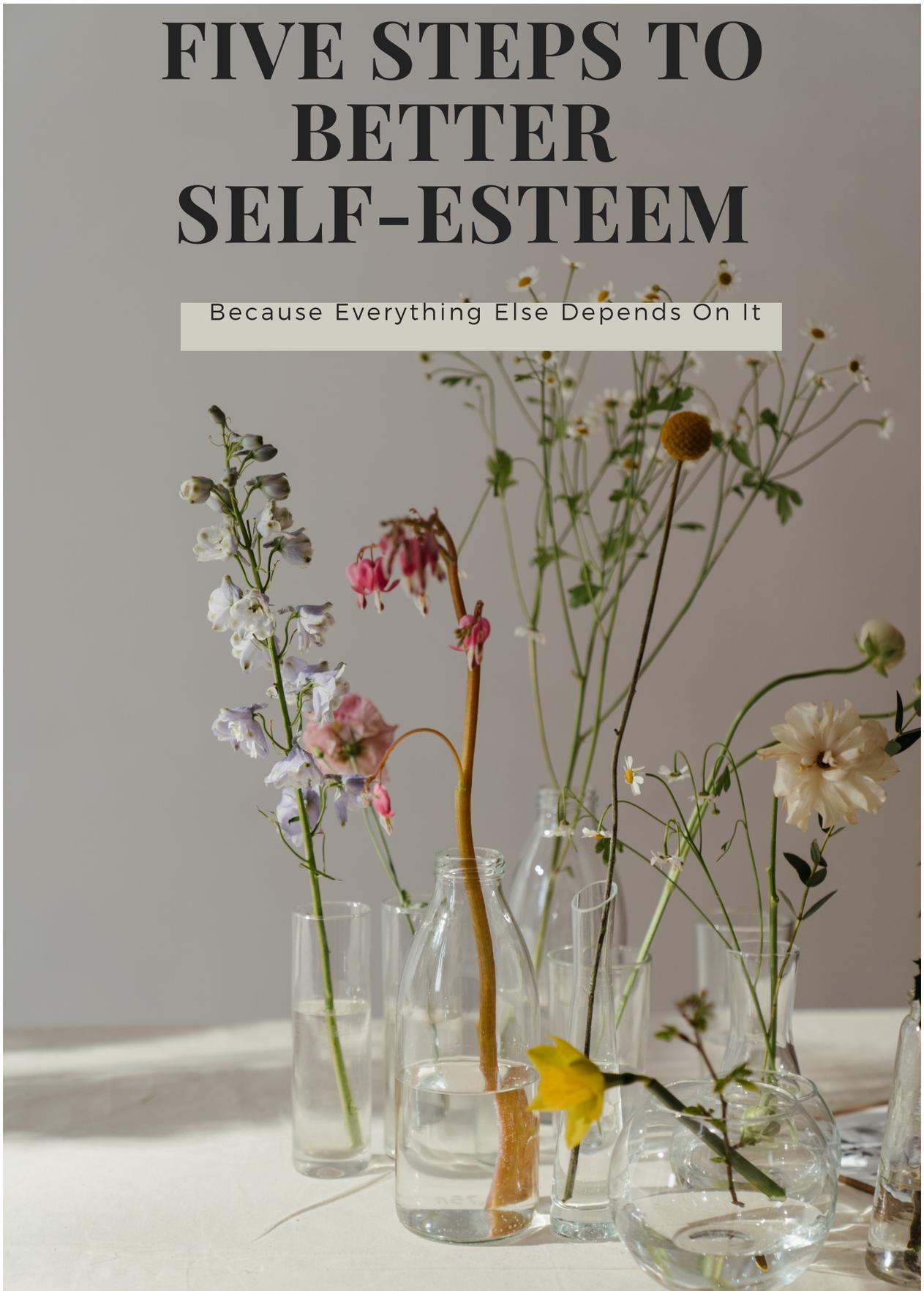


# FIVE STEPS TO BETTER SELF-ESTEEM

Because Everything Else Depends On It



**INSIDE THIS  
SPECIAL ISSUE:**

**FEATURED PRACTICES  
-5 +BONUS!**

**BY KAILA BOUDEWYN,  
LICENSED MENTAL  
HEALTH COUNSELOR**

# FIVE STEPS TO BETTER SELF-ESTEEM



How we feel about ourselves impacts everything in our lives. It determines how we treat others, how we let others treat us, how we feel at work and with the people we love, how hard we try, how big we dream, how much sleep we get at night...everything.

Many people go through their whole life not feeling good enough or valuable enough. This makes us do unfortunate things like; inadvertently push people we love away, or cling to situations that don't really work for us. It makes us try to prove our worth in ways that cause us more struggle. It makes us accept poor treatment because we don't fully believe we deserve better. And it makes us feel generally irritable, sad, and anxious.

Life is already extremely hard. And not feeling good enough makes everything harder. Here are 5 things you can start doing today and every day to build yourself back up.

*-Kaila Boudewyn*  
LMHC, CATP

# Set Better Boundaries Around People That Don't Make You Feel Good

## **AND SPEND MORE TIME WITH THOSE THAT DO**

It can be easy to find ourselves stuck in a loop with someone that isn't really healthy for us, but often times it can be difficult to acknowledge that we don't actually have to put ourselves through such stress. Sometimes we stay in relationships (romantic or otherwise) because we feel a certain obligation, or because we fear we may be lonely without it, or simply because it's been there for so long. This goes for family relationships, and friendships, as well as romantic relationships. But the reality is that no one is entitled to your time (except maybe your children or fur children).

The people around you influence how you think and feel about yourself. You can't control what they say or do, but you are in charge of what kind of treatment you'll accept. If you have a conflicted relationship, try sitting down and listing out the things that don't feel good for you. Then think of how you might ask that person to change what they're doing in a respectful way. There are all types of resources on healthy communication and non-violent communication online. Then think of how you might remove yourself from the situation if they are not able to accept the boundary you set.

It's also important to consider that different relationships belong in different categories based on what feels good and safe with each person. Not everybody has the capacity to be who you need them to be, no matter how respectfully you ask. Certain relationships are the 'say anything' kind of relationships and others are the 'only talk about certain topics' kind. Then some relationships are the 'no longer good for me at all' type. It's time to start taking inventory of how different relationships impact you so you can determine which box each belongs in.



# Start Challenging The Evidence Reel That Plays In Your Head.

## HALF OF IT IS CGI AND CREATIVE LIBERTY

We all have one...the movie reel of memories and thoughts that comes up when something new challenges our self-worth. You know, that one time you really failed, that other time someone left you, and that dumb thing you said in the third grade that still haunts you today. This is the evidence reel.

When something comes up in the present that makes us feel bad about ourselves, the evidence reel is often right there to back it up with (air quotes) "cold hard facts" that convince us that whatever has just happened must be a true reflection of our worth.

The present situation combines with all those past moments to form a shame spiral much bigger than the sum of its parts.

I'm here to tell you that the evidence reel is often Wrong. We can't actually reflect on those past moments of pain accurately. We're seeing them through the distorted lens of how we feel now + the distorted beliefs we already had about ourselves at that time. Meaning...most of our 'not good enough evidence' is actually wildly inaccurate, even though it feels like fact. Different psychological factors (like trauma and chemical states) change the brain's perception of past memories too.

Next time the evidence reel comes up, try reminding yourself that your perception of these pieces of evidence are distorted, even if you can't totally comprehend how at the time.

*"The Evidence Reel Is Wrong!"*



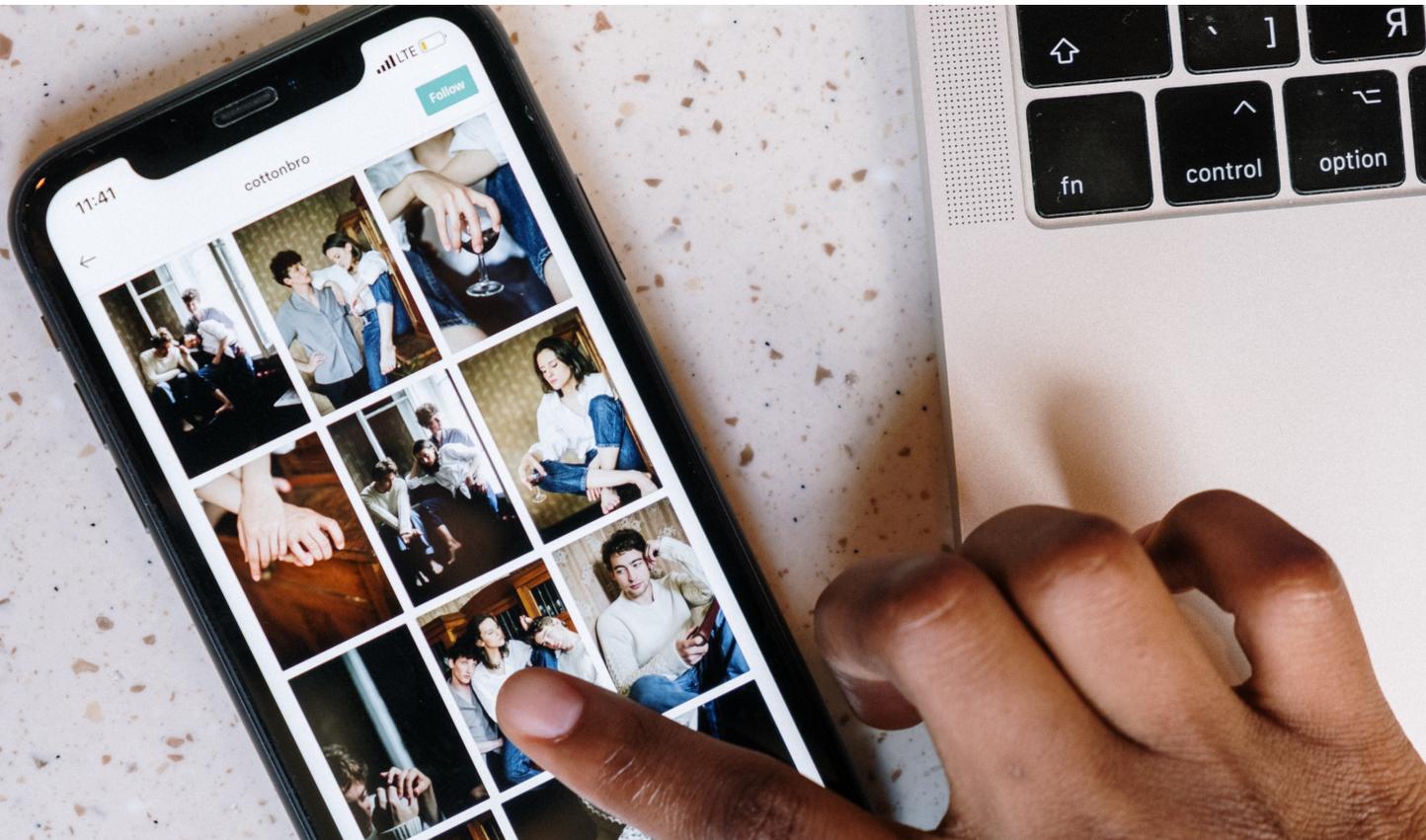
# Curate Your Socials

## THEY'RE SKEWING YOUR VIEW OF HOW YOU MEASURE UP

Let me teach you about a little something called the *Availability Heuristic*. It's a mental shortcut our brains use to calculate the prevalence of something based on the available information. This effect often leads us to have false beliefs about things. For example, because shark attacks are so shocking, they are reported every time they happen in the media. Although the actual prevalence of shark attack is very low, our brains calculate the danger as being much higher than it actually is statistically.

This same mental calculation is at work when we're scrolling through social media. When we see only images of happy perfect looking people, our brain starts to calculate this as the reality of our surroundings, often with us as the exception. The problem is that this is absolutely not reality. Much of what can be found online is a snapshot of someone trying their hardest to present themselves in a very specific way for just a few moments. The reality of their ups and downs, unflattering angles, and human flaws are all omitted. But our brain can't factor all this into its quick judgement when we're consuming lots of data. So naturally, we start to build a skewed belief that everyone is living happier, healthier, more blessed, and more accomplished lives than we are.

You have the power over what you see on your socials. Curate them to bring you joy. Follow cute animals, interior design, cool scenery, anything that brings you joy vs. self-doubt.



# PRACTICE ASKING FOR WHAT YOU NEED AND SAYING NO

## WITHOUT APPOLOGY

One of the biggest ways you can boost your self-esteem is to actively show yourself that your needs matter. One way to do this is to give yourself permission to consider your needs first before meeting others' needs. This may sound selfish but I promise it's not. The safety announcement on your flight tells you to put on your own oxygen mask before helping anyone else out with theirs. That's because if you pass out first, you can't help anyone. The same is true for love and kindness. You can't effectively meet others' needs if yours are not being met.

Sometimes people struggle to ask for what they need because they believe they need to be 'the giver' or 'the easy going one' to get the love they need. These are messages we pick up from our early development, but they are often false and don't serve us in feeling good about ourselves. They're called "interjected conditions of worth". Other's were never allowed to say no in really big moments, so it feels dangerous or impossible to even try.

Although this is a really big goal, you can start small. Make a list of the things that are most important for you in life and the things you want to accomplish most with your limited time. Are there things you are doing that don't contribute towards something on your list? If so, ask yourself why you're doing it. If it doesn't actually serve you, practice saying no. There are a million ways: "I can't", "I don't have time", "I don't like that", "Please don't do that again", etc.

Then practice asking for what you need. Again start small. Maybe it's more affection you want to ask for. Maybe it's more time for a project. Maybe it's more ketchup at a restaurant. It doesn't matter. Every time you ask for what you need, you are saying to yourself, "I am important enough to try to get my needs met". This can send important feedback to your brain about your personal power and your value.

*"You can't effectively meet other's needs if yours are not being met!"*



# Remember That Having A Lot Of Emotions Is Not A Character Flaw

**(INCLUDING FEELINGS OF LOW SELF-ESTEEM)**

People who struggle with big emotions often also struggle with the feelings they have about those feelings. These are called secondary emotions. Those of us who feel a lot, often also feel guilt, sadness, anger, shame, and hopelessness about the fact that we have such big feelings in the first place.

But feeling a lot isn't a character flaw. It's not because we're bad, or too needy, or too emotional, or too \_\_\_\_. In fact, a lot of it is out of our control. That doesn't mean we have a free pass to behave however we want, but it does mean we need to give ourselves compassion for the way we're wired. You may not know this, but feeling guilt or shame about who we are actually doesn't really lead to growth or change, it leads to more negative behavior. So stop trying to punish yourself better and stop listening to other people that try to punish you into being better.

If this also feels out of your control, that's okay too. That's a good sign that it's time to talk to someone neutral who can see you more clearly and help you make friends with your emotions.



# Bonus Tip: Practice Loving You Like I love You

**I'M SORRY YOU'VE BEEN TAUGHT  
OTHERWISE, BUT YOU ARE  
VALUABLE JUST BECAUSE YOU  
EXIST. FULL STOP.**

You don't need to be smart, pretty, responsible, successful, wealthy, well-dressed, or ANYTHING ELSE to be valuable. You can still strive to be those things, but you deserve love, respect peace, and kindness without any of them.

I would tell you that you are a wonder just because you are here. And that is the absolute truth. The world can mess with our understanding of the worth we are entitled to. When your starting to feel like you don't measure up, whisper to yourself,

*"I am a Wonder Just Because I am Here"*



# IF YOU'RE FEELING INSPIRED

TO TAKE THINGS A STEP FURTHER AND  
START THERAPY...

PLEASE REACH OUT.  
CONSULTS ARE ALWAYS FREE.  
KAILA@BOUDEWYNCOUNSELING.COM

