

Quality #6: Self-Esteem

3 Major Causes of Low Self-Esteem

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Intentional Creation

OG MANDINO FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Low Self-Esteem

Intentional Creators are whole and complete. They are real, genuine and authentic without the need to impress, pretend, feel shamed or fear. Imagine being comfortable in your own skin, comfortable and confident in connecting with others, fully available to serve and free to create the world you want. It is time to discover how.

Before we explore in some detail the causes of low or challenged self-esteem and several practices to improve self-esteem, we invite you to step back from any sabotaging thought processes and embrace this time-tested principle: you are nature's greatest miracle. Regardless of what these thoughts may want you to believe, no matter what you have done, where you have been or what has been done to you, you are priceless and unique. Deep down inside, underneath any fear, shame or blame, you somehow know this even though some of those pesky sabotaging thoughts want you to think differently. It is time to let go and surrender and be the real you.

The vast majority of people in western culture are driven by the need to be perfect, while believing that it is selfish, egotistical, or even prideful to acknowledge or own their goodness. The most selfish thing we can do is to be consumed with fear, self-doubt, self-criticism and concerns about our own inadequacies. When we are preoccupied with these negative thoughts, we are holding back our natural gifts and thus rob ourselves and others of our greatest gifts.

Og Mandino writes, "I am nature's greatest miracle. I am not on this earth by chance. I am here for a purpose and that purpose is to grow into a mountain, not to shrink to a grain of sand. Henceforth will I apply all my efforts to become the highest mountain of all and I will strain my potential until it cries for mercy."

It is time to leave behind vain attempts to imitate others – and be real. It is time to awaken your natural genius – and be genuine. It is time to embrace your uniqueness – and be authentic. It is time to stretch and grow. It is time to change your focus from "What is wrong with me?" to "How can I use my life experiences to better serve others?" It is time to become the person you were designed and destined to become! It

is time to find “you” so that you can give yourself in service to others.

Three Major Causes of Low Self-Esteem

We have been able to identify three major causes for low or challenged self-esteem. The first cause is ever-present, unrealistic expectations created by vivid escape and avoid fantasies (see Quality #2: Goals and Expectations). These expectations are concrete conditions for happiness. When real life shows up differently than our expectations, and it always does, we can feel like a failure. This cause creates self-blame and feelings of unworthiness.

Does it ever seem like your dreams will never come true?

Does it ever feel like you never get a break?

Does it ever feel like everyone else is succeeding?

Ever wonder what is wrong with you?

The second cause is traumatic life events that threatened the often-fragile underpinnings of trust. This cause can leave us fearful, cautious and even reclusive.

Do you ever feel alone or lost?

Ever want to hide in a shell?

Ever feel suspicious or have the need to be overly cautious?

When your mind wonders, does it ever entertain thoughts about people letting you down or being hurt by others?

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The third cause is inconsistency between our public self and our private and often secret self. This cause fosters shame.

If people really knew what we do in private and in secret would they be attracted or repelled?

Would we be okay, relieved or embarrassed?

For most, there are differences between our public and secret self, however, when the gap is wide, shame abides. This is often true of private or secret addictions such as drugs, alcohol and pornography.

Let's spend some time reviewing and getting our heads wrapped around each of these causes.

Unmet Expectations: The vast majority of those actively seeking financial abundance share two thought processes in common. Both are associated with vivid visualization.

With the measurements now available through the Intentional Creation Assessment™ and the current discoveries being made in neuroscience, along with the research we have done in interviews with thousands of individuals actively seeking abundance, we now know that the overwhelming majority of those who share these two thoughts, use them to engage in deadly escape and avoid fantasy. In doing so, they create unrealistic expectations. (See Quality #2: Goals and Expectations for a thorough discussion on this topic)

Even though these expectations are created in the mind and exist only in our mind, due to the unique measurement found in 97% of those actively seeking financial abundance, these expectations are so vivid, so real that they become non-negotiable, concrete conditions for happiness. Furthermore, these expectations are brought into tangible reality and are used as a measuring stick by which they determine the value of

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everything in their lives from relationships to finances.

Reality can never stack up to this rigorous comparison. Instead of igniting passion that drives discipline, focus, effort and action, they instead create high levels of dissatisfaction, overwhelm, anxiety, frustration and even anger. They do not get closer to living our dreams in tangible reality; they in fact get further away.

The lax financial controls of the last decadent decade kept the real damage caused by this process under wraps but no longer. Foreclosures now abound. Credit card defaults soar. Lives and families are being torn apart. The fallout has shaken the very foundation of our financial system. Fantasy was in fashion. Unbridled spending to create the appearance or illusion of wealth enjoyed unprecedented popularity for over a decade. In the history books it will be looked upon with infamy. Few have escaped and the destruction is nearly incalculable.

Expectations are created in the mind but the discouragement reigns supreme in tangible reality. For a long time and for most, it has seemed as if they were the only ones experiencing this pain. Someone had to be blamed. The most common target was self-esteem.

Believing that others are succeeding when we are not, we may think that we are not worthy of wealth. At the deepest of intrinsic levels we may think that “God” does not love us. We may look at others and conclude that something must be wrong with us.

In an attempt to realize these expectations, we may compromise our values, beliefs, opinions and ideas. We may go into debt attempting to prematurely experience these expectations. This deadly spiral of fantasy, catastrophe and self-blame, compounded by mountains of consumer debt crushes the soul and heightens feelings of hopelessness and a lack of worthiness. There is little comfort in finally knowing we are not alone.

I clearly remember a group coaching session when a middle-aged man came on the line

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and said, “Finally I understand. I was raised in a good home and have supportive parents. I never had any really traumatic things happen to me. What you see is what you get with me. Yet my self-esteem is in the toilet. That is exactly what I have been doing – creating expectations through vivid fantasy. Finally I know why I have felt so worthless.”

The single greatest cause of low self-esteem among those actively seeking abundance is unmet unrealistic expectations.

As you have discovered in the second quality of an Intentional Creator, Goals and Expectations, visualization is essential to success. Knowing how to use these powerful and vivid thought processes is critical. Review this Quality and master the five constructive ways you can use these two vivid thought processes to ignite passion and drive discipline, focus, effort and action.

Traumatic events: The second biggest cause of low self-esteem is traumatic life events that damage trust and steal personal identity. The most common contributors include a lack of proper nurturing during developmental years, feelings of abandonment when parents get divorced, emotional, physical or sexual abuse experienced as a child or as an adult, unexpected or untimely job loss, serious financial setbacks that results in bankruptcy or dislocation, clinical depression and serious injury or health challenges. Many seem to survive this cause unscathed while others experience deep wounds that leave painful scars.

Helping a person process through these traumas is the work of a skilled therapist. When someone is ready to own the past, engrave it on their heart, use these experiences to serve others and move forward and take on life, it is time for a life coach.

In my childhood, two cruel people violated my trust and left me reeling for identity. It left me shy and at times reclusive and distrustful. I lived in my own emotional cocoon obsessively thinking about how people would hurt me or how I could hurt them. I was in there. The world was out here.

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As with most people who share similar experiences, I developed coping skills so that I could venture out here long enough to appear normal. I'm sure some of my best friends were imaginary characters who lived in my mind, the one place I could go for safety, control and comfort.

Dad was in the aerospace industry so every three years we moved. As a result of moving and my emotional paralysis, I made few lasting friendships. However, when friendships were made, especially in high school, the relationships ran dangerously deep. I was hungry to be understood and loved.

Those who knew me may be surprised. This is quite revelatory. I am being transparent for your benefit. I was the May Day King in grade school. Played football in junior high, high school and college. I was a member of the honor society, was a first team all-conference linebacker and was recruited by an Ivy League school. Football was one place I could unleash my anger and hunger to find meaning in life.

Football career over, I turned my attention to making money and accumulating material things, which again brought meaning to my life. The material things I owned became the foundation of my self-esteem. In 1988 and 1989, when Ramona and I lost millions in the real estate crash in Southern California and faced the prospect of paying back nearly a million dollars in debt, most of it personally guaranteed corporate debt, I again lost my identity.

I was my business, my apartment buildings, my residence, my exotic cars, my custom bus, my watches, my money. When we were unceremoniously stripped of these things, I was again nothing, just a wounded child with a lost soul. Who would have known that inside this over achiever was a broken and frightened little boy who could not get traction in life.

Perhaps you, too, have suffered a significant loss. Perhaps you, too, have hidden behind obsessive work habits, material things, positions and titles and have suffered a financial

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setback that has exposed your child. Perhaps the pain has been intensified because you, too, lost some of the basic building blocks of childhood and have stepped into adulthood without a proper foundation or frame of reference. Perhaps you have suffered a serious, untimely and debilitating illness or accident and you feel lost, incomplete, less than.

I do not share my story to get pity. I share it so that if anyone has ever felt alone or lost that they may know there is hope. There is a way to fight through this darkness. There is a way to find yourself again – your real self – the miracle that is you. There is a way to let go of the need to be a victim and become a victor.

There is a way for your self-esteem to heal but it will require vigilance and determination. It will require a firm desire to bless the lives of others and a committed partnership with a power greater than you.

With all of my energy, I will share the path I walked to find peace of mind praying that you will have the courage to walk this path and find the same joyful destination. It is time to rebuild your self-esteem one millimeter at a time from the inside out. It is time to learn how to BE real, genuine and authentic. It is time to let go of the need to impress, pretend, feel ashamed and fear. It is time to surrender to what is, let go of what's not and create the most with what you have.

Dr. Robert S. Hartman, who created the math used in the Intentional Creation Assessment™, wrote, "To simply BE is the hardest and most important task in our mortal existence." He went on to say, "This is the highest level of maturity." I used to believe that age and maturity were somehow connected. Not true. In fact they have little to do with one another.

Maturity comes only when we are grounded, whole and complete, fully available to serve others. It has been my experience that few feel qualified, yet as Og writes, "I am nature's greatest miracle. Although I am of the animal kingdom, animal rewards alone

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will not satisfy me. Within me burns a flame which has been passed from generations uncounted and its heat is a constant irritation to my spirit to become better than I am, and I will. I will fan this flame of dissatisfaction and proclaim my uniqueness to the world.” It is your time!

In 1987, the year before our financial crash commenced, I wrote, produced and directed a three-part series on child abuse entitled, *Come in From the Storm (China Doll, The Diary, The Necklace)*.

In *China Doll*, a young and emotionally abusive mother, played by Holly Anderson, finally surrenders and seeks assistance while her loving daughter gratefully listens through the door.

In *The Diary*, a young boy, played by Emmanuel Lewis (TV’s Webster), comes back from the future to visit with his future father who is still a young boy. In a touching scene, Emmanuel’s character pleads with his future father to break the chains of abuse and change the future.

In *The Necklace*, a young girl, played by Tiffany Brissett (Small Wonder), talks with her father, played by Gordon Jump (WKRP in Cincinnati) about a close friend who is suffering from sexual abuse.

It is not uncommon for causes and then symptoms of low self-esteem to be passed down for generations. In truth, we cannot go back in time and change the past, although many of us have wanted to, but we can absolutely change the future. Take courage. Be the one who makes the conscious decision to break these chains. It can stop here. You can change history in one generation – starting with you. Generations to come will honor your very courageous and unselfish gift.

Inconsistencies: The third cause of low self-esteem is inconsistency between our public and secret self.

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Over 92% of those actively seeking abundance are over focused on a person's outward appearance. This can create three risks. One, we can become too trusting of a person based on how they look and become disappointed. Two, we can create expectations about how that person will perform based on how they look and become frustrated. Third, we can compare our worst against their best and become intimidated. This risk can be heightened if the person has the characteristics and/or possessions we desire.

This risk becomes destructive when we inappropriately undervalue our own appearance, possessions, gifts, talents and skills. When this occurs, we become introspective and focus on all of our perceived shortcomings, faults and failures and then compare this against the outward appearance of others – our worst against their very best. We feel less than or even unworthy. Intellectually we can step back and conclude that this is not sound thinking to compare our worst against someone outward appearance, but nonetheless, over 92% engage in this destructive comparison game and the damage is staggering.

Let's add a little more fuel to this fire. We know what is true about ourselves even if we try to project a different public persona – even if we try to hide it from ourselves – we know. However, when we further burden the truth with unnecessary, inappropriate, and destructive negative self-talk we can become uncomfortable and intimidated by almost anyone. Thus the emotional cocoon. This is why I believe abuse of any form at any age can be so devastating. It undermines the truth about who we really are – the greatest miracle in the world - and creates destructive over compensating behaviors. If I said half the things to you that your thought processes are saying to you, could we still be friends?

When we over focus on a person's outward appearance, we may believe that the public persona we see from others is the truth. It is seldom the truth. However, when we focus on what is wrong with us and compare it against the outward appearances of others, we build straw bridges – a bridge that cannot support connection – a bridge that cannot be crossed. Thus we rob ourselves and everyone around us of our greatest gifts (see

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Quality #1: Connecting with People). We can remain trapped in an emotional cocoon with few choices but to act out inappropriately.

Now let's add explosives.

What happens when we examine our private and often secret life and discover behaviors that are terribly inconsistent with our outward appearance or persona?

What happens when we are ashamed of these behaviors?

What happens when we live in fear of being discovered or of public disclosure?

Please understand. We are talking about private and secret acts in which we may engage that we would want to hide from the public. These are private or secrets acts that prick our conscience and for which we are ashamed even if shame comes retrospectively.

A secret life is an incubator for shame. When we feel guilty we are displeased with what we have done. When we feel shame, we are displeased with who we are.

When the gap between our public self and private self is significant, we cannot feel whole and complete. There is a chasm in our soul. We are duplicitous – double minded – split in two. We want to be more like our public persona and are ashamed of our secret persona so we really don't know who we are. We are quite literally lost in this deep chasm.

Before we precede any farther down this road, let us all agree that we each have weaknesses. We all have areas in our lives that can be improved. Most have over-compensating behaviors. I know I do. This cause, as currently being discussed focuses on significant differences. Examples would include addictions such as alcohol, drugs and pornography.

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These secrets are only secrets when we fail to shed light on them and their root causes. Until then we are simply avoiding the truth about our behavior and in the process avoiding connection with our real self and ultimately with others. Relationships will remain superficial at best. Intimacy will be replaced by physical release. Many lives will be destroyed. Fear that we are our behavior crushes hope. Instead of honest introspection, we may spend time trying to impress others or pretending that things are better than they actually are. We may be lost in a tsunami of fear that someone might discover the truth about us or we may be shrouded in shame haunted by our conscience. The root word of shame is sham – like a pillow sham. Shame is a covering under which is hidden our natural genius.

When we finally surrender and willingly take a look, we are on the road to being real, genuine and authentic. This is what is real no matter what we have been projecting. From here we can let go, rebuild, overcome, lift burdens, heal and become whole.

It is the chasm between this secret reality and the projected public image that can create low self-esteem. As this chasm narrows and we become more and more consistent, we become more whole and complete. I have often said that businesses like network marketing and direct sales can fillet a person wide open. Literally it can expose this gap. In some professions we can hide, but not in these.

Some may attempt to pretend. Others anesthetize reality with alcohol or drugs or materialism or work. Others will just cower and fail. The truly brave step into this darkness and shed the light needed to expose the truth and root it out. Wholeness, joy and peace of mind are their reward.

The most common secrets that create this chasm are addictions such as drugs, alcohol and pornography. Other common causes are any differences between professed beliefs and actual behavior. Examples are private and secret outbursts of anger, bouts of depression, spousal or child abuse - things we would not want the world to see because it is inconsistent with our public image.

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If you are struggling with your Self-Esteem due to unmet unrealistic expectations, start using your thoughts constructively and teach those closest to you to do likewise. Please do not let them get trapped in this destructive spiral of fantasy, lost hope and self-blame.

If you are struggling due to a loss of personal identity, seek help from a qualified therapist. You owe it to yourself and you owe it the next generation.

If there are inconsistencies in your life, have the courage to shed light, let go and heal. If you are ready to engrave the past on your heart and use your life experiences as a resource to serve others and move forward, let's begin the rebuilding process.