



## **Student Services Counseling Center**

***Where students are assisted with academic, career and personal needs.***

Greetings from the NTC Counseling Center. The counselors at NTC are available to help guide, support, and assist students with academic, personal, and career needs. Student support is our priority. Monthly, we will share information on a variety of topics. The topic for the month of March is self-esteem. We look forward to helping you.

### **Building Self-Esteem**

As students at NTC, perhaps you have overcome barriers and challenges to get here. Perhaps your family was not as supportive as you would have liked, or perhaps you are here after a life-changing experience such as a divorce or job loss. Perhaps your high school grades were not what you wished they would have been. Any of these experiences can slice away at your self-esteem.

One of our most personal and private challenges is feeling good about ourselves – our accomplishments and successes, in both our personal and professional lives. We want others to see us positively. But more importantly, we want to feel good about who we are in a genuine and realistic way. Building self-esteem is important if we are to find satisfaction in our careers and personal lives.

What is low self-esteem? Low self-esteem is about not valuing ourselves as human beings. It may also be called low self-image. Many of us have had the experience of feeling that we haven't been "good enough" in a specific situation, particularly if we face rejection or criticism. However, some people find it hard to value themselves even when outwardly things are going well and this is a persistent rather than passing state.

#### **Signs of low self-esteem.**

These vary. Some people do not believe they are likeable, attractive, or successful, even when presented with information which is contrary to these negative beliefs. Self-esteem issues may lead to an endless round of comparisons with others, leaving one feeling lacking across a range of attributes. Low self-esteem can also have a detrimental effect on relationships if one partner depends greatly on the other to maintain their self-image.

#### **How does low self-esteem come about?**

Early experiences can impact greatly on the beliefs we have about ourselves. For example abuse, neglect, or abandonment can foster beliefs which influence self-esteem throughout life. However, low self-esteem can occur in the absence of serious childhood trauma. It may arise from inconsistent or critical parenting, or as a result of late life experiences. Identifying a "cause" is not necessary in order to obtain help.

#### **What can be done to help?**

The good news is that there are things that can be done to improve feelings of self-worth. There is some evidence from research that during the process of counseling, improvement in self-esteem can occur. Counseling provides the opportunity to re-evaluate beliefs about ourselves which are formed early in life. New coping strategies such as developing assertiveness skills and a greater awareness of individual needs can also be learned during counseling sessions.

**Changes that can result from improving self-esteem.**

The most important development from improved self-esteem is self-acceptance. This means being able to live with our strengths and weaknesses, and coming to terms with previous behaviors.

Having a strong sense of self and/or cultural belonging has consequences for the individual alone and in relationships. When people value themselves they tend to improve self-care and make sure physical and emotional needs are met. It is important for an individual to be able to look after themselves before they embark on a permanent relationship. It is an advantage to choose a partner from a position of strength, rather than need.

Other important decisions and challenges in life are made easier when self-esteem is good. When people value themselves it is also less likely that they will do things which might be damaging to themselves or others.

**What to do if you think you need help with self-esteem.**

Talk to one of our counselors. Also, there are many excellent self-help books available. Our counselors can help you in this search.

(Ideas for this article have been taken from an on-line pamphlet on self-esteem located at Massey University Student Services website.)