



Self-defeating behaviours that people with low self-esteem may display.

There are six main self-defeating behaviours that have a negative impact on us and leave our self-esteem even more vulnerable. See if you can recognise which behaviour or behaviours you display to others and let's try to change them!

Box A

Avoidant behaviours

These people believe that if they avoid certain things, it might reduce their feelings of discomfort, or if they avoid certain things, it will stop bad things from happening.

They have the attitude or belief it is better not to try or not put in 100% than try their absolute best and still fail.

Behaviours include

Avoiding situations that make them uncomfortable, people, social events, making decisions, certain tasks, giving up part way through a task or before they've even started! And they put off doing things (procrastinate).

Box C

Hiding behaviours

These people 'hide' the aspects of themselves they think others may not like. Things such as their 'real' appearance, (i.e. be something or someone they are not).

They hide their beliefs, likes and dislikes, and their abilities, their sexual orientation and/or their religious beliefs.

Behaviours include

Pleasing other people and fitting in with others, they try to make themselves more loveable and likeable by agreeing with others even if they don't agree with them. They often make jokes at their own expense hoping to avoid rejection, criticism or negative judgements.

Box B

Perfectionist behaviours

These people believe that if they can be perfect and achieve perfection, they will feel better about themselves. Their belief is that being perfect will stop bad things happening. They may also believe deep down that being perfect will make their life better.

Behaviours include

Trying to please people all the time, trying to be in control 100% of the time, they work excessively hard at everything they do, are excessively competitive, and can get angry with themselves and others if mistakes happen or things don't go the way they had hoped or planned.

Box D

Attention seeking behaviours

These people need positive reassurance and compliments from others about their abilities. Sadly, only other people can make them feel better about themselves. They may seek sympathy from others as their belief is it will make them feel better. They get other people to do things for them, as they believe they are incapable (though they aren't).

Behaviours include

They might need to prove themselves to other people and so will put themselves in risky or dangerous situations, seeking the attention they need to feel good about themselves.



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Box E

Passive

These people believe that their rights are less important than other people's, they doubt themselves and their abilities.

They believe they are unworthy, and that their opinions, needs and feelings are less important or valid than other people's.

They worry about upsetting others and about bad stuff happening.

Behaviours include

Avoid sharing their opinions, or expressing their feelings, wishes or saying what you need. They try to please others all the time and find it hard to say 'no' to others when they really want to.

They may say things like 'I might be wrong, or 'it's only my opinion' or say things like 'it doesn't matter' as they try to avoid any kind of disagreement or conflict.

They may put themselves down, making jokes about themselves or laugh at themselves.

Box F

Aggressive behaviours

Sometimes people over compensate or hide their low self-esteem by being aggressive.

These people can blame other people for the negative way they feel about themselves.

They might be defensive as they can't cope with the idea that people may view them in any negative way. They can be jealous of others.

Behaviours include

Treating others with disrespect, putting other people down, they can be verbally abusive or shouting at others.

To them, their opinion is the most important, so they often push it on others. They often demand their own way and can be physically aggressive or threatening. They may make fun of other people's opinions, thoughts or feelings and take their anger or frustration with themselves out on others.

Their body language can be aggressive too, with fist clenching and being loud.