

EsteemUp

Work on improving
your self-esteem and confidence

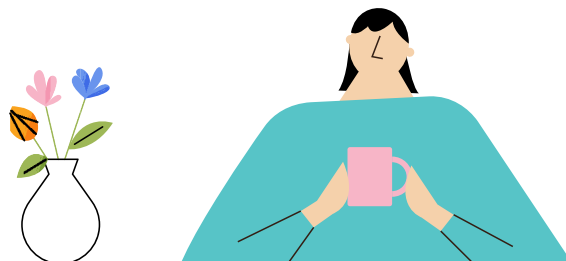


Module 3

Start to own it

Contents

How to use this workbook	P1
Introduction	P2
Own your accomplishments	P5
Stop comparing	P9
Build on it	P14
It's a wrap!	P16
Cheat Sheet	P18



How to Use this Workbook

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 2

Confidence booster

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



Module 3

Start to own it

Learn to really own your accomplishments and to stop comparing.



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)

Tel: 3917-8388 | Email: cedars-cope@hku.hk

Module 3

Start to own it

Introduction

Hello again!

Today we're going to build on what you've learned and done in the previous weeks to continue growing your self-esteem.

In this module, you'll...

- ▶ Start to own your achievements, big and small
- ▶ Work on breaking the habit of comparison
- ▶ And continue to grow your confidence by taking another small step



Quick check-in

Positivity list & character traits

In the last module, you got the assignment to continue keeping a positivity list, and to start adding some character traits. Grab your list now and look it over!

How is it going keeping track of your positivity list and adding traits? Is it getting easier to notice the positive and to attach traits to positives?

Share some traits you write down here!

Reframing negative thoughts

The other thing you've been doing for the past few weeks, is paying attention to your negative thoughts and reframing them to be more realistic.

How is it going recognizing and reframing your negative thoughts?

Keep it up! The more you practice these things, the more your self-esteem will improve.

I struggled with these assignments

It's perfectly normal if you struggled. You've probably had low self-esteem for quite a while now, and changing that will take some time and effort.

Here are two things you can do:

1. Instead of continuing this module, repeat an earlier one to practice a bit more with the positivity list (module 1 or 2) and/or reframing negative thoughts (module 1). We're cramming a lot of info in a short time, so it's a perfectly good idea to repeat an earlier step before moving on.
2. Consider what might have been the reason(s) that you struggle. They might be practical (e.g. forgetting, lack of time), more emotional (e.g. it feels difficult and demotivating) or something else. Once you know, you can come up with a fitting solution by yourself or with the help of a friend.

Ready to continue with this module?



Own your accomplishments

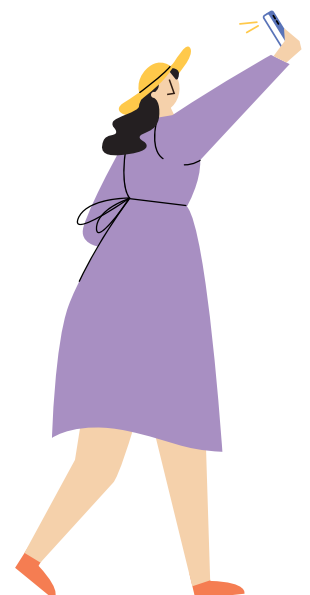
In the previous module you learned that confidence comes from doing something over and over. You also selected an area to grow confidence in, and came up with one small step you could take. Let's see how it went!

This was what you wanted to be more confident about: refer to answer A in Module 2

This was the step you wanted to take: refer to answer B in Module 2

Did you perform this action? If so: how did it go? If not: what stopped you? (answer A1)

How do you feel about yourself after doing (or not doing) this action?



I didn't manage to do it and now I feel bad about myself

Is it a bummer that your plans didn't work out? Yes.

Is it worth beating yourself up over it? Absolutely NOT.

People aren't machines and sometimes things don't go the way we'd like. Here are a few things you can try to overcome these negative feelings:

- Use the technique from the first module to reframe these negative thoughts.
 1. Become aware of your negative thoughts
 2. Gather evidence & come up with arguments against the thoughts
 3. Reframe the critical thoughts in a more realistic way
- Focus on what you DID do: you made a plan, you're doing this module now, so you are working on your self-esteem even though the action above didn't work. The exercise below might help with this.
- Later in this module we're going to work on another step you can take. It's an opportunity to revisit this action and perhaps tweak it so it becomes more manageable.

Learning to own it

Remember the 'black-tinted glasses'? When we lack confidence or self-esteem, we have this tendency to interpret information in a way that fits our beliefs. If we lack confidence in something, we might not notice that it went well, downplay our efforts, or we say 'we got lucky' or 'it was a fluke'.

These glasses can prevent your confidence from growing, so to maximize your confidence gain you need to really **own your accomplishments**. Here are 2 ways to do this.

1 Focus on what YOU did well

First, start paying attention to who you give credit to when something goes well. Is it Lady Luck? A teammate? Was it because 'it was easy, anyone could do it'? Something else?

If you performed the action you came up with last time, you can use that for the exercise below. If not, another situation is also fine!



Describe a recent situation in which you did well or succeeded at something, but still didn't give yourself the credits. This can be about the action you performed, or something else entirely:

Now select all the external factors you attributed this success to: "It wasn't me, it was because ..."

It was easy, anyone could've done it

I got lucky

I got help / support

The circumstances were just right

Otherwise, namely:

While these factors may have played a role, they are almost never 100% responsible for our successes. We ourselves, **our personality, past experiences, skills, knowledge, time** and **effort** generally play the bigger role. To grow your confidence, it's important to learn to attribute your successes more to yourself.

So give yourself credit where credit's due. Take a moment to write down all the big and small things you did to get to that outcome. Did you study hard? Prepare well? Develop certain skills in the past that came in handy? Have a positive trait or useful habit that helped?

For the same situation (in which you did well or succeeded at something), write down all the things that YOU did to get to that point.



Make a habit out of it! Every time something goes well, take a second to ask yourself: What did I do to contribute to this success? Write it down in your positivity notebook.

2 Make a conscious effort to celebrate your successes

Once you become more aware of your successes, you can celebrate them and reward yourself. This way, you show yourself that you achieved something.



There are many ways to celebrate, big and small. Here are some ideas to get the ball rolling:

- Next time someone asks how you are, mention that you're proud of yourself for <enter recent success here>.
- Try saying the positives out loud, for example 'I did a pretty good job on ...!' Silly as it may feel at first, it can actually feel really nice to hear it said out loud.
- For a smaller celebration, treat yourself to your favourite meal or snack.
- For a bigger one, organise a fun activity with friends. For example: go to the movies, out to dinner, picnic in the park etc. And make sure you share the reason for the activity: your success!
- Make time for something you enjoy doing, but usually feel you don't have time for.
- Buy yourself a (small) gift.

Let's brainstorm. How do you think you could celebrate your own achievements? Come up with ways to celebrate both small and bigger successes. (answer B1)

Keep this list somewhere close by (for example in your positivity notebook and keep expanding on it!), so you know what to do next time you achieve something ;)

PS. When you finish this module, you will unlock your third unlockable! A cheat sheet for owning your accomplishments :)

Stop comparing

Here's another habit that can prevent your confidence and self-esteem from growing: comparison.

People compare themselves with others all the time. We compare **how we look, our grades, how many friends we have, how good we are at our hobbies, and infinite other stuff**. Especially when we see all those glamorized and perfected shots with thousands of likes on social media, it's hard not to compare.

Do you have a habit of comparing yourself to others? If so: in what areas do you compare? (answer C1)

If you only compare yourself to people who are doing less good than yourself (who look less good, get lower grades, have fewer friends), you'll probably feel quite happy with yourself. But if you only compare yourself to people who are doing better than you, this will probably affect your self-esteem in a negative way.

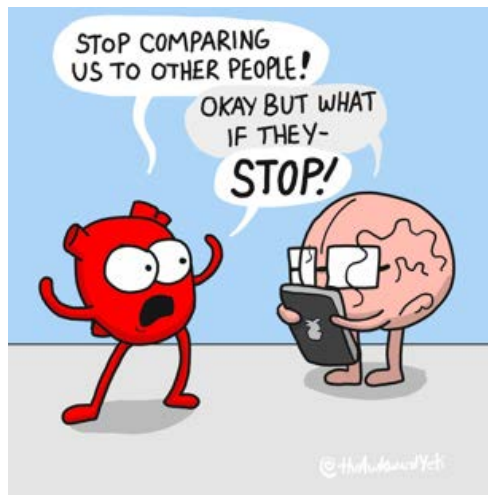
Who do you compare yourself to most?

- People who are doing better than me
- People who are doing similarly to me
- People who are doing less good than me

How do you feel about yourself when you compare like this?

Most people with low self-esteem have a habit of comparing themselves to those that do better than them, and then feeling inferior, useless or worthless. And even if you often compare to those that are doing worse than you and feel good about yourself, you're still growing the habit of comparison - which will eventually turn against you because you can't always be the best at everything.

So next we'll show you 3 steps to break the habit of comparison.



Comic by [The Awkward Yeti](#)

1 Aware that you compare

First, be on the lookout for comparisons. Odds are you compare yourself all the time without even noticing, whether it's to someone you know, a stranger on the street, a celeb from social media, or even to a former 'better' version of yourself.

You already wrote down a few areas in which you compare: refer to answer C1 on p.9

Think of a recent, common comparison that you made. Write down the 'comparing thoughts' that went through your head:

Examples of comparison thoughts in different domains

Domains	Comparison
General	Other people would've done x much better/faster/easier than I.
Sports performance	They're so much fitter than I am.
Physical appearance	I wish I was as skinny as the people on Insta.
Academic performance	No matter how hard I study, I'll never get as good grades as ...
Intelligence	My friend is so much smarter than I am.
Relationships	Their relationship is better than ours, they have more fun/sex/hobbies/less fights/etc.
Money	Everybody has money to go out and party, but me.
Talent/skills	I'll never be as good an artist as ...

2 Reality check

Now that you know your exact comparing thoughts, you can perform a reality check. Ask yourself:

- Is it a 'fair' comparison: is it realistic to compare that person and their circumstances to my own?
- Am I only focusing on a small aspect to compare, and neglecting the overall picture?
- Am I comparing another person's 'highlight reel' (their best moments) to my own reality and 'behind the scenes'?
- If a friend made the exact same comparison, what would I tell them?

Perform a reality check for the comparison thought you wrote above. Ask yourself the questions above and write down what you come up with:

Examples of reality checks in different domains

Sports performance: They're so much fitter than I am.

- They probably work out like crazy and always eat healthy. If I did the same, I'd be just as fit - but I don't have the time or money so it's an unrealistic expectation for myself.

Physical appearance: I wish I was as skinny as the people on Insta.

- All those 'perfect' images are 100% photoshopped.

Academic performance: No matter how hard I study, I'll never get as good grades as ...

- We aren't the same person living in the same circumstances. Maybe they get external help, or already had some knowledge on the topic that I don't have. It's not a fair comparison.

Intelligence: My friend is so much smarter than I am.

- There are many aspects to intelligence. My friend is really good at ..., and I am much better at ... We're both smart in different ways.

Relationships: Their relationship is so much better than ours.

- I don't see what goes on behind closed doors. I'm only assuming it's great based on some surface-level observations. Besides, no relationship is perfect.

Money: Everybody has money to go out and party, but me.

- Other people might get financial support from their parents, or have massive loans - which I don't!

Talent/skills: I'll never be as good an artist as ...

- This person has probably spent decades perfecting their craft, unlike me. If I spend the time, I know that I will also get better.

3 Shift your focus to gratitude

Last step: redirect your focus. Instead of thinking what other people have that you don't, think about all the things you have that you're grateful for within the same domain.

For the thing that you compare: what are you grateful for?

Examples of gratitude in different domains

Sports performance: They're so much fitter than I am.

- I'm grateful for my healthy body that allows me to do all the things I want to do.

Physical appearance: I wish I was as skinny as the people on Insta.

- I'm grateful for my straight, white teeth. My clear skin. And all these other things that I like about my body.

Academic performance: No matter how hard I study, I'll never get as good grades as ...

- I'm grateful that I get to do the studies I want, and that I pass most or all of my courses.

Intelligence: My friend is so much smarter than I am.

- I'm grateful to have such an awesome friend. And I'm grateful that I'm smart in my own way.

Relationships: Their relationship is so much better than ours.

- I'm grateful for my partner. Even if we fight sometimes, there is a lot of love there.

Money: Everybody has money to go out and party, but me.

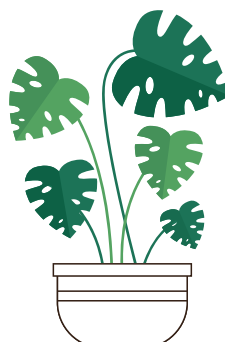
- I'm grateful that I can afford all the things I need to live my life: food, a place to live, my studies etc.

Talent/skills: I'll never be as good an artist as ...

- I'm grateful that this person can be a rolemodel and a teacher that I can get inspired by and learn from.

Break the habit of comparison by consistently applying these 3 steps:

- Be on the lookout for comparisons and what goes through your mind
- Perform a reality check: how 'fair' is the comparison?
- Redirect your attention to what you're grateful for instead.



Build on it

If there's one thing worth repeating, it's the importance of repetition! Improving your self-esteem depends largely on how often you practice and repeat the things you've done and learned. So now that you're armed with these two techniques (how to own your accomplishments and stop comparing), it's the perfect time to keep building your confidence through more action.

You wanted to grow confidence in this: refer to answer A in Module 2

In the last module, you came up with this action: refer to answer B in Module 2

And earlier today, you reflected on it: refer to answer A1 on p.5

Now it's time to build on this action! Here are the most important things to take into account when coming up with your next action.

1. Reflect and adjust

Ask yourself how something went, how you felt and acted, what barriers you faced and what you can do to overcome those next time. You can use your findings to fine-tune the next plan.,

2. Keep it small and repeat

Though you might feel tempted to come up with a new action, it's often a better idea to repeat the same or a similar action. The context will always be different, and through repetition it will get easier every single time (which is nice because you'll really feel all the progress you've made - and that's great for your self-esteem!).

3. Plan and practice

Decide when/how you want to do this action, and maybe do a test run. Write down what you want to say or do exactly, practice by yourself or with friends, and set a date and time.

4. Decide that you can handle it

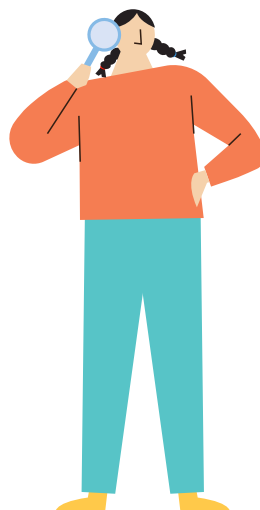
No matter how much you prepare, the moment you're about to do the thing you're insecure about will always be uncomfortable. This cannot be avoided. So when you feel the discomfort, decide that you can feel the fear and do it anyway.

Write down one small action to perform in the coming week. What will you do exactly? (Again: it can be the same or a similar action as last time!) (answer D1)

When will you take this step (in the coming week)? Set a time/date, and add a reminder in your calendar, too! (answer E1)



It's important to have realistic expectations when you set yourself a goal like this. Feel free to take another look at the chapter 'Rethink your expectations' from module 2 if you notice yourself being a perfectionist.



It's a wrap!

**You finished the third module -
celebration time!**



In a nutshell:

- 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., ,
- Lastly, repetition is the key to boosting your confidence. You can't just do something once and feel confident, you need to do it several times. That's why you came up with another step to take!

On which day of the week and at what time do you want to do the next module? Add it to your calendar or set a reminder on your phone.

Take it home!

1. Make a conscious effort to **own your achievements** in the coming week. When something goes well - no matter how small! - take a moment to think of what YOU did to accomplish that.

You can also use the cheat sheet you unlock upon finishing! You can find it in the main menu under 'Unlockables'.

Also celebrate these successes, for example with one of the ideas: refer to answer B1 on p.8

2. To continue building **confidence**, you decided to take **another step**.

This is the step you wanted to take: refer to answer D1 on p.15

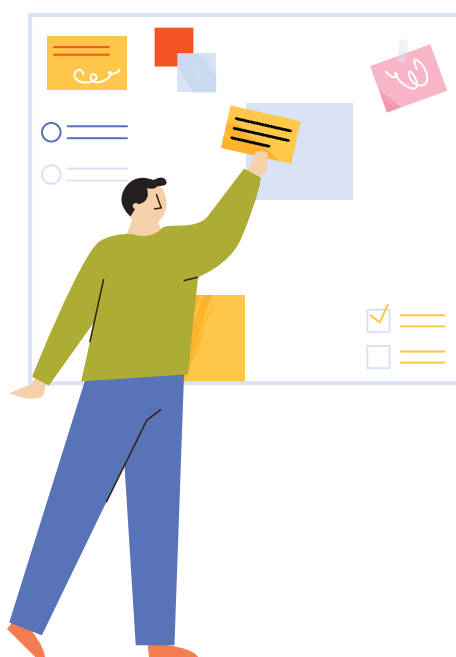
And this is when: refer to answer E1 on p.15

3. Continue keeping track of your **positivity list** and adding positive traits to the list.

Also keep an eye out for **comparisons**. When you notice yourself comparing, perform a reality check and then shift your focus to gratitude.

Good luck and see you next time!

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



Own your accomplishments



Focus on what YOU did well

When something goes well, think of all the big and small things you did to get to that outcome. Did you study hard? Prepare well? Develop certain skills in the past that came in handy? Have a positive trait or useful habit that helped?

What was the success?

.....

How did YOU contribute to the success?

.....

.....



Purposefully celebrate your successes

Once you become more aware of your successes, you can celebrate them and reward yourself. This way, you show yourself that you achieved something.

How can you celebrate this success?

.....

.....