Self-esteem

‘*Self-esteem’* describes the beliefs you have about yourself – what you think about the type of person you are, your abilities, the positive and negative things about you and what you expect for your future.

If you have healthy self-esteem, your beliefs about yourself will generally be positive. You may experience difficult times in your life, but you will generally be able to deal with these without them having too much of a long-term negative impact on you.

If you have low self-esteem, your beliefs about yourself will often be negative. You will tend to focus on your weaknesses or mistakes that you have made, and may find it hard to recognise the positive parts of your personality. You may also blame yourself for any difficulties or failures that you have

Negative thinking patterns associated with low self-esteem, such as assuming you will fail at things you do, can develop over time and lead to problems such as depression or anxiety.

Low self-esteem can make it hard to try new things or complete tasks, such as starting a new hobby or completing a job application. This can stop you from living your life the way you want, and lead to frustration and depression over time.

If you find certain situations difficult because of low self-esteem, you may start to avoid them and become increasingly socially isolated. This can cause feelings of anxiety and depression.

Low self-esteem can cause people to develop unhelpful behaviours as a way of coping, such as forming damaging relationships, taking drugs or drinking too much. This often causes problems in the long-term and makes life more difficult.

If you are finding it hard to cope with low self-esteem, you might find a talking treatment helpful. A talking treatment can help you explore and understand the reasons behind your low self-esteem and develop possible solutions to deal with it.

Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) is often the treatment of choice for low self-esteem. It aims to identify connections between thoughts, feelings and behaviour, and helps you to develop practical skills to manage any negative patterns that are causing you difficulties.

In order to increase your self-esteem, you need to challenge and change the negative beliefs you have about yourself. By yourself, this can feel like an impossible task, but with the help of a good Cognitive Behavioural therapist, people can improve their self-esteem enormously and have a perspective on how to maintain these changes.