and weaknesses.
3. This week: Whenever your inner critic attacks you about anything say your stop-phrase. Then try to redirect your thoughts to something more positive and helpful like a few of your strengths or what small action you can take to improve the situation you are in.