

Lots of people struggle with self-doubt and self-acceptance. It is a very common issue for people on the Autism Spectrum. It is easy to lose your confidence and trust in yourself. Self-acceptance means honoring all of your characteristics, both positive and negative. It is especially difficult to believe in yourself when your experiences often differ from what others deem "normal" or "typical," and they don't validate your viewpoint. If you doubt yourself, it can affect the way you see and interact with other people.

Self-doubt makes it harder to be successful in life. This often leads to negative self-talk and the tendency to think you've done or said something "wrong." This cycle can cause someone to try less often and to stick to safer actions that are less anxiety-provoking. It can also lead to situations where people do not trust their intuition about a person, place, or thing since they lack experience. This can lead to more problems like anxiety, depression, and anger.

One way to increase self-trust and self-esteem is to utilize more effective communication. There are four different communication styles: Passive, Passive-Aggressive, Aggressive, and Assertive.

- **Passive:** Not stating your feelings or needs. Neglecting your own rights and allowing others to ignore your rights.
- **Passive-Aggressive:** Appearing passive or submissive outwardly but subtly acting out in an angry manner.
- **Aggressive:** Expressing yourself in a hostile or dominant manner that attempts to control others and their responses.
- **Assertive:** The ability to communicate in a considerate and respectful way that honors the rights, opinions, and boundaries of yourself and others.

What is self-trust?

In part, it comes from personal experience and getting to know yourself. For example, think of your likes, dislikes, preferences, viewpoints, and beliefs. Another part is taking what you learn about yourself and consistently applying it to your life. At its center, self-trust is the deep belief that you can look after your own needs and safety.

Building self-trust takes practice and patience, and is a lifelong process. Starting with small everyday interactions and progressing to more complicated situations is important. Increasing your self-trust and self-knowledge involves learning from past experiences, including what works well for you and what does not.

Example 1: You want to get a drink at a coffee shop. You need to decide what you want to drink, order, pay, and then receive your drink. This is a lot more difficult than it sounds. It involves choosing what you want and interacting with another person. You need to decide and know how to pay for your purchase. Then you must wait for your order and collect it. Practicing these skills will enhance your abilities and showcase your increasing self-trust.

Example 2: A friend or family member asks if you want to go to a Mexican restaurant or a Chinese restaurant for dinner. You need to decide which option works best for you. In making this choice, it helps to know what you like and don't like. Having a good sense of self-trust makes it easier to tell another person what you prefer.

Setting and maintaining good personal boundaries involves deciding how to interact with others and sharing your preferences with them. This involves making rules about how you want to be treated physically and mentally. Just like a strong sense of self-trust helps you communicate in easier, healthier ways, self-trust can also help you establish boundaries. Personal boundaries are a very important set of skills, and you can change your boundaries at any time.

7 Personal Boundaries:

1. Physical
2. Emotional
3. Sexual
4. Intellectual
5. Time
6. Financial
7. Material

