

Building Confidence and Self Esteem: Both Internal and External
May 20, 2020
Lisa Nathan

What stories do you tell yourself over and over again in your mind? Are you aware of them? Alone in your thoughts are you kind to yourself or do your stories involve shame, guilt, resentment, regret? Do you feel unworthy? That you're not good enough? Do you have a habitual pattern of negative self talk?

Negative self talk stimulates the stress response in us and over the long term can lead to unnecessary worry, anxiety, fear and feelings of low self worth. The more often our thoughts go by unchallenged, the stronger they become. These negative thoughts, if left to roam freely in our minds, can have a profound impact on the way we see ourselves and the way we interact with this one precious life.

So what is self esteem? It's our sense of how worthy and capable we are. It refers to the extent to which we like, accept and approve of ourselves.

So how can meditation help you build your self esteem?

- We can't just wish for genuine self worth, self esteem. You must break patterns of negative thinking. Thoughts trickle into our unconscious mind and become our core beliefs but the good news is that no matter how ingrained they are, it's possible to learn how to let them go.
- Meditation teaches you how to observe your thoughts without judgment and gives you distance from the story line looping in your mind, loosening its grip. It gives us the ability to take a step back from our thoughts to see them more clearly like an artist that steps back to get a more objective viewpoint.
- So when thoughts come, and they will come, the idea is to just let them be without engaging with them. Letting them pass by like clouds in the sky or a leaf floating down a stream. Simply observing and being curious without judgment.
- If your mind tries to seduce your attention, simply bring it back immediately and gently to your breath and then back to your body. Attention is a focused channel of awareness. Attention can also be called consciousness. In order to be conscious you first must be aware.

When we channel our attention through the instrument we call our brain, it becomes the mind. The mind is the brain in action. The brain is designed to process information but it's next to impossible to stop thinking when our attention is in the brain. This makes it easy for us to get lost in our thoughts, constantly identifying with the influx of thought processes, leaving us unconscious and captive in the state of the ego. Focusing on our breath brings us back to our body.

Meditation

1. Settling in, can you make yourself 10% more comfortable.
2. Gently closing the eyes.
3. Connecting to your breath and feeling your body connect to what is supporting it.
4. Taking a deep breath in and letting it go. Repeat.
5. Finding a natural rhythm to your breathing.
6. Where do you feel your breath the most? At your nostrils, the rise and fall of your chest, in your throat?
7. Give yourself permission to settle down, to take this time for yourself.
8. When a thought arises, acknowledge that you are thinking and gently come back to your breath. No judgment, no criticism. You cannot do this wrong.
9. Accept whatever feelings or emotions may arise.
10. You may catch yourself thinking, "I don't see how this can help me" or "I'm doing this wrong", or "other people do this better than me". Disengage by simply coming back to your breath.
11. The more we practice, the easier it becomes to give less attention to our thoughts and not allowing them to define who we are.
12. We get to know this inner critic that lives in our mind but also affects our bodies and our hearts. Be curious about its character, the way it presents and the way it makes us feel. And from this place of curiosity and awareness, we can cultivate some perspective. Just enough perspective to enable us to interact with this inner critic in more skillful ways.

13. This takes commitment, practice and time. It takes time to understand the incredibly strong grip of your ego to negative thinking and to develop the ability to detach. But you absolutely have the power and ability to do this and to make true and lasting change in order to grow your best self. Meditation is incredibly simple yet incredibly complex and offers profound benefits. By letting go you set yourself free. This is your life, your journey and you deserve it to be the best one possible.