



University Counselling Service

Self-esteem

Introduction

Many personal decisions are made and problems solved through discussions with friends or family, a College Tutor or Director of Studies, a Nurse, Chaplain, colleague, line manager or a GP. However, at times it is right to seek help away from one's familiar daily environment. The University Counselling Service exists to meet such a need. Seeking counselling is about making a positive choice to get help by talking confidentially with a professionally trained listener who has no other role in your life.

Who are the Counsellors?

The Service is staffed by a team of trained and accredited counsellors and therapists. The counsellors are all experienced in helping people from many different backgrounds and cultures, and with a wide range of personal and work issues.

Some of the counsellors who work in the Service are Associates, in the late stages of their counselling training. Their work is carefully supervised within the Service. Please let us know if you would prefer not to be seen by an Associate.

Contact us

University Counselling Service
Student Services Centre
Bene't Street
Cambridge
CB2 3PT

Tel: 01223 332865
Fax: 01223 760990
Email: counsellingreception@admin.cam.ac.uk
Web: www.counselling.cam.ac.uk

Opening times

Mondays: 9:00 - 5:30
Tuesdays: 9:00 - 7:30
Wednesdays: 9:00 - 5:30
Thursdays: 9:00 - 7:30
Fridays: 9:00 - 5:00

Self-esteem

The way we view and feel about ourselves has a profound effect on how we live our lives. These opinions are shaped by our past experiences and the culture in which we live.

The background

For many of us, self-esteem can feel conditional and linked to our achievements, or acceptance by others. Conversely, success can seem like a great ego booster, and academic achievement like an obvious sign of success. However, living in an environment where there is a wealth of talent and overt competition can challenge the views that people hold of themselves - you may feel that your ability is over-estimated. Students can feel under pressure to do well for the sake of their family, communities, college, or the university.

However, what we feel about ourselves is not based solely on what we do. It usually involves

our relationships with others and whether we feel worthwhile as people. We have a basic human need to be wanted, noticed, and included. Many of us want to contribute, to be of value, and make a difference – in other words, to matter.

Our self-esteem can fluctuate and be affected by events and encounters with other people. Many of us are constantly judging and evaluating ourselves, often in comparison with others.

Suggestions for improving self-esteem

Change is not easy. It means stepping into the unknown and taking a risk. Inevitably this means that some initiatives will work well while others won't work out as hoped. You can help yourself by being realistic in your choices and seeing each success as a step in the right direction. Remember that even small changes add up.

Try to do things for pleasure, for fun

- Think about ways in which you can enjoy yourself. Put effort into making life pleasurable and satisfying.
- Try learning something new, maybe something you have always wanted to try, even something you never thought you could do.
- Make time to volunteer for something that you feel passionately about, and that connects you with the local or wider community.

Look after yourself physically

- Try to eat regularly and think about the sort of food you eat.
- Try to get the amount of sleep you need, and establish a routine that works for you.
- Exercise can help to feel more confident and to connect with your body. Try to pay attention to how you stand and walk.

Use rewards, but avoid punishments

- Reward yourself in different ways. How about giving yourself one day off from work a week? Can you buy yourself a little treat? Or do something you particularly enjoy but don't often get round to.
- Listen to your internal dialogue. Can you try to be kinder and more compassionate to yourself?

Cultivate good relationships - with yourself and others

- Can you bear to be ordinary? Are you continually expecting more of yourself than you do of others? If you accept the troubles, mistakes and variability of other people, how about being happy with 'good enough' in relation to yourself?
- Take care not to push other people away through being negative about yourself.
- Join in with others. Be proactive in making and maintaining contact with others.

Take responsibility

- It's no good waiting for others or circumstances to leave you feeling better about yourself. Accept responsibility for your own actions - you cannot make other people change, but you can make the changes yourself.

Where to seek more help

If you get stuck or find it impossible to know where to start with these suggestions, maybe you can talk it through with a friend or family member, or someone else you trust. You are also welcome to talk this over with one of our counsellors.

The University Counselling Service runs a course specifically for students to help develop self-esteem. You can find more details on our website:

www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/studentcouns/studentgroups

If you are interested in attending the course, please contact the Counselling Service Reception on 01223 332865, or email counsellingreception@admin.cam.ac.uk

Useful resources

You'll find information on a range of resources to help address low self-esteem, as well as other issues, on the University Counselling Service website: www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/selfhelp

Available Self Help Leaflets 2019

Anger Management
Anxiety and Panic
Asserting Yourself
Bereavement
Concentration - a CBT guide
Coping with Exams
Depression
Eating Disorders
Effective Communication and Managing Conflict
General Information for Students
General Information for Tutors
Homesickness
How to be Mindful
Insomnia
Intermitting
Loneliness
Managing Alcohol Consumption
Parental Separation and Divorce
Perfectionism - a CBT approach
Phobias - a CBT approach
Post-Traumatic Stress
Procrastination
Self-Esteem
Self-Harm
Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor
Sexual Assault and Rape
Simple Relaxation
Transition to University
What Is Mindfulness
Worry - a CBT Approach

University Counselling Service

Student Services Centre

Bene't Street

Cambridge

CB2 3PT

01223 332865

counsellingreception@admin.cam.ac.uk



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE