

The value of a positive self-esteem?

Self-esteem can heavily influence people's choices and decisions. It serves a motivational function by making it more or less likely that people will take care of themselves and explore their full potential.

A challenging work environment may deeply affect one's self-esteem. Seafaring is characterized by a unique set of features which sets it apart from other occupations. The demanding physical working conditions, the hazardous tasks, the long hours of work and high levels of stress and fatigue, as well as the isolated lifestyle, can affect a seafarer's mental wellbeing. In this context, the workforce may be regarded as particularly vulnerable to mental ill health.

In such a challenging environment, having a positive self-esteem is vital. Let us devote an article to understanding the value of a positive self-esteem and ways to challenge our beliefs in order to raise our self-esteem.

What is self-esteem?

Self-esteem involves the beliefs we hold about ourselves. When we have healthy self-esteem, we feel positive about ourselves but also about most aspects of our lives. We tend to look at everything with a more positive attitude and we can also better deal with life's challenges. On the other hand, when our self-esteem is low, we tend to see ourselves and our lives in a more negative and critical light. This also means that we may find it a lot more difficult to deal with and overcome the challenges we face no matter how small or big they may be or appear to be.

What causes low self-esteem?

Low self-esteem often begins in our early years. People we are close to, such as teachers, friends, family but also the media send us positive and negative messages about ourselves. It is interesting to notice that we often only focus on the things that we believe we are not doing well, rather than accepting and embracing the positive feedback



messages that we see and hear. Moreover, negative life experiences like neglect, abuse or criticism can have a negative impact on our self-esteem.

How does low self-esteem affect us?

When having a low self-esteem or low confidence, you focus on flaws rather than positive personality traits you possess. You may avoid social situations, you may be afraid of trying new things, and avoid things or activities you find challenging. This may not appear to be such an important issue but in the long-term, your life can be significantly impacted due to low self-esteem. Living with low self-esteem can harm your mental health and lead to problems such as depression and anxiety. You may also

develop unhealthy habits, such as smoking and drinking too much, as a way of coping. Low self-esteem can impact work relationships. Individuals with low self-esteem may not voice their opinions or needs out of fear of being judged; they may perceive constructive criticism as an attack to their self-worth; seek constant reassurance from others or miss out on opportunities for development out of fear of failure.

How can we boost our self-esteem?

The first step is identifying the negative beliefs you have about yourself, and then challenge them. Become aware of these negative thoughts, beliefs or feelings and ask yourself when and why you first started to think these thoughts. Also write

CREW HEALTH ADVICE

down positive things about yourself and things that you are good at. Use positive affirmations to counteract negative self talk. Aim to have at least five positive things on your list and add to it regularly. Keep your list somewhere you can see it and read it whenever you feel like you need a boost.

Helpful Techniques to improve low self-esteem

- Recognize what you're good at: we are all good at something and we all have great qualities.
- Set small achievable goals that can give you a sense of accomplishment. Small goals can include following a healthy diet, expressing your opinion in a safe setting, celebrate successes no matter how small they may appear to be.
- Build positive relationships: try to build relationships with people who are positive and who appreciate you.
- Be kind to yourself: being kind to yourself means being gentle to yourself at times when you feel like being self-critical.
- Start saying no: people with low self-esteem often feel they have to say yes to other people, even when they



do not really want to. This may make you feel angry, resentful, stressed and depressed.

It all starts with taking small steps and wanting to see the change in yourself! Devote some time to yourself each week to focus on the things you would like to change. To empower yourself and think about all that you are great at! Don't undermine the little things. Be kind to yourself as if you were your closest friend!

This advice was compiled with the help of our psychological and psychometric screening partners I.M.E.Q. You can watch their mental health video library at: www.imeq-magazine.com

CREW HEALTH ADVICE

The Club was the first to launch a crew health scheme in 1996 due to increasing crew illness claims and a lack of accountability of clinics. Since 1996, the Crew Health programme has become one of the Club's leading loss prevention initiatives. The aim of the programme is to reduce the volume and value of crew illness claims which are caused by a pre-existing illnesses or disease. These underlying conditions often impact on the crew member's fitness for service and can endanger not only the health of the seafarer but also the onboard safety of other crew.

Sophia Bullard

Crew Health Programme Director

Direct: +44 20 7204 2417

Email: sophia.bullard@thomasmiller.com



Sophia joined Thomas Miller in 1992 and from 1994 worked as a claims handler dealing mainly with French and Spanish Members. In 2004, Sophia became the Crew Health Programme Director. Sophia has undertaken a large number of clinic audits, implemented the standard medical

form and clinic guidelines. She has also lead the scheme through the largest period of growth and development with a doubling of approved clinic facilities and a four fold member increase. Sophia is a Director of Thomas Miller & Co. Ltd.

Saidul Alom

Crew Health Fees Administrator

Direct: +44 20 7204 2968

Email: saidul.alom@thomasmiller.com



Saidul Alom joined Crew Health from the European Region Service Team in 2004. Saidul provides administrative support to the Crew Health programme and is responsible for liaison with the approved clinics on financial billing matters and ensuring prompt payment of all clinic fees.

Stuart Last

Crew Health Member Administrator

Direct: +44 20 7204 2413

Email: stuart.last@thomasmiller.com



Stuart joined Thomas Miller in 1998 as a claims trainee for UK P&I Club's Greek Members. In April 2005 Stuart joined Crew Health as the Team Administrator. Stuart is responsible for co-ordination of Member entries and administration for the clinic approval process.