

Thank you for your interest in this topic. If you have any questions about this, or any issue, please contact our office at 214-642-8737

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Newsletter of Stonebriar Counseling Associates

▣ What is Self-Esteem?

Self-esteem or self-image is the view a person holds of himself. It is the basic components of human identity. A solid sense of self-worth is not something we can take or leave. It's something everyone needs. As a counselor I listen to the pain or hurts of people who are struggling. Here's what I hear: "I blew it. I'm a failure.... I've been abused. I'm a victim... I gave in again. I'm an addict.... I'm alone. I'm just a loner... I can't lose weight. I'm unattractive." Unhappiness and despair often coexist with low self-esteem. Low self-esteem comes in different forms. Those vulnerable to depression often feel they are falling short of their *hopes*. Television, radio, magazines, movies, billboards—all convey the same message—the finer things in life are reserved for those who have the right jobs and social status. Instead of rewarding honesty, integrity, courage, craftsmanship, motherhood, loyalty, and personal maturity, society applauds and perpetuates an endless, fruitless message of searching for becoming rich and famous. Second, those vulnerable to anxiety often feel they are falling short of what they *ought* to be. We all have some desire to be part of a group and to experience affection. When that need is unmet, the pangs of loneliness and rejection are very strong. Sometimes our self-concept is unconscious when it is too painful to face what we really think about ourselves. The person who drinks excessively in order to "get courage" to fulfill obligations may rarely admit that he or she does not like him- or herself. Sometimes that estimate is accurate; sometimes it is not. Whether it's excessively drinking pill taking, high levels of generalized anger, self-pity, excessive shyness, loudness at

parties, or, a martyr-like attitude may in essence be manifesting from a low self-image. Sometimes it is conscious. At other times, it is unconscious. The correlation of how we feel about ourselves can be traced to the belief that we are deeply motivated to belong to someone and/or feel important part of something. When Adam fell, the need to belong and the need for self-esteem became one of the most prominent driving forces of personality. Many try to meet their needs in their own way rather than the positive ways that God has designed so as to produce happiness and fulfillment. Therefore if low self-esteem is a feeling of worthlessness then a key component of human identity is an underlying sense that one is of worth and value.

▣ By What Standards?

Although the Bible encourages an awareness of self-worth that has its origin in God, educational or community-based programs often find it necessary to encourage individual self-worth and self-respect without bringing God and religion into the picture. Whether the purpose is to keep children in school, avoid teen pregnancies, or escape the self-destructive habits of drugs, gangs, or alcohol, some programs are based on the belief that good self-esteem can be promoted as the most common and foundational of human values. Without appealing to religious or spiritual authority, educators and motivational speakers encourage young people to believe, "You're not junk. You're special. Don't let yourself be used by others. Be yourself. Love yourself. Trust yourself and follow your own heart. Be all that you can be. Look out for yourself; because if you don't, no one else will." Such attempts to promote a positive self-image have

merit. There is no doubt that many young people have been motivated to stay in school and make something of their lives because someone believed in them, or at least taught them to believe in themselves. At the same time, much that is taught in the name of self-esteem carries a subtle spirituality that can be misleading. Saying that people can be whatever they want to be is true only up to a point. Saying there is no reason to feel bad about what we've done is often not true. Encouraging no fear, no guilt, no regret, and no ultimate accountability to anyone but ourselves is only a short-term fix. In the long run, efforts to make people feel better at the expense of the truth is advice that ends in lasting regret and despair. If this is true, then perhaps pushing the gauge artificially higher is akin to forcing a car's low fuel gauge to display "full." Could it be that problems and failures cause low self-esteem if there is no identity in something bigger than us? Could it be that self-esteem reflects reality? That is, feeling good is a measurement or gauge that reads out the state of our relationship with God and others. Our net worth is not equal to the sum total of our appearance, our abilities, and our affluence.

▣ Self Esteem and Shame

How we feel about ourselves is the driving force behind our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Therefore, one who is without sufficient self-esteem might think, "I know that I am a child of God, but I don't feel like God's child. What does it feel like to experience God's unconditional love? Even I don't love me." Again, how we feel about ourselves is an important dimension to one's worth and value. Of the most familiar byproducts from a lack of self-esteem I see in people are rejection

and a lack of affection. If the need for love from one's parents goes unfulfilled, a sense of shame often results ("I am worthless and unlovable"). Children who have not been loved sometimes spend the rest of their lives, consciously or unconsciously, doing all kinds of things to avoid being hurt again. Shame is the most painful and destructive of all emotional states. To feel ashamed is to believe yourself to be bad and rejected for your badness. You think you are worthless and unlovable. You reject yourself and expect others, including God, to reject you. You look at what is wrong with you (or what seems wrong) and say, "That's me and I'm bad!" In other words, when you're ashamed you're identifying yourself with a bad part of you or a bad thing that was done to you.

☐ Self-Esteem and Rejection

In adolescents negative feelings are most manifest in both self-hatred and a lack of self-confidence. The lower their self-esteem, the more they tend to hate themselves. It is common for people who fear further rejection to retreat into the darkness of depression, chemical dependency, sexual promiscuity, or unreasonable fears. Some run from emotional intimacy and meaningful relationships for fear of being rejected again. In each case, however, the pain of running causes them to feel worse about themselves. Their self-esteem sinks lower and lower. They feel bad and act worse. Then they feel worse yet about what they've done. Frustration unabated can turn into self-hate and anger. Increasingly, I have seen clients who may not consciously be aware of their anger, yet it is nonetheless present in the form of a lifestyle preoccupied with gaining power and control. The individual releases their pent up anger from past hurts and rejection and inevitably treats others

ruthlessly in order to gain a sense of self-worth.

☐ By God's Unconditional Love

The first ingredient for a healthy self-esteem is a sense of feeling loved—"I belong to God Who loves me unconditionally." When we feel loved we have a deep abiding resource that emboldens us in relationships, our work and all of life. When this is lacking, we feel alone, isolated, and depressed. Knowing that He unconditionally accepts us and that our relationship with Him is forever sealed by His love provides value and a purpose in life. Without purpose, we become discouraged or depressed and fall prey to feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and condemnation. What a strong foundation for self-acceptance we have, since God has chosen us to be His sons and daughters! This acceptance doesn't come and go according to our performance. It is a love that is completely unconditional. Based on the fact that Christ loves us as we are there is a second important ingredient—worth. At the core of each human being God declares us of infinite worth. If we are aware of our worth, we are on the road to a strong inner sense of identity. We believe we are valuable and that we have a right to live. Without a sense of worth, we become discouraged or depressed and fall prey to feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and condemnation. His love is all-inclusive; it accepts the whole of each of us. The Bible tells us we were created by God and that we need to live our lives with Him at the center. We are not gods who can independently run our lives. We are not to "think more highly of ourselves than we ought" (Romans 12:3). It is wrong to think poorly of ourselves when we are God's gifted children. But humility does not mean groveling, or feeling inferior or worthless, nor does it imply hating oneself. True humility could best be defined as seeing and accepting

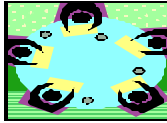
ourselves as God sees and accepts us. True humility recognizes that we are finite creations of an Almighty God and that He has created us with many abilities. But it also recognizes our failures and our needs. True humility recognizes our strengths as well as our weaknesses and is not preoccupied with either. People with a solid sense of self-esteem do not have to keep evaluating their worth. Because they have a settled identity, they get on with life and serving others. A third ingredient in our self-concept is an attitude of confidence. Confidence, which implies a basic level of trust in our own abilities and a sense of inner strength, is the quality that enables us to reach out and try new tasks or tackle new challenges. It is the opposite of inferiority. When confidence is lacking, we feel tense, anxious, frightened, or insecure. Closely tied to a feeling of confidence is our need for a feeling of security. The Bible lays out a rich and trustworthy provision. It tells us God will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). It is our one great source of security in the midst of the confusing and distressing happenings in our world. God promises us security in our relationship to Him. He promises that nothing will be able to separate us from His love (Romans 8:38-39). He is with us day by day and we will spend eternity with Him. People without a sense of security are constantly worrying about these and other potential tragedies and are unable to feel comfortable and relaxed. The greatest and ultimate source of a good self-concept is the knowledge that we are created, gifted, loved and watched over by the God of the universe. After all, God did make us and we are not "junk!" The Bible declares, "You are created a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:5). And the Bible speaks to every aspect of our self-esteem—our needs for a sense of love, worth, confidence and security.



Newsletter of Stonebriar Counseling Associates

From the desk of...

Bob Good



Sexual Addiction Group Meeting
Tuesday Nights at 7:00 pm
Location: SCA office



Dear Educator and Ministry Leader:

A young boy posted this sign in bold letters on his bedroom wall: "I'm me and I'm good 'cause God made me and God don't make junk!" Perhaps poor grammar, but a fantastic attitude toward life! This boy already had a key to life that other people—including those older than him—never find: he had a positive attitude toward himself. Most of us have mixed feelings about ourselves. We fluctuate between periods of relative contentment and times of self-dissatisfaction. Sometimes we like ourselves; sometimes we don't. When we feel good about ourselves, we are happy, confident, relaxed, and alert. When we don't, we become pressured, anxious, irritable, or "down." Some individuals have such a poor self-concept that they are constantly riddled with self-doubt, depression, and feelings of inferiority and worthlessness.

- "There's something wrong with me."
- "I don't like myself."
- "I don't have what it takes."
- "I don't compare well."
- The attitude that we have toward ourselves—our self-concept or our self-image—is one of the most important things we possess. Research shows that people with good self-concepts perform better at school and on the job. They have fewer marital and relational problems. And they are less prone to depression, anxiety and anger. If, as Barbara Streisand sings, "people who need people are the luckiest people in the world," then it follows that people in all cultures have a deep need to belong. Human beings, contended the personality theorist Alfred Adler, have an "urge to community." In other words when we feel included, accepted, and loved by those important to us, our self-esteem rides high. Our self-esteem is a gauge of how valued and accepted we feel. In order to be socially accepted and included we generally conform to group standards and try to make favorable impressions. By seeking love and belonging, we spend billions of dollars on clothes, cosmetics, and diet and fitness aids—all motivated by our quest for acceptance.

Bad self-esteem is a curse. More and more people are realizing that if you *feel* as if you have nothing to offer, you'll *act* as if you have nothing to offer. If you *think* poorly of yourself, you will tend to *act* poorly. If you have a low image of yourself, you will be inclined to back away from relationships and challenges. If you are sure you're going to fail, then chances are you will. Low self-esteem is like self-fulfilling prophecy. If you believe you don't have what it takes to win at life, you are apt to confirm your own prediction. From what point of view do we develop a healthy and realistic view of ourselves? If you know of someone who is struggling with these very issues the following article will uncover some of the myths and work through a Christian view of self-esteem.

Sincerely,

Bob

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES), has been the most frequently used instrument for assessing self-esteem. In scoring it, first reverse the numbers (1 = 4, 2 = 3, 3 = 2, 4 = 1) placed in front of items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10, and then add the numbers in front of all 10 items to obtain a total score. Scores can range from 10 to 40, with higher scores reflecting a greater sense of self worth.

The SES is designed to assess the degree to which people are generally satisfied with their lives and consider themselves worthy people. Other researchers have attempted to measure self-judgments relative to specific areas of daily functioning, with self-esteem being a summation of subscale scores.

For each of the following statements, use the scale below to indicate your agreement or disagreement.

- 1= Strongly Agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Disagree
- 4= Strongly Disagree

Source: Rosenberg, M. (1989). *Society and the adolescent self-image* (rev. ed., pp. 325–327). Hanover, NH: University Press of New England. Reprinted by permission.

- ___ 1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
- ___ 2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- ___ 3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
- ___ 4. I am able to do things as well as most people.
- ___ 5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
- ___ 6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
- ___ 7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- ___ 8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
- ___ 9. I certainly feel useless at times.
- ___ 10. At times, I think I am no good at all.

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Upcoming Free Workshop

Please RSVP

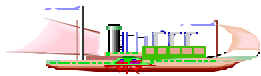


How To Help Those With Low Self-Esteem—May 26, '04

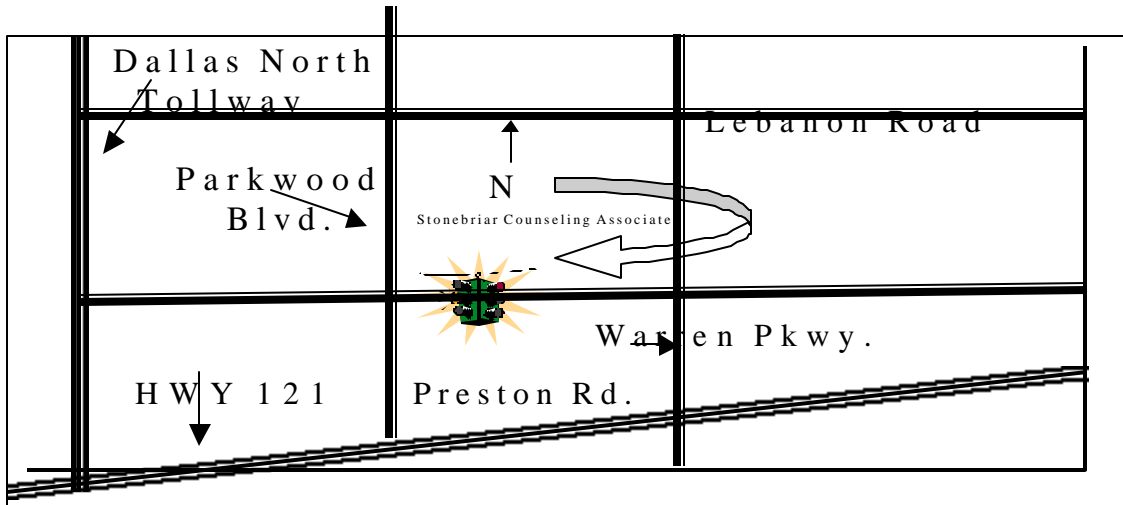
(Free Refreshments) Time: 6:30 PM

Location: 3550 Parkwood Blvd., Suite 301, Bldg. C, Frisco, Texas

Call SCA office at 214-642-8737 to register



New Location!!



Mission Statement

Stonebriar Counseling Associates (SCA) is purposefully passionate in providing quality psychotherapy from a Christian perspective that influences the treatment of psychological, emotional, and mental health issues.

To this end, SCA is committed to glorify God by:

- Believing that each person has the innate ability for personal growth and wholeness.
- Seeking a variety of approaches to help you learn new skills and find more choices so as to manage life's changes with a broader range of solutions for recognizing your strengths.
- Accepting all people with respect and love regardless of age, sex, race, religion, ethnicity or socio-economic status.
- Thoughtfully affirming and carefully following the morals of the Christian faith and the ethics of the professional governing boards.
- Providing research and development for new and innovative programs, seminars, and workshops in order to further the