

# EsteemUp

Work on improving  
your self-esteem and confidence



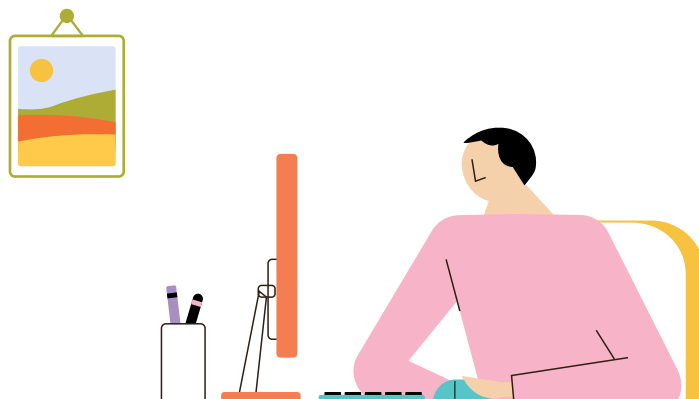
## Module 4

### Socially self-assured

CEDARS – Counselling and Person Enrichment Section (CoPE)

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# How to Use this Workbook

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EsteemUp is a self-help programme with 4 modules based on the principles of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). It takes around 45 minutes per week for 3-4 weeks.

It was developed in the Department of Clinical, Neuro-, and Developmental Psychology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Students were involved in the creative process by giving feedback on the materials, which were then adapted to suit the needs and preferences of students.

A special thanks to Manja de Neef and her book 'Build your confidence with CBT' for the invaluable input she has provided!

## An overview of the programme

### Module 1

#### Kick-start your self-esteem

Start challenging all the negative thoughts you have about yourself and focus on the positives.



### Module 3

#### Start to own it

Learn to really own your accomplishments and to stop comparing.



### Module 2

#### Confidence booster

Learn the secret to growing confidence: feeling the fear and doing it anyway.



### Module 4

#### Socially self-assured

Lastly, boost your self-esteem by improving your social circle and speaking your mind



You can find a list of resources in the community [here](#) when you need support. Counselling service is available at HKU for current students. It is free-of-charge, professional and confidential. Don't hesitate to seek help if needed.

#### Enquiries and Feedback

CEDARS – Counselling and Person Enrichment Section (CoPE)

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# Module 4

## Socially self-assured

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### Introduction

Awesome, you made it to the last module!

We need to take a moment to celebrate, so please do the following:

1. Raise your left arm above your head.
2. Straighten the fingers of your left hand.
3. Raise your right arm above your head.
4. Straighten the fingers of your right hand.
5. With a good amount of speed and force, touch your right hand to your left hand.



Today's topic is about self-esteem in a social context. Our social environment and interaction with others can greatly affect our self-esteem; both positively and negatively.

What we're covering today:

- The importance of surrounding yourself with people that make you feel good about yourself.
- How to be assertive by speaking up and asking for what you want.
- And lastly, we'll take a look at how far you've come and recap all the tools.

## Quick check-in

### 1 Owing your accomplishments

When something goes well, you started to own it by focusing on what YOU did to get there, and by celebrating (like we just did with the self-five!).



How did that go? Did you notice yourself owning your accomplishments more by focusing on what you did and/or by celebrating?

### 2 Building confidence by doing

You also continued to build your confidence through action.

This was the action you want to take: (refer to answer D1 in Module 3)

Did you perform the action? If so: how did it go? If not: what stopped you?

Remember: repetition is the key to confidence. So keep repeating the thing you want to gain confidence in, and we can almost guarantee that your confidence will grow.

### 3 Stop comparing

Comparison is the thief of joy. You started paying attention to when you compare and learned how to perform a reality check and shift your focus to gratitude.

How did it go? Did you become more aware of your comparisons, and did you manage to perform a reality check and shift your attention towards gratitude?

PS: the techniques you've learned in this programme can be tricky to master. Don't get discouraged if it's hard - **this is normal!** Keep at it; it will get easier and will almost definitely positively impact your self-esteem and life.

Okay, on to today's content!

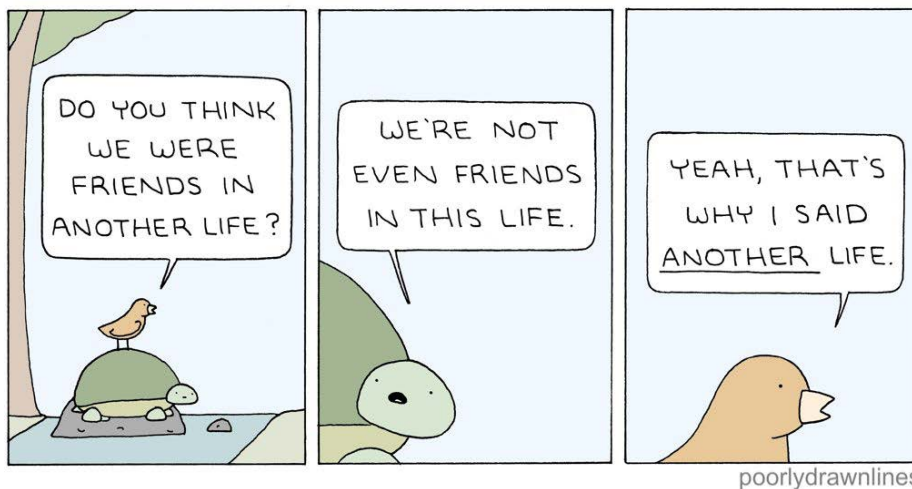


## Positive relationships

Let's talk about something that might seem logical, but can still be difficult to realize in daily life. And that is to create and foster positive relationships.

All too often, we stay in unhealthy relationships (whether it's friends, romance or other). Perhaps we've been friends for so long that we don't know how to change the dynamic. Or we want to end the relationship but don't have the heart to say: I don't want to hang out with you anymore.

**It's time to take a good hard look at your relationships.**



Comic by [Poorly Drawn Lines](#)

You want people in your life who ...	You want to stop interacting with people who ...
Appreciate you	Take you for granted
Are positive about you	Criticize you
Accept you, flaws and all	Make you feel like you need to be perfect
Say nice things about you to others (when you're not there)	Talk negatively about you behind your back
Make you feel good / safe / happy	Make you feel bad / insecure / unhappy

Are there any people in your social circle who have some (or all) of the negative traits?

No       Yes

If the answer is **no**, feel free to turn to P.10 for the next chapter. If it's **yes**, continue with the chapter as usual!

What do they do that makes you feel bad about yourself?

### Can you choose you?

Now ask yourself: are you willing to change or end the relationship, for the sake of your own well-being? If so, think about how you could go about this. For example, you could:

- Ask them to change their negative behaviours. If they are willing to do that, perhaps the relationship can be salvaged.
- Change your own behaviour: perhaps you've enabled the other person through your own actions.
- Change the role the other person plays in your life, for example from 'friend you hang out with often' to 'acquaintance you rarely see'.
- Have an honest conversation with them and explain that this relationship isn't working for you.
- Or simply stop reaching out until the relationship dies out.

Write down if and how you want to change or end the relationship with the person/people you wrote down above.



## What if it's impossible to end the relationship?

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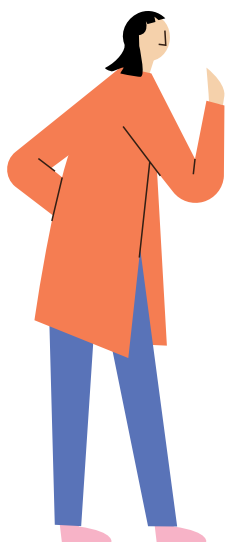
Sometimes, you're simply 'stuck' with a person. Perhaps they're a family member, or someone you're forced to interact with on a daily basis such as a colleague.

In this case, you might try to:

- Minimize the contact you do have. It's okay to politely end an interaction and move on.
- Make an effort to improve the relationship, for example by giving them your feedback. The next chapter will teach you how.
- Distance yourself from what they say. Remind yourself that what they say and think is simply their perception and in no way the 'truth' about you. Don't keep thinking about it.
- Keep it from bringing you down: if they say something negative, remind yourself (in your mind) of something related that's positive.

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The last thing is to of course take action and do what you just wrote down above. It can be difficult to **speak up** sometimes, so that's exactly what the next chapter is about.



## Assertive you

Assertiveness is an important skill that anybody can learn. It's been shown to link to higher self-esteem and healthier social relationships. Assertiveness is an umbrella term for things such going after what you want, saying 'no' and speaking up. It's a style of communication in which you express your feelings and needs directly, while maintaining respect for others.

How assertive would you say you are on average?

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

Not at all Very!

Why did you give yourself that rating?

Assertiveness can help successfully navigate social, professional and academic challenges such as:

- Asking for help when you need it
- Disagreeing with someone
- Standing up for yourself
- Telling someone to stop
- Giving someone negative or positive feedback
- Receiving negative or positive feedback
- Requesting something, asking for a favor
- Asking questions (for example: during a lecture)
- Initiating interaction (for example: stepping up to talk to someone at a party)

What could you gain by being more assertive? How would that benefit you?

Today, we're going to focus on one way you can be assertive, and that is by speaking your mind or asking for what you want/need from another person.

**There are 3 steps to speaking your mind:**

- 1 Don't let your negative thoughts and feelings stop you
- 2 Decide what you want to say
- 3 Have the conversation

**Let's go over each of them.**



## ● Don't let your negative thoughts and feelings stop you

There can be different reasons for not being assertive, even when a situation calls for it.

Think of a situation in which you wanted to say something, but didn't. Maybe somebody played music out loud in the study hall, your housemate often leaves dirty dishes, a friend has a habit of interrupting you, or anything else. If possible, choose something that you could still say something about (something recent or recurring).

Describe what happened: what did the other person do? (answer A)

There can be several reasons to stay quiet. Which of these reasons do you recognize in yourself (both generally as well as in the situation above)?

- Speaking up feels like being a jerk, it's too close to being aggressive
- Feeling less important than others
- Not wanting to be an inconvenience or bother the other person
- Being afraid of what the other person will think or say; of being judged
- Worrying that people will get mad or reject you
- Coming from a culture or a family in which assertiveness is not appreciated, found inappropriate or perceived as offensive or rude
- otherwise, namely:

It's very natural to not like confrontation. People are social animals and we prefer to get along. But when your well-being is at stake, it's important to speak up. And as we said earlier: being assertive also boosts your self-esteem. **By asking for what you need, you're basically saying to yourself: I matter.**

So if you want to speak up, the first step is to be aware of what's stopping you and to challenge those beliefs and thoughts by formulating an alternative view. Here are some examples:

Negative thoughts and feelings:	Alternative view:
Being assertive feels the same as being a jerk.	Being assertive differs from being a jerk/ aggressive because you still respect and listen to the other person.
I am not as important as other people, or: what I want is not important.	I am just as important as everyone else, it's my low self-esteem thinking that I'm not.
I want to be liked by others, I'm worried they'll judge me.	If me being honest means the other person stops liking me, that probably means they are not a relationship worth keeping. I want to surround myself with people who won't judge me, I want to build positive relationships.
I don't want to have conflicts with other people, they're going to get mad at me.	I can have a different opinion than others, that doesn't mean we'll have a big fight. If I communicate respectfully, the other won't get upset.
It's more polite to stay quiet and not make a fuss.	I know it's in my own best interest to speak up. And in the end, my well-being is the most important thing and way more important than so-called 'politeness'!

For each of the reasons you selected or wrote above, write down an alternative view.

## 2 Decide what you want to say

There are 3 'ingredients' to a friendly yet assertive message. Let's combine them now.

This was the situation you described earlier in which you wanted to say something, but didn't:  
(refer to answer A on p.10)

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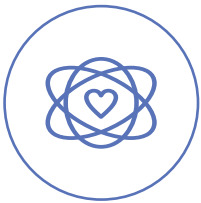
### First ingredient: The other person's observable behaviour

Here you describe concrete, observable behaviour, rather than blaming criticizing or judging. If your statement is factual, the other won't feel attacked. Examples: I've noticed that...

- ... *the music you're playing is quite loud.*
- ... *there are often dirty dishes in the kitchen.*
- ... *you sometimes interrupt me while I'm speaking.*

Using the situation from above, what is the concrete, observable behaviour of the other? Formulate this as if you would tell the other person. "I've noticed that ..."





### Second ingredient: The impact it has on you and your feelings

This allows the other person to understand why it is important to you.

- I've noticed that the music you're playing is quite loud. *I can't concentrate and study for my exam because of it.*
- I've noticed that there are often dirty dishes in the kitchen. *I end up having to do dishes first when I want to start cooking and it's very frustrating.*
- I've noticed that you sometimes interrupt me while I'm speaking. *When that happens, I feel like you don't care about what I'm telling you.*

What are the consequences of the other person's behaviour for you? Again, formulate this as if you would tell the other person.



### Last ingredient: What you would like to see differently

Offer a solution to the problem, or ask the other person to come up with one.

- I've noticed that the music you're playing is quite loud. I can't concentrate and study for my exam because of it. *Could you turn down the volume a bit?*
- I've noticed that there are often dirty dishes in the kitchen. I end up having to do dishes first when I want to start cooking and it's very frustrating. *Please do your dishes after you've finished cooking.*
- I've noticed that you sometimes interrupt me while I'm speaking. When that happens, I feel like you don't care about what I'm telling you. *Could we talk about that?*

What solution would you like to propose?

### 3 Have the conversation

Now that you know what you want to say, it's time to say it! Here are some general tips to have productive conversations.

- Pick a good moment to talk to the other person. Make sure you have enough time (don't squeeze it in somewhere) and that you are both in a reasonably good mood (it's often unwise to have these types of conversations when you are feeling emotional).
- Think of how you want to open the conversation, for example "There's something I wanted to talk to you about and it's difficult for me, but I think it'll be better for our friendship". Practice saying this sentence out loud a few times so it comes out easier.
- Listen to the other person as best as you can. In these kinds of conversations this is often difficult, but it is also necessary to come to a solution. Remind yourself that your main goal is to improve things, not to accuse the other.
- If necessary, take a short or longer break. For example, if one of you gets emotional, or if you can't seem to find a solution together. Then make a clear plan for when to continue the conversation.
- A few days after the conversation, if possible evaluate how it went together. What did you like about the conversation? What would you do differently next time? In this way, you work together on a continuously improved relationship.

As with most things, it's easy to have the intention of speaking up, but actually doing it is a lot harder. It is uncomfortable to have such conversations with others, and there isn't much that can be done about that. That's why it's important to make a concrete plan to do it anyway.



If the situation you worked with today was a current one, decide when to have the conversation. What day, time and place might work? If it wasn't a current situation, you can leave this question blank.



How can you encourage or convince yourself to speak up, even if it's uncomfortable and you want to chicken out?

### Examples of how to convince yourself:

- Remind yourself of WHY you want to speak up. Think of how your life would be better if you did say something, so your motivation to speak up outweighs your fears or worries.
- Assume the other person will react positively. We tend to imagine catastrophic consequences ('they're going to get mad and our relationship will be ruined!!'). But more often than not, people react really well to these kinds of conversations. So assume the best.
- Text the person in advance saying you want to talk about something later that day/week. That way, you have to follow through.
- Remember how our negative thoughts stop us from being assertive? When faced with the situation, try to become aware of your negative beliefs. Maybe you think the other person will get angry at you, or will be very hurt. Then come up with a more realistic view of the situation.
- Write down what you want to do on a sheet of paper and tape it somewhere you can see every day as a motivational reminder.
- Make a promise to yourself that you won't let fear hold you back or make your decisions for you. **You can feel the fear and do it anyway!**

PS. When you finish this module, you will unlock your last unlockable! A cheat sheet for speaking up :)



YOU  
CAN  
DO IT!

## Keep going!

You're nearing the end of the last module of EsteemUp. You've learned and done a lot in the past weeks, so it's the perfect time to take a look back.



This is what you said you struggled with at the beginning of this programme: (refer to answer A in Module 1)

This was the goal you set for yourself: (refer to answer B in Module 1)

Take a moment to reflect. Where do you stand now and did you reach (parts of) your goals?

Of course we hope that you're feeling much more confident and happy with yourself. But we also know that it usually takes several months to grow a healthy self-esteem. If you're not there yet, that's OK! Keep using the tools and techniques you learned until you're happy with your levels of self-esteem.

## Looking ahead

Remembering and utilising the tools and techniques from this programme is key to changing your healthy self-esteem. Let's look ahead.

Set a self-esteem or confidence-related goal for yourself for the coming month(s):

Think about which tools can help with this goal, and check out some ideas for how you might remember to use them!

<b>Changing negative thoughts</b>	<b>Positivity list</b>
Write down the 3 steps on a piece of paper and keep it somewhere in sight, for example by hanging it above your desk.  1. Notice the negative thought 2. Gather evidence against it 3. Reframe in a more realistic, friendly way	Get a physical positivity list (such as a little notebook) that you always carry with you in your bag. You'll often see it and get reminded.
<b>Feeling the fear and doing it anyway</b>	<b>Having realistic expectations</b>
Make a nice background for your phone that says 'Feel the fear and do it anyway'. Inspirational quotes can be useful after all!	Get a small item that represents anti-perfectionism to you and keep it in sight. For example something with imperfections that you love anyway.
<b>Owning your accomplishments</b>	<b>Stop comparing</b>
Add a small notification into your calendar for every (other) week to look back and notice all your achievements and successes - big and small. And to celebrate them!	Get yourself a 'no-comparison buddy': make a deal with a friend that in each other's presence, you don't compare (so if one person does, the other points it out!).
<b>Being more assertive</b>	<b>Bonus tip!</b>
Adopt a fierce, fiery, fearless alter ego. Give them a name - like how Beyonce had Sacha Fierce as her alter ego. When you want to be assertive but find it hard, think to yourself: what would my alter ego do or say in this situation?	When you need a little pick-me-up or refresher, you can redo any (part of a) module at any time. For example: save the URL in your bookmarks bar, or add a shortcut to your homescreen on your phone!

Now make a plan for yourself to work towards your new goal: which of the tools and techniques might be useful, and how will you remember to apply them? Feel free to mix and match the ideas above, or come up with your own!

Choose 1 or 2 techniques you want to implement, and write down how you'll remember and use them:

**Good luck with your new goal!**



## It's a wrap

And with that, you've come all the way to the end of the programme. Amazing!



Here's a summary of everything you've done and learned in the past weeks.

### Module 1

#### Kick-start your self-esteem



- We defined self-esteem: it's what we think, feel and believe about ourselves, and the value that we place on ourselves.
- What keeps self-esteem low is the way you process information (your 'glasses') and your actions.
- You learned how to be more aware of your self-critical thoughts and to reframe them in a more friendly way.
- You started paying more attention to the positive things around you, and began writing down all the nice things you hear or think in your day.

### Module 2

#### Confidence booster

- You started forming a more balanced view of yourself (weaknesses and strengths) by adding good traits of yours to your positivity list.
- The only way to grow your confidence is by doing the thing you're insecure about over and over.
- 3 steps to make this easier: make it smaller, plan and practice the action, and decide you can feel the fear and do it anyway.
- If you have unrealistic expectations, you'll never be happy with the outcome. So make them more realistic.



## Module 3

### Start to own it



- To grow confidence and self-esteem, you need to own your accomplishments. Focus on what YOU did well and celebrate your successes.
- The habit of comparison can stand in the way of a healthy self-esteem. Stop comparing by becoming aware that you compare, perform a reality check, and shift your focus to gratitude.
- Repetition is the key to boosting your confidence. You can't just do something once, you need to do it several times.

## Module 4

### Socially self-assured

- Our social environment and interaction with others can greatly affect our self-esteem; both positively and negatively.
- It's important to surround yourself with people that make you feel good about yourself and to build positive relationships.
- You can grow your self-esteem by being assertive and speaking up: name the other person's behaviour, the effect it has on you and propose a solution. You practiced a conversation today: make sure to actually have it!
- Lastly, you set a new self-esteem related goal and came up with a plan to work on it using the tools from EsteemUp.



## And that's it!

It's amazing that you made it all the way to the end, and we're really proud of you. **A healthy self-esteem doesn't appear overnight, but if you keep applying what you've learned in your daily life we can almost guarantee that you will get there.**

Your coach will message you one last time and you can log in to the platform at any time during the next two years to take another look at the modules. We wish you the best of luck in the future and hope your self-esteem keeps growing!



What did you think of this module? Please let us know your views here.



## Speak your mind



### Don't let your negative thoughts and feelings stop you

It's very natural to dislike confrontation. But when your well-being is at stake, it's important to speak up. Become aware of what's stopping you and challenge those often inaccurate beliefs and thoughts.

**What thoughts and feelings are stopping you?**

.....

**What can you say to counter these?**

.....

.....



### Decide what you want to say

There are 3 parts to a friendly yet assertive message: the observable behaviour, the effect on you, and what you'd like to see differently.

**Write down the message as if you're telling the other person:**

.....

.....



### Have the conversation

It's uncomfortable to have such conversations with others, and there isn't much that can be done about that. That's why it's important to make a concrete plan to do it anyway.

**When will you have the conversation?**

.....