The Link Between ADHD and Low Self-Esteem

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ADHD and Low Self-Esteem: What Causes Low Self-Worth in ADHD Children and Adults?

ADHD can impact your self-esteem, especially if it is not addressed early. Problems in school — like difficulty paying attention or frequently handing in homework late — and the subsequent negative feedback from teachers can lead to feelings of low self-worth and an inability to believe in your own capabilities. A similar negative environment at home or amongst peers exacerbates the problem.

Addressing feelings of low self-esteem is important, as those with a lower self-worth are more likely to struggle with depression, anxiety and possible substance abuse. Low self-esteem in children may lead to a lower academic performance and problems forming lasting relationships as they grow into adults.

What Are the Signs of Low Self-Esteem in People With ADHD?

Signs of low self-esteem in children include:

- A reluctance to try new activities, possibly due to no longer feeling capable.
- Frequent negative comments being made about themselves, like, "I'm useless," etc.
- Socially withdrawing as they feel unable to interact with their peers, or may have received negative feedback.
- Diminishing opportunities or avoiding them, and being pessimistic about other options working out.

Signs of low self-esteem in adults include:

- Extreme sensitivity to any criticism you receive.
- Apologizing all the time — even when there is nothing to be sorry for.
- Feeling as though your achievements are lucky, or due to external factors, while your failures or mistakes are all your fault.
- Defensiveness and hostility.
- Socially withdrawing.

8 Ways to Battle Low Self-Esteem

There are ways you can battle low self-esteem. The first, and potentially most important step, is accepting your own shortcomings. This is very hard to overcome but is vital in building a toolkit to battle low self-worth.

Following this, you may find the below tips helpful:

1. **Walk away.** Choosing your battles will ensure that you can successfully meet the important demands in your life. It may feel as though you are failing or giving up, but being realistic about your activities will lead to greater success elsewhere.

2. **Let go of the need to be perfect.** It is always better to hand in a complete project on time rather than missing a deadline because you were trying to achieve perfection. If you hold yourself to high standards and always aim for the best, you may be prone to long periods of avoidance interspersed with short bursts of enthusiasm. This is not a productive way to work.
3. **Be realistic.** Make sure your expectations of yourself, and what you can achieve, are realistic. You may feel that people without ADHD have everything come easier to them, but this is not the case. Some tasks may run smoother for other people, but everyone struggles at some point. Don't be disheartened by setbacks, use them as an excuse to try again in a different way.
4. **Don't procrastinate.** With ADHD you may often find yourself distracted or forgetting things. Over time this may mean you achieve less of what you want to and this can impact your self-esteem. Avoid procrastination by creating reminders, or address something straight away and you will soon see results.
5. **Recognize your strengths.** Knowing your weaknesses and accepting them is important, but there is a flipside to this coin. We all have different areas of strength, different aspects that we excel in and it is important to recognize these. Knowing your strengths and working on them can help improve self-esteem.
6. **Start slow.** It can take a while for the brain to adjust to a new habit, and therefore you must not expect changes overnight. Start something slowly and thoroughly and you will see much better results. Knowing that you have achieved something will, in turn, give you a boost.
7. **Praise effort.** Sometimes we do not achieve the goals we were aiming for, or get the results we wanted. This can be disheartening, as you may feel you have put in a lot of effort and had nothing in return. It is therefore important to praise yourself for the effort you put in, as it shows you can work hard towards your goals.
8. **Be sociable.** Forming new relationships can be hard when you have ADHD, however, a strong friendship can be a very good self-esteem booster. If you feel shy about meeting new people, you could look for an ADHD support group in your area.

If you were diagnosed with ADHD much later in your adult life, then attempting to make these changes may be more of a challenge. You may feel set in your ways or that your behavior is now ingrained. This is not the case, and it is completely possible for someone of any age to change the way they act and the way they think about themselves.

For parents of a child with ADHD, the quicker these tips are utilized in daily life, the speedier the response will be. You may want to introduce one aspect at a time so as not to overwhelm your child, and you may need to adapt them somewhat. For example, you may encourage after-school activities rather than an ADHD support group.

The Importance of Support With ADHD and Low Self-Esteem

It is important to have a solid support network behind you when you are trying to boost your self-esteem, and this can consist of many parts:

- Your family and friends are vital in supporting you through times of crisis, and you must not be afraid to reach out to them if you are struggling with low self-worth.
- Medication is often required in the treatment of ADHD, and it is important that you take your medication correctly and as directed by your healthcare professional.
- Your doctor will be able to provide valuable advice on medication and side effects and will be able to refer you on to other necessary services.
- If you receive therapy or counseling, this can be vital in helping you come to terms with how you feel about yourself. Therapy can be beneficial in building up low self-worth and could include techniques like cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or psychotherapy.
- Support groups run by local charities or other organizations will help you feel less alone in the difficulties you may be facing. You will be able to connect with other people who get where you are coming from and will be in a good position to support you through the more challenging times.

When you have built up your self-esteem and self-worth, it will be noticeable in all areas of your life. As you have more faith in yourself, relationships will improve and you will be able to perform to a greater standard at school or in the workplace. You will be able to give more back into the world and will feel more worthy of good things that

may come your way.

Working on your self-esteem can seem like a daunting task at first, but is something that is paramount in being successful in life.