



SELF ESTEEM: THE FOUNDATION FOR A SUCCESSFUL LIFE



When we have healthy self-esteem, we believe in our value and our right to success and happiness, and we have confidence in our ability to overcome life's difficulties.

By PIERRETTE DESROSIERS M.Ps.
Work psychologist, conference speaker, work coach

When Martin came to see me, he no longer knew who he was. He doubted his value and abilities. How could this strapping, 40-year-old man doubt himself, after all his success in business? Despite all his success and accomplishments, Martin had very low self-esteem.

Why does Martin feel compelled to do so much, when his physical and mental health and his family life are all giving him signals that he is overdoing it?

When he was young, there were conditions on the love and recognition he received. *"I was someone, if I worked, and if I was better than others, still I had to do more. And even then, more wasn't enough. My performance was everything. As a child, I had no value. Only what I accomplished was important."*

How much must Martin produce or perform in order to be proud of himself and believe he has value?

Nothing will suffice, as long as Martin measures his value by his performance. It's like trying to fill a leaking bucket. Even a barrel of water will not be sufficient to keep the bucket full; it will always empty out. Martin will have to re-examine his values if the leak is ever to be plugged.

It is clear that, without enduring self-esteem, business success is unlikely. But is success in business synonymous with self-esteem? Not necessarily.

Two kinds of motivation can lead to success. The first is a desire for accomplishment. People in this category have enduring self-esteem. They enjoy what they are doing, are proud of their progress and do not sense a threat from those who do better than they. They are not overwhelmed by the difficulties they face.

The second kind of motivation is fear of failure. Curiously, some people succeed because they are afraid to fail. They have very low self-esteem. Like Martin, they will accomplish much, but no success will ever make them proud of themselves. They appear to be confident, however, they doubt their value and skills. They live in fear of being judged by others, and constantly compare themselves to others. They are unable to deal with significant difficulties because they perceive them as evidence of their inferiority.



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How many of us were taught these values as we grew up: work and performance? The problem is not with working and wanting to perform. The problem arises when, as Martin, we can never do enough to feel good and to be happy and proud of ourselves.

If you have any comments or suggestions to share, please contact Pierrette Desrosiers.

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