



Solutions for Life

from **Solutions Counseling & EAP**
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2016: The Year of Letting Go

Happy New Year! As you can see above, I have dubbed 2016 as “The Year of Letting Go.” Every month, I am going to address a different area that I want you to work on releasing. We’ll be talking about letting go of the past, unhealthy relationships, bitterness and resentment – all kinds of good stuff coming your way this year.

I want to kick off our “Year of Letting Go” with something big and very important – it’s time to let go of low self-esteem. As you probably know, self-esteem is the view you have of yourself, and it can be anywhere on a continuum from low to high.

Interestingly, those with low self-esteem believe the Self-esteem continuum is fluid and variable. That’s because people with lower self-esteem base the way they feel about themselves on outside forces. If someone compliments them, they feel better about themselves. If someone is critical of them, they feel worse.

People with higher self-esteem know the continuum does not fluctuate much. Yes, with work on yourself you can go up on the continuum, but not quickly. And not because of what other people think about you. People with higher self-esteem like themselves regardless of what is happening around them.

I listened to a TED talk recently about hygiene. (Go with me here, there is a connection, I promise). We know that good personal hygiene increases life expectancy. The speaker theorized the same for emotional hygiene. You wouldn’t take a physical injury and see what you could do to make it worse, right (i.e. keep walking on that broken leg, or not medicating that infection)? Why then, do we do that very thing when something bad happens and we are emotionally injured? We beat ourselves up at the very time we should be nurturing ourselves.

So, how to stop injuring and start building...This is going to be one of those “fake it until you make it” situations. You’re going to pretend you think you are awesome until you actually do. Here are some starting points:

- 1. Say your name.** This is an exercise I use when doing self-esteem workshops. I have everyone in the room introduce themselves. And I begin to point out the people who have more confidence based solely on that action. Who made eye contact? Who had a strong, confident voice? Whose voice pitch went down at the end of their name instead of up? (That whole “up talk” thing drives me crazy – talk about sounding unsure of yourself!)
- 2. Make a list.** This list is going to consist of your positive attributes, both outer and inner. People with lower self-esteem hate this exercise. Mainly because they have always focused on what they consider to be their flaws. I want you to make a list that will continue to grow as you continue to appreciate more and more about yourself. I will allow you to start with the easy stuff: everyone is allowed to put “I am nice” for number 1. But then you have to dig deeper. What are you good at? What are your good physical characteristics? What makes you a good human being? What do your friends like about you? What does your pet like about you? You cannot stump me on this. I will find things you will admit are not horrible. I know you are awesome, and I know you can think of some things you don’t hate about yourself.
- 3. Increase human interaction.** Many people with lower self-esteem are isolated. They don’t have many friends, they spend a lot of time alone, and they don’t realize the damage it is doing. We are social creatures. We need interaction and contact. Join a group or organization that has a cause you believe in. Get manicures/pedicures/massages – anything to increase actual contact. Become a hugger (not the creepy kind, though).

It’s time to get started on becoming the best version of yourself. That means actually knowing who you are and liking yourself. Let’s make 2016 your best year yet!