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Let us improve our self esteem

We all have different needs. As we fulfil these needs more needs arise. Humans first aim to fulfil their basic needs. Once these basic needs are met we aim to fulfil secondary needs and then the higher needs.

We learnt in grade six and seven that basic human needs include food, water and air which are essential for life. Secondary needs include sense of security and love.

In this lesson we will discuss about self esteem, which is one of the higher needs, and about factors which affect our self esteem.

Self esteem

The following is a conversation between the Principal of a rural junior school and his deputy principal.

Principal: Mr. Sirimevan, I just had a telephone call from Mr. Priyantha, the teacher in charge of sports. He said Nimal has won a gold medal in the 100 meters at the National Schools Games.

Deputy Principal: Is that so sir? That is great news, we feel very happy and proud.

Principal: Yes Mr. Sirimevan, this is a victory not only for us, it is a victory for our school, village and the area. We all feel very proud. Let us have a ceremony to welcome Nimal. Let us invite his parents too.

Let us look at this dialogue. Nimal who won the 100m gold medal would be feeling elated. Self esteem is the person's own evaluation of his or her own worth. Self esteem should be an objective evaluation about ones ability and worth.

Let us look at another example. You receive a letter informing that you have won the first place in an art competition organised by a newspaper. You are requested to collect the certificate and prize. You would be very happy and elated and tell your family and friends about this achievement. The feeling of pride and positive evaluation about your self will improve your self esteem.

Activity

Read the dialogue regarding Nimal. List all the people who would have been happy about Nimal's achievements.

People have different skills and abilities. As described in our example Nimal is good at sports while another person may have artistic abilities. Our abilities contribute to the development of our self esteem. Achievements in sports will increase the self esteem in those who are good in sports while engaging in singing, dancing and art may improve the self esteem of others who are talented in those arts.



Figure 1.1- Different skills that would help to increase persons self esteem

Because our abilities and achievements influence our self esteem, we must identify our abilities and try to improve on them.



Activity

List abilities of people and how these can contribute to improve self esteem.

Now compare your list with the following.

Table 1.1

Person's abilities	Achievements
Sporting abilities	Become a sportsman
Drawing	Become an artist
Dancing	Become a dancer
Music	Become a musician
Acting	Become an actor
Mathematics	Become a mathematician
Languages	Become a poet, author
Creativity/ Innovativeness	Become a creator or inventor

Self esteem comes high in the hierarchy of human needs. To develop our self esteem we need to identify our strengths and abilities. Your teachers will provide opportunities for each student to demonstrate and develop his or her special abilities and skills.

In addition we can improve our self esteem by using our abilities to help others.

Other characteristics like honesty, kindness, patience, obeying rules, being disciplined will improve our social acceptance by making us more admired people and therefore improve our self esteem.



Figure 1.2 - Helping others

Our achievements and other positive characteristics can improve the self esteem of others too. As we discussed previously Nimal's family, friends, teachers, schoolmates and people in his area were all happy when he won the 100 meters gold medal.

When Susanthika Jayasinghe won the Olympic silver medal and when Sri Lanka won the world cup in cricket the whole country felt proud and happy regarding the achievement of our sportsmen and women.

Special abilities and characteristics which contribute to improving self esteem

We can develop our self esteem by developing our abilities, and good characteristics.

Abilities

- Singing
- Playing an instrument
- Acting
- Dancing
- Computer literacy
- Literary abilities
- Sporting abilities
- Making handicrafts
- Engaging in agriculture activities
- Gardening
- Cooking
- Debating

Characteristics

- Leadership
- Organising skills
- Honesty
- Altruism
- Patience
- Modesty
- Obedience
- Follow rules (Discipline)
- Cooperation
- Socialisation

Factors which have a positive impact on self-esteem

Whatever skills we possess, there are various factors that contribute in earning our self-esteem. They can be divided into two as internal factors and external factors.



Activity

Give examples for opportunities you got at school and at home which helped to boost your self-esteem.

Internal factors (which should be cultivated by us)

- Identifying your strengths and weaknesses – self-realization
- Self-confidence
- Having commitment and enthusiasm
- Identifying your duties and responsibilities and fulfilling them without fail

External factors

- Example and advice from parents and teachers.
- Recognition, guidance and appreciation by teachers, adults, parents, friends and well-wishers.
- Encouragement by way of awarding prizes and certificates.



Figure 1.3 - Encouraging by awarding

As the above mentioned factors contribute towards earning our self-esteem, you will understand that maintaining healthy social relationships is very important in achieving beneficial results from the skills we possess. Your skill in maintaining healthy relationships, too, helps fulfill the need for earning self-esteem which is a higher human need.

As we improve our self-esteem, we should also think of the self-esteem of others too. Further, we should make it a point not to do anything that could damage others' self esteem.

We can also make our contribution towards boosting the self-esteem of our younger brothers and younger sisters, friends and workers employed at school or at our house.

Factors which have a negative impact on self esteem

Social factors	Internal factors
Social rejection	Breaking social norms and morals
Neglect	Violating the law
Lack of appreciation	
Being criticized	
Being ridiculed or bullied	
Being abused	



Figure 1.4 - Being abused

People with good self esteem contribute positively to society. Those with high self esteem must be conscious of the self esteem of others and must not act in ways which will have a negative influence on the self esteem of others as well as themselves.

Each person is unique. We have different characteristics and abilities. Therefore we must appreciate the positive aspects of each person.

For example a doctor will cure patients while a farmer will provide food for people.

Engineers will provide the technical knowledge and technicians and skilled workers such as masons will help build bridges and buildings.

We must appreciate the good work done by all of them and treat everyone equally.

Summary

After fulfilling basic needs and secondary needs humans try to achieve higher needs. Self esteem is an important higher human need.

Developing and appreciation of our abilities and positive characteristics help improve our self esteem.

A person's physical, psychological and social skills contribute to positive self esteem.

External and internal factors influence our self esteem.

We must develop our skills and characteristics so that they contribute to our positive self esteem as well as the self esteem of others. Therefore we must try to improve our self esteem and we must ensure that we don't harm the self esteem of others.



Exercise

1. What are our basic needs?
2. How do we categorise needs such as love and security?
3. Name a few skills and abilities which contribute to positive self esteem
4. What are the external factors which influence our self esteem?
5. What are the internal factors which influence our self esteem?
6. How does a person with high self esteem contribute to society?