Self-esteem and Kindness

Self-esteem means different things to different people, and may not even be the same from one day to the next.

Generally speaking, people with adequate self-esteem:

- Are confident in their ability to think about and cope with everyday challenges

- Recognise their right to a happy and successful life

- Feel entitled to assert their needs and wants

- Feel worthy and deserving of rewards for their efforts

People with low self-esteem tend to have a negative perception of themselves, the effects of which can impact both personal and work life in the following ways:

- Low self-esteem is associated with pessimism, depression and withdrawing from life

- People with low self-esteem tend to undervalue and understate their potential, and will often treat themselves and/or allow other people to treat them badly

- Self-doubt is common, with people often downplaying any achievements or successes. Conversely, there may be excessive self-criticism and blame when things go wrong

How can I improve my self-esteem?

People with low self-esteem often find it difficult, if not impossible, talking to people they know. If this is true for you then talking to someone who you don't know might be a step you to feel able to take. You can call Care first 24/7 and speak in confidence with one of our professional counsellors. You also may find these tips helpful:

- Self-help – we often have much greater resources than we think we have and can do things to help ourselves

- Use your imagination to remember times or events when you felt better about yourself. If you can't remember perhaps others can

- Set realistic, achievable and meaningful goals to focus on. Achieving even small goals can build a sense of competence and increased self-belief

- Try to identify unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaving by becoming more aware of the things you say and do. If you can identify what isn't helpful you can begin to see what might be

- Take regular, appropriate, gentle exercise

- Take time out to relax and get away from daily pressures. People with low self-esteem are often highly emotionally aroused and need to learn ways of calming themselves down

- Eat a good diet and cut down on alcohol/drugs

- If you can, seek support from friends and family, or perhaps colleagues and managers, other health professionals such as your GP

- Find out more information, for example, on the internet.

As the World continues to react and change to cope with COVID-19, there are many challenges posed in our everyday lives. We have seen some amazing acts of kindness during the COVID-19 pandemic and this article will look at ways to be kind to others and to yourself. Being kind to both yourself and others can have a positive effect on not only your mental health but also it can have an amazing knock on effect to your self-esteem and other people's mental health as well. Below are some ideas to inspire you as well as further information on self-esteem and the importance of you!

Be Kind to Family and Friends

- Call a family member or friend that you have not spoken to in a while
- Tell someone how much you appreciate them or tell them something that you really like about them – or you could do both!
- Find a really good news story and share it with others
- You could host a virtual quiz through Zoom or Skype for example and invite all the family and friends to join in
- Send an inspirational quote to family or friends
- Send a joke to family member or friend

Be Kind to Yourself

- Put positive messages where you will regularly see them
- Write down three things that you appreciate about yourself
- Make sure you spend some time doing something that you enjoy at home
- Do something that makes you feel good – It could be something simple like dressing smart for a video call

Care first

- Try to smile and laugh as much as possible whether your speaking to someone on the phone or just looking back at pictures or memories for example

Be Kind at Home

- Make a drink or cook a meal for someone in your house
- Help with some of the household chores where you can
- Spend some time playing with your pet
- Try and make people in your household laugh and smile

Be Kind to your Community

- You could donate to a charity or take part in some fundraising using any skills or interests you have
- You could offer support to a vulnerable neighbour
- Donate or get involved with helping foodbanks
- You could order a gift or meal to be delivered to someone in your community
- You could teach someone a new skill via video call – for example if you play a musical instrument could you teach someone else to play via video call

Be Kind to your Work Colleagues and Clients

- Give praise for work that an individual has produced wherever you can
- Just call a colleague to see how they are getting on and if they need any support
- When having a meeting with a client or speaking to a customer ask how they are doing
- Have a virtual lunch video call with a colleague

There are lots of acts of kindness including the ones mentioned above. However it is also important to remember not to overdo it as you may end up becoming overwhelmed or giving more away than you can handle, which could then have a negative impact on your mental health. It may be worth starting off in a small way with your acts of kindness, so that you do not end up feeling overwhelmed. Always remember why you are doing that act of kindness and the effect that will have on the other person or people.

Studies have shown that practicing kindness can boost serotonin and dopamine levels in your brain, which are known as the "feel good, happy hormones". Whilst the opposite, cortisol - the "stress hormone" can lead to unhappiness, anger and resentment.

Consider what you can do to be 'kind' to people both inside the home and out. It really is such a simple thing, but can make a world of difference not just to the person (or people), but to you as an individual and will be of huge benefit to your own mental health. How can we all be more kind to one another not just now but in the future as well?