

## Excerpts from *The Self-Esteem Habit* . . .

(From Tip #1: Recognize Your Power)

Ava blamed her father for her low self-esteem. When she was little, he left and never came back. She always wondered if it was because he didn't like her or if she wasn't good enough. When she thought this way, she'd feel bad about herself. One day Ava realized her self-esteem could never change as long as she based it on this fictional story. She might never know how her father felt about her, but she didn't have to spend the rest of her life feeling down on herself. She decided to let go of this negative thinking habit, take back her power, and remember that her self-esteem was in her hands, not his.

### **Perceive It**

There can be many circumstances that affect your self-esteem: things that happen, things people say, things you can't control, things you don't like. You might think these things make you feel bad about yourself, and until something changes you can't feel different.

This thinking habit makes you a victim: dependent on something outside yourself to feel okay. In reality, no matter what happens, only you can decide how to think about yourself. When you embrace this power, you can feel good without waiting for circumstances or people to change. When you recognize and accept that your self-esteem is in your hands, you can make a conscious choice to see all the good in yourself. You can do this no matter what's happened in the past, what's happening right now, or what happens in the future. When you recognize your power, you can create healthy self-esteem.

### **Believe It**

I am not a victim; my self-esteem is in my hands!

### **Achieve It**

(Activity involves a peaceful visualization of throwing stones into a deep body of water, each carrying a devaluing message.)

"Remember, your self-concept is just a collection of thoughts about yourself."

- Michael A. Singer

(From Tip #3: Understand and Release Devaluing Messages)

### **Perceive It**

Our self-esteem develops in great part from both positive and negative messages we receive about ourselves when we're young. For example, you may have heard, "You're so good at science," "You'll never amount to anything," "You've got a generous heart," or "You should be more like him."

It's important to understand that most caregivers don't intentionally set out to send devaluing (damaging) messages. But words can still do harm. Even well-intentioned parents may not realize their negative overtones. They may be speaking from anger or pain, or their own emotional needs may be so unfulfilled that they have little or nothing positive to give to a child.

As a child, you couldn't comprehend this; you just took in everything you heard. You absorbed and believed the messages you received and carried them with you. As a teen, some devaluing messages may still form the base for how you feel about yourself. When you understand their source and that they aren't true, you then have the choice to release them. You can stop the thinking habit of believing devaluing messages and start building healthy self-esteem.

### **Believe It**

I recognize and release any devaluing messages I've received.

### **Achieve It**

(Activity involves identifying, writing, and then shredding devaluing messages.)

"Accept yourself, love yourself, and keep moving forward. If you want to fly, you have to give up what weighs you down."

-Roy T. Bennett