What is self-esteem?
Self-esteem is about the way you see and value yourself, and remain having a favourable impression of yourself, despite your imperfections. Good self-esteem enables you to remain resilient regardless of failures and down times. You may still experience sadness or a sense of failure at times, but having a good self-esteem helps you to maintain an overall sense of self-worth.

If you feel like you might have low self-esteem, you can do things to help build this up. Self-esteem is affected by what you think and what you do; by working on these two things, you can improve your self-esteem, step by step.

Self-esteem and doing
A great way to build your feelings of self-worth is to DO things, achieve things and experience success first hand. It is easy to dwell on the negative and feel left out if you don’t have much to do or anything to look forward to. By achieving goals and participating in things we enjoy, we build our sense of self-worth, purpose, connection and belonging.

Here are some simple tips to help you feel stronger and achieve success:
- Set reasonable, realistic and flexible goals.
- Break down big goals into small and achievable steps.
- Take action – get to work on the first step.
- Notice and celebrate as you achieve each step.
- Schedule time for activities you enjoy, whether they are related to study or not. Achieving and doing things can result in you feeling less overwhelmed and more powerful and positive.

- Make time and do activities that you enjoy doing. You can aim to do things well, but it’s important to enjoy yourself too!
- Try new things – get out of your comfort zone. Achieving a new goal or doing something you previously feared is great for improving your self-belief and confidence.
- Focus on only one or two new things at a time (be careful not to take on too much).
- Don’t expect to do things perfectly, especially if trying or doing something for the first time.
- Spend time with positive people. Move towards people who are encouraging and positive, and away from people who put you down or discourage your dreams.
- Get moving as it increases your energy. Get fit and strong and stand tall.

Self-esteem and thinking
Habits, or patterns of doing things are formed over time. It is possible to get into the habit of thinking negatively or focussing on the negative in people and situations, particularly when you are tired or run-down. In this mind frame, you might discount compliments because you think they cannot be true and you are not really good enough, and you remember the mistakes and criticism. In this way poor self-image is made stronger because you only taking notice of things that support the negative view. It is
important to stop and notice the things you do well and the
good points you have, just like you might notice good
things about other people.

It ok to feel uncertain, have down times or make
mistakes, but if you notice that your thinking gets tuned
to the negative all the time then perhaps it is time to
refocus your thinking.

Negative thinking is a habit which can be changed with
patient practise. Be aware when you are thinking
negatively and focus on the full range of facts of the
situation.

- Talk to yourself kindly, as you would to a friend. You
  would challenge the negative thoughts of your friend
  by pointing out the other facts and helping them keep
  perspective.
- Look at things in an unbiased way and stop feeling
  guilty. If you make a mistake look for the cause and
effect rather than the right and wrong. “Mistakes” can
  be valuable lessons as we learn and grow.
- Accept compliments. Don’t protest them even in your
  head! Enjoy and remember them!
- Don’t blame yourself for things beyond your control or
  things that other people were responsible for. Be
  realistic about what is really your problem.
- Avoid comparing yourself to others. Often we will
  compare our mistakes and faults to other people’s
  talents and assets. It is ok – in fact its important- to be
  your own unique self.
- Look at and focus on what action you can take to
  resolve a problem or improve a situation. When things
  go wrong it is easy to blame others but doing this also
  takes away your power in the situation.
- Focus on what you do well, and in building your
  strengths.
- Stop worrying about what others are thinking, we
  cannot read minds. Focus on doing your best
- Believe its ok to be a friend to yourself. Treat yourself
  well – physically and emotionally.
- Consider your values. Choose to act in ways aligned
  with these values. Some questions to help you:
  - What is most important to you in work, study,
    relationships and your own behaviour?
  - What makes life meaningful to you?
  - What will matter in 1/5/10 years time?

Where can I get more information of help?
University Counselling Service: www.utas.edu.au/counselling
Free personal counselling (faceto-face, video, phone, instant chat and email)
appointments are available with experienced mental health clinicians
between 8.30am and 5.00pm weekdays.
Online bookings: utas.edu.au/appointments
Phone: 1800 817 675

Need to talk?
Call 1300 511 709
Text 0488 884 168
University of Tasmania
after-hours Crisis
Support Service
Call or text to speak
with a qualified counsellor
5pm – 9am weekdays / 24 hours
weekends and public holidays
> utas.edu.au/students