



*Clear Thinking newsletter from Uncommon Knowledge - Issue 74*

In this month's Clear Thinking...

1. 3 crafty ways to instantly boost self esteem in depressed people
2. Learn how to lift depression fast on our online course

## **3 crafty ways to instantly boost self esteem in depressed people**

*Giving a depressed person a compliment is playing with fire. These techniques will let you slip your uplifting delivery in the side door.*

You're walking along a busy road. There's a sweet old lady who needs help to cross the road. Only you're on the other side from her... Do you a) shout and wave her over from your side, hoping she'll dodge the racing traffic and roaring buses and suchlike? Or do you b) cross over and join her on her side and then gently lead her safely over to where she really wants to be?

Tread carefully - you tread on their beliefs

The worst way to try to treat low self-esteem is to challenge it directly.

Simply arguing with a person's perception that they are 'worse than others' or 'unlovable', is disrespectful. Trying to contradict their powerful belief system by, for instance, telling them how 'special' or 'wonderful' they are is akin to 'waving them across' from what seems to them an impossible (and dangerous!) distance.

Low self esteem is a *highly emotionally charged belief* and contradicting *any* belief, however well-intentioned and even logical your argument, will likely meet with strong resistance.

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Two important research findings help to explain this. People with low self esteem are more likely to have been abused and bullied in the past and their low self esteem beliefs have been forged through intense emotion. (1) And the famous (and much lauded) 'positive affirmation' may actually worsen low self esteem. (2)

Before you can help someone, you need to build rapport with them. To create rapport with someone you need to let them feel that you see reality in broadly similar ways to how they do. Of course, you *don't* share their negative view of the world and themselves, so this needs to be managed with delicacy.

### **3 ways to raise self-esteem**

- **Agree – and then disagree**

Agree with the part of what they have said that you *can* agree with and then gently put a more positive spin on it:

*"I am just a waste of space! I'm a lousy mum!"*

*"You're a waste of space? Well, that's what you believe [agreement], but I'm happy that you're taking up space here. In what ways do you want to improve as a mum?"*

Note how this isn't so overly positive as to be an instant turn off and how using the word 'improve' *implies* that 'lousy mum' is not a fixed state and that things can change positively. There is no outright contradiction.

- **Use metaphor to bypass conscious argument**

Metaphorical language allows you to present a positive *pattern* to someone without directly contradicting their beliefs. For example:

*"I just feel so worthless!"*

*"Yes, it is difficult to see your own worth for what it truly is, is it not? A diamond, for instance, has no sense of its own amazing value and a beautiful painting can't possibly know its own beauty..."*

There is no direct challenge to their statement. You might now quickly change the subject so the idea can work subconsciously undisturbed by the usual 'automatic negative filter'.

- **Reframe negatives as positives – but carefully!**

Context is everything. A knife in the hands of a mugger is a very

different thing from a knife in the hands of a surgeon. Find the positive quality in any 'deficit' and gently turn it into a positive. For instance:

*"My husband says I'm stubborn."*

*"Mmm... and in what other ways do you show that kind of determination?"*

We need to tread gently around people's beliefs and not trample on them no matter how good our intentions are.

## Learn how to get people out of depression fast

In only a few short weeks we'll be running our next *How to lift depression fast* online course. This is where you can learn what you *really* need to do to make a difference to someone with depression – direct from Mark Tyrell.

The next course starts on 22 September, so there's still time to take advantage of our early bird offer of 25% off if you book before 1 September!

Here's where to [sign up for How to Lift Depression](#).

Don't twiddle your thumbs while waiting for the course to start. Boost your self-esteem raising skills with our powerful ebook [How to lift self esteem in others](#). You'll learn subtle communication skills you can use to help others overcome the negativity in their lives and feel much better about themselves.

See you next time!

[Mark Tyrrell](#)

Co-Founder

Uncommon Knowledge

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Who do you know that would benefit from this article? If this issue of Clear Thinking has been forwarded to you, you can sign up for [therapy techniques every two weeks here](#).

#### Notes

(1) See the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report: [Self-esteem: The costs and causes of low self-worth](#). Nicholas Emler. 28 November 2001

(2) Canadian researchers found those with low self-esteem actually felt worse after repeating positive statements about themselves. They said phrases such as "I am a lovable person" only helped people with high self-esteem. Wood, J., Elaine Perunovic, W., & Lee, J. (2009). 'Positive Self-Statements: Power for Some, Peril for Others', *Psychological Science* DOI: [10.1111/j.1467-9280.2009.02370.x](#)

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