

Boost your self esteem with Meditation



Have you ever been to a party and 10 people tell you how good you look, but one friend says, "You look weird," and all you can think about is that one comment? If lack of self-esteem has got you down, find out how meditation can transform your negative fixation and help you find the inner confidence you've had all along.

The Dalai Lama met with a group of Western psychotherapists and asked them what was the most common issue their patients came to see them about. We were told they were unified in their response: a lack of self-esteem. Apparently, he found this quite hard to believe because self-esteem was not a known problem in Tibet. Later, we talked to one of his translators, Tashi, who's now living with his wife and child in London. Tashi told us children growing up in Tibet would be welcomed and loved by the whole village, which he found very different from the way children are raised in our more nuclear family-oriented culture.

Perhaps it is this culture that has contributed to confidence issues, because it can be difficult to develop a good feeling about yourself if your home life is conflicted or limited. Ed's family of five lived in a three-bedroom apartment in the old Bronx, at a time when children were told they were to be seen, but not heard. This inevitably influences a child's—and later the adult's—sense of worth or self-respect.

We watched as an eager, young television reporter from CNN asked the Dalai Lama what was the first thing he thought of when he awoke in the morning. We thought the world's most famous meditator would say something deeply profound or insightful, something along the lines of vowing to save the world from its own ignorance.

Instead, the Dalai Lama simply replied, "Shaping motivation." He said everyone, including himself, has to be vigilant so intentions are focused in the right direction, and that shaping his motivation on a daily basis reminds him to extend loving kindness and compassion to all others. Such motivation takes you beyond yourself so you are not limited by a lack of confidence or self-esteem.

When we met privately with the Dalai Lama at his residence in Dharamsala, India, he held our hands tightly as if we were dear friends. It felt as if he was filling us up with that kindness and compassion, so that we were re-invigorated with self-belief and certainty.

2 ways meditation can give you inner confidence

There are two very specific ways meditation can help you transform a lack of self esteem into inner confidence and self-belief. First, it enables you to meet, greet and make friends with yourself. You get to know who you really are, and to accept and embrace every part. You'll soon find that your doubts, insecurities or fears are really only superficial, as you begin to connect with a deeper place of trust, dignity and self-worth.

Second, it awakens you to the inter-connection between everyone, the sense that you are not alone here. Rather, you are a part of this wondrous planet, and the more you extend yourself with kindness, the less you will be focused on your own limitations. Discovering your inter-connection takes you from a place of self-centeredness to other-centeredness.

As you bring acceptance and loving kindness to yourself, you may uncover the deeper belief that you do not deserve to be happy, that you do not believe you are good enough—a sort of built-in self-destruction clause. As Oprah says: "What you believe has more power than what you dream or wish or hope for. You become what you believe." So you invite kindness into that self-negation and lack of self-esteem, until such uncertainty dissolves in love.

Loving Self-Meditation

Find a comfortable and upright place to sit. Take a few deep breaths, and watch the flow of your breath as it enters and leaves.

Bring your focus to your heart, and as you breathe in, feel as if your heart is opening and softening; as you breathe out, release any tension or resistance.

Now bring into your heart either an image of yourself or repeat your name, and hold yourself in your heart, tenderly and gently. Silently repeat, "May I be freed from self doubt, may I be happy, may all things go well for me."

Keep breathing into your heart, holding yourself with love and repeating the words. This will generate a deep, loving kindness and appreciation for yourself.

When you are ready, take a deep breath and let it go. Then go about your day with a caring heart and a smile on your lips.

Ed and Deb Shapiro are the authors of *Be the Change, How Meditation Can Transform You and the World*