

Building Your Mate's Self-Esteem

Silently lurking in the closets and attic of your mate's past and present life are dozens of clues signaling insecurity, fearfulness, or low self-confidence, which all result from poor self-esteem. The following ten clues will help you understand whether your mate struggles with the problem of low self-esteem:

1. **Your mate's childhood/adolescence was marked by some type of abuse (i.e. verbal, emotional, physical, sexual) or neglect by parents, peers, or others.**
2. **Your mate fears opening up, being real, and being vulnerable with you and others.**
3. **Your mate gets easily discouraged.**
4. **Your mate lacks confidence, especially in decision-making.**
5. **Your mate has difficulty admitting when they are wrong or believe that they are always wrong and to be blamed.**
6. **Your mate is a driven person or fears new challenges or tasks.**
7. **Your mate is covertly critical of others but still "people pleasers."**
8. **Your mate has a tendency to be perfectionist.**
9. **Your mate is overly critical of self.**
10. **Your mate indulges in escapism.**

How To Build Your Mate's Self-Esteem

Key Thought: Words are powerful seeds. Once planted in your mate's life they will bring forth flowers or weeds, health or disease, healing or poison. Your words have the power to build a positive self-image or to create a spreading malignancy that will destroy it.

Proverbs 18:21 "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."

You are not the only one who plants these seeds in your mate's life. In fact, many of their mistaken perceptions about themselves have sprouted from others' negative words. These **weed seeds** have crept across the property lines of your their life in the form of jokes, criticism, and innuendoes from close friends, peers and maybe even you. *While you are not the only source of seeds, as a marital partner you have the power to help arrest the growth of negative words by sowing your positive ones.*

Planting Good Seed

“Anxiety in the heart weighs a man down, but a good word makes it glad” (Proverbs 12:25). Notice the impact of a “good word.” Not a sentence or a paragraph. Not a message. Just one, well-placed, positive word.

Choose with wisdom and care the words you speak to your spouse. If you have been sowing weed seeds into your mate’s life don’t expect an immediate “crop failure.” It may take years to kill the bad seeds that have been carelessly spoken. Ask for their forgiveness. Ask that God will make you mindful of the power of your tongue and to make you more aware of the words you speak to your mate.

Words are not the only source of weed seeds. Your negative attitude toward your mate may also have a devastating effect on their self-image. Non-verbal cues or ignoring your mate can plant seeds, too. You may be habitually sowing negative words or attitudes without realizing it.

Sow words of praise (i.e. to give value, to lift up, to extol, to magnify, to honor, to commend). Building your mate’s self-esteem is basically a matter of helping him or her feel valuable. Praise is a necessary tool for that process. The more you verbally express your appreciation (praise), the more secure your mate will become in their self-esteem.

1. **Praise specifically.** Sow the seed of praise with statements such as...

“I appreciate you because you...”

“I admire you for your ...”

“Thank you for...”

2. **Praise truthfully.** There is a difference between truthful praise and flattery. Flattery gratifies a person’s vanity. It can notice and compliment only a person’s physical looks, intelligence, or wealth. Praise, however, is based on a person’s character and deeds.
3. **Praise generously.** Your praise can be excessive only if your words are insincere. Genuine, heartfelt praise cannot be overdone.

Esteem Builder Project

1. Write a paragraph of positive words to your mate. Pick one of the topics below:
 - A paragraph of praise
 - A paragraph of appreciation
 - A paragraph of encouragement
 - A paragraph of belief
2. Be specific—avoid generalities.
3. Be prepared to read it to your mate in class.