

SECRETS OF SELF-RESPECT AND SELF-ESTEEM

With Ann B. Sloan

As we face challenges in life, we may become “handicapped” by not honoring ourselves enough. Our focus is on finding ways in which we can honor, respect and appreciate ourselves.

Let’s clarify our terms:

Self-CONFIDENCE = having faith and confidence in what we are and can do

Self-APPRECIATION = appreciating and cherishing who we are

Self-RESPECT = having respect for ourselves and honoring ourselves

Self-ESTEEM – widely overused denotes “value” – but here self-esteem = inner or intrinsic value – our value as children of the Universe

Our emphasis is on “**Self**” with a capital “**S**” – referring to **our higher self** or spirit that tunes into the Universe or higher power.

Another consideration is the term “**Inner Child**” – referring to our own innate sense of self – the sense of the child in each of us. Since our inner child may have been abused, we need to learn how to nurture and embrace the child within us.

Low self-esteem may be quite prevalent – evident in our body language, lack of care in dress and grooming, living in clutter, and so on as the result of being put down, being made to feel guilty, living with a controlling spouse and on and on... often becoming a vicious cycle.

BUT the good news is that we can break that cycle! Hopefully, we can break it before we reach our breaking point – that point of no return – when we state “I’m not going to take it anymore!”

How do we break the cycle?? **We CHOOSE to move forward with trust!**

We reach the **TURNING POINT** and make the **DECISION to honor ourselves** at last, stand up for ourselves even if others are knocking us down!

We choose to move forward to change our lives one step at a time.

Remember: The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.

When we make this forward movement we can surmount our feelings of inertia / helplessness & hopelessness. We begin by taking a walk in the park – going to the library or anywhere – listening to music - anything that begins to get us out of our rut.

If there are children in our lives, we need to consider how our lack self-esteem may be affecting their impressionable lives. We move them into activities to interact with other children to have fun and embrace life more fully – removing them as much as possible from any abusive or harmful setting.

We don't have to build our feeling of self-confidence, self-respect and self-appreciation all on our own. There are **resources everywhere** – once we start looking – self-help books at the library – support groups – organizations to assist and build a support network – so much is available – we only have to start looking.

As we begin to **open our hearts to others** – to trust our own instincts to do what is best for us, we gain a new sense of hope, we begin to radiate compassion for others – that in turn attracts more good into our lives and **upward spiral begins**.

As we start taking these baby steps to move forward with our lives, we can look for some signs that we're improving – such as our smiling more, taking more care in our appearance and our home, maybe even humming or singing as go about our tasks, we begin to shine from within.

TOOLS FOR LOVING, HONORING, and RESPECTING YOURSELF

- **Speaking to yourself in the mirror technique:** Look at yourself in the mirror, smile and say “I love/like you” or “I wish well” and other things that make you feel good about yourself
- **Making notes in a Journal:** Start an informal journal – just start jotting down your feelings without editing – just let your emotions flow out on to the paper
- **Gentle care:** Pamper yourself: Baths, nice clothes, good food, silence, quiet time, meditation, prayer, flowers, candle-light, attending support groups, church & other spiritual communities (None of this needs to cost a lot of money!)
- **High Energy activities** (contrast to Gentleness): lively music, singing, dancing, silly play, comedies, role playing -- and of course physical exercise!
- **The Honored Guest technique:** Treat yourself with the special respect & you'd expend on a very special person / honored guest coming to visit you.
- **The Poor Refugee Child technique:** Treat yourself with the compassion you'd take with a traumatized refugee child who had just been put in your care
- **ESSENTIAL! Nurture Yourself:** As much as possible, avoid toxic people who disrespect you, trigger you, abuse you – **focus on and spend time with warm supportive people** who make you feel good about yourself

For more information contact **Ann Barczay Sloan** at annbsloan@gmail.com . Watch for her upcoming book, *How to Use Pieces of a Broken Heart: Recipes for Rebirth* – for details, see the blog at <http://AnnBarczaySloan.blogspot.com> . Ann's Writing & Editing Services website is <http://www.GeniusUnbound.com> .