WHAT?

We all need to have a sense of personal worth. This sense of personal worth has two elements: security and significance.

Security means being loved and accepted for who I am, regardless of what I do. This is known as “core” self-esteem. Significance means having meaning or purpose in my life, feeling adequate in what I do. This is referred to as “situational” self-esteem.

Self-esteem is essential to normal and healthy development when we feel secure within ourselves; we tend to respond appropriately to challenges and opportunities. When there is a lack of security, our ability to be resilient in the face of life’s problems is diminished; with negatives having more power over us than positives.
SELF ESTEEM

People with high self-esteem believe that they are adequate, strong and worthy of a good life, while those with low self-esteem feel inadequate and worthless. Many people base their self-esteem on external factors, such as how much money they earn, how much they weigh and whether people like and appreciate them. If one of these external variables change, self-esteem may be affected.

UNHELPFUL ASSUMPTIONS

We often develop a series of false assumptions regarding what we think will meet our needs for security and significance. The reason they are called false assumptions is because they do not give us unconditional love, acceptance, and firm significance in life. They give us a temporary sense of self-esteem.

Do any of the following sound familiar to you?

I will be secure if:
- I am in a loving relationship
- I am never criticized
- I am not rejected as a person

I will be significant if:
- I excel at school
- I excel when my projects are promoted
- When I have financial success
- When I am granted recognition by my peer group

When we pour our energy into meeting our needs through pursuing false assumptions (like those above), we can be devastated when those assumptions do not lead to lasting security and significance.

DEVELOP

Choose to please yourself
It is good to care about other’s feeling but your needs are just as important. Do not neglect yourself.

Recognise your anger
You deserve to live life as you want. Also, remember the truly successful things you have done in your life. Reward yourself when you do succeed.

Learn a new skill/hobby
The “I can do this” type of feeling or a new understanding that comes with mastering a new skill or concept can help you feel better about yourself.

Creativity
Anything that involves new behavior, new ideas, new beginnings, new projects, a different way of doing things, new ways of expressing the self. Keep an open mind – just the ability to try new things is important in and of itself.

Exercise
Nothing extraordinary is necessary, a brisk walk will do. Regular exercise fuels creativity and positive moods. Exercise also gives a sense that we have accomplished something.

Serving others
Giving service to your family, friends, and community is important, positive work. Giving of yourself – whether it be time, services, or just plain energy – can be very rewarding.

Spiritual activities and experiences
These keep us focused on the deeper meaning of life and help us keep problems in perspective.

Talk to friends, family and colleagues
This can be useful in further defining who you are, your strengths and abilities, and what your have to offer the world.

Talk to a therapist
Contact Mrs Wong Kwok Leong Student Wellness Centre for individual/group therapy. Seek help in building an inner dialogue about who you are and how you might come to the genuine feeling of being a person who is worthy of the good things in life.

Connect with others with the same issue
Talk to the counsellors from the counselling centre for a referral to a self-help group.

POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

A positive affirmation can help you replace a negative thought with a more helpful positive one. By repeating them, you can recondition your brain and change how you feel and think about any situation. Moving away from negative thinking helps improve your self-esteem.

Some positive affirmations to strengthen your self-esteem:
- I deserve to be loved
- I deserve to be happy and successful
- I am free to choose to live as I wish and to give priority to my desires
- I can make my own choices and decisions
- I can choose happiness whenever I wish no matter what my circumstances
- I have power to change myself
- I am flexible and open to change in every aspect of my life
- I act with confidence having a general plan and accept that plans are open to alteration
- It is enough to have done my best
- I can forgive and understand others and their motives