

# Self esteem: friend or foe essay



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Lauren Slater, in her article “ The Trouble with Self-Esteem” starts out by stating that self-esteem is generally regarded as a positive thing. A person of high self-esteem is a successful well-respected member of society, with the opposite being true for a person of low self-esteem. She explains that in the social science and psychological world this notion has been rarely challenged until recently. She shares examples of many papers and essays whose premise is to contradict these well-accepted ideas. She goes on to cite that we as Americans focus on self-esteem, creating associations and task forces to aid in the development of self-esteem. Slater quotes researchers and studies that share these ideas which question the validity of what we generally think about self-esteem.

They state that self-esteem might not be beneficial and could even be a hindrance in the lives of Americans. She explains the history of self-esteem in America, citing the ideas of Ralph Waldo Emerson and other significant people in history. Slater introduces the idea that Baumeister and Emler are improperly assuming self-esteem to be bad, possibly confusing it with pride and egotism. She also shares a personal experience she had with a murderer. She found that supposed high self-esteem can actually be hiding low self-worth. She then proposes that concealed low self-esteem can be what causes violence and complex interpersonal problems whereas demonstrative low esteem is not dangerous.

One of Slater’s ideas is that the more we think of ourselves, the easier we can be offended by what others think of us. With this new insight, she hypothesizes that it may be beneficial to us to be brought down a notch instead of building ourselves up to be more than we are. She declares that

this notion is contradictory to the psychiatric and psychological fields, stating that it would be hard to have patients pay to be beaten down, and leave feeling worse about themselves. Slater introduces a Japanese therapeutic practice called “ Morita” which centers on separating ones feelings, cares, and worries from oneself, and refocusing them on something other than themselves. Slater proposes that we might be more successful by practicing more self-control.

She gives examples of therapeutic programs that concentrate on self-control. She shares the idea that it may not be of import how we feel about ourselves but how well we do, citing Sigmund Freud that work and love are essential. She branches off from self-control and self-responsibility to self-appraisal to understand where we are weak and frail, and where we flourish and are stable. This self-appraisal is her remedy to our so-called woes of self-esteem. I think this self-appraisal may be key to the solution to the problems mentioned, but not to the solution to self-esteem.

For, I believe that there is no problem with self-esteem, but as Slater herself suggested, many people confuse self-esteem with pride and egotism.

Therefore I agree with Slater that self-appraisal may help our society to be more successful and happy; yet, I disagree with various points contained in this article, many of which, however, are not the opinion of the author. I think that a proper definition of self-esteem, something not provided in the original text, would help us in properly seeking out the problems we are seeking to understand. Self-esteem is defined as confidence and satisfaction in and with oneself. Now what is wrong with confidence and being content with oneself, if it is merited and appropriate? I propose the answer would be <https://assignbuster.com/self-esteem-friend-or-foe-essay/>

nothing. Nevertheless I can see how one could misinterpret arrogance and narcissism for high self-esteem; even though these things are formed by improper feelings about oneself.

Inappropriate pride would most definitely be detrimental and could effortlessly lead one to be offended, easily provoked, or violent. This is because pride and self-esteem are vastly different. Self-esteem means you feel good about yourself, that you are pleased with yourself and confident in your abilities, nothing more and nothing less. These are personal, internal things, involved solely with oneself. Self-esteem, or feeling good about yourself, would naturally lead us to being happy and therefore treating others well.

However, pride, as I will call it, referring to improper pride, is unlike self-esteem; it's believing that one is better than another person not merely thinking highly of oneself without comparison and competition. These feelings of pride would lead one to belittle and degrade others in an attempt to exalt oneself. The way we combat pride is through its antonym, i. e. humility.

How do we do that? Slater suggests using self-appraisal. This is the act of evaluating ourselves, our talents, goals, desires, successes, etc. It's endless. Using the key of being honest with ourselves in where we stand, we then recognize we are only human and that we have weaknesses. These understandings keep the feelings of superiority and hatred at bay while affording us the room to esteem ourselves of worth. In conclusion, Slater does a good job of sharing many points of view, although we must be careful

of misconstruing the problems of pride and vanity with something enriching like self-esteem.

She does however share a very poignant idea; we could use self-appraising to free ourselves of these other core problems that really affect us. Hence, positive high self-esteem along with humility, understanding, and self-appraisal, is the combination we need. They need not be opposites. We can possess both conjointly and without contradicting ourselves; and in them lies the happiness we seek.