Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Self-Esteem

Most people feel bad about themselves from time to time. Feelings of low self-esteem may be triggered by being treated poorly by someone else recently or in the past, or by a person's own judgments of him or herself. This is normal. However, low self-esteem is a constant companion for too many people, especially those who experience depression, anxiety, phobias, psychosis, delusional thinking, or who have an illness or a disability. If you are one of these people, you may go through life feeling bad about yourself needlessly. Low self-esteem keeps you from enjoying life, doing the things you want to do, and working toward personal goals.

You have a right to feel good about yourself. However, it can be very difficult to feel good about yourself when you are under the stress of having symptoms that are hard to manage, when you are dealing with a disability, when you are having a difficult time, or when others are treating you badly. At these times, it is easy to be drawn into a downward spiral of lower and lower self-esteem. For instance, you may begin feeling bad about yourself when someone insults you, you are under a lot of pressure at work, or you are having a difficult time getting along with someone in your family. Then you begin to give yourself negative self-talk, like "I'm no good." That may make you feel so bad about yourself that you do something to hurt yourself or someone else, such as getting drunk or yelling at your children. By using the ideas and activities in this booklet, you can avoid doing things that make you feel even worse and do those things that will make you feel better about yourself.

This document will give you ideas on things you can do to feel better about yourself - to raise your self-esteem. The ideas have come from people like yourself, people who realize they have low self-esteem and are working to improve it.

As you begin to use the methods in this booklet and other methods that you may think of to improve your self-esteem, you may notice that you have some feelings of resistance to positive feelings about yourself. This is normal. Don't let these feelings stop you from feeling good about yourself. They will diminish as you feel better and better about yourself. To help relieve these feelings, let your friends know what you are going through. Have a good cry if you can. Do things to relax, such as meditating or taking a nice warm bath.

Before you begin to consider strategies and activities to help raise your self-esteem, it is important to remember that low self-esteem may be due to depression. Low self-esteem is a symptom of depression. To make things even more complicated, depression may be a symptom of some other illness

Have you felt sad consistently for several weeks but don't know why you are feeling so sad, i.e. nothing terribly bad has happened, or maybe something bad has happened but you haven't been able to get rid of the feelings of sadness? Is this accompanied by other changes, like wanting to eat all the time or having no appetite, wanting to sleep all the time or waking up very early and not being able to get back to sleep?

If you answered yes to either question, you may be depressed. If that is the case, there are two things you should consider:

- See your doctor for a physical examination to determine the cause of your depression and to discuss treatment choices

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- Do some things that will help you to feel better right away like eating well, getting plenty of exercise and outdoor light, spending time with good friends, and doing fun things like going to a movie, painting a picture, playing a musical instrument, or reading a good book