

## Self-Esteem Basics: With and Without Shame

By Cheri DeMoss

**W**hen asked if we have good self-esteem most people answer with a resounding "Yes."

Yet if we look at how people act in the world, those of us with truly high self-esteem behave differently than those with lower self-esteem. High esteem people act without shame the majority of the time. They have developed an internal shame-free based and demonstrate shame-free behaviors in most area of their lives. They are less judgmental or critical of themselves. When they make a "mistake" they see themselves as human instead of "bad or wrong".

Shame-based or low self-esteem people behave differently. They are more judgmental or critical of themselves and others. When they make a "mistakes" they view themselves as being "bad or wrong" or tell themselves they should have known better. People who do not have high self-esteem tend to be reactive, get defensive, verbally and/or emotionally attack or disconnect from others.

Shame is feeling bad about who we are or what we do. As a child, the more we have been made to feel bad about ourselves, our actions or our feelings—the more we act out as an adult.

If you want to know the level of self-esteem you or someone else has — notice their



*There is a calm confidence that comes from feeling good about who we are, what we do and what we feel.*

behaviors. The less esteem we feel the more reactive we are because we are experiencing a shame-attack. Those with low self-esteem will overtly or covertly manipulate others. They will shame or blame those different from them.

They will try to control others instead of themselves. They will often make others feel bad about themselves: what they do, how they feel or who they are. They will try to make others make them comfortable. They don't understand or know how to handle their emotions which causes them to become reactionary & angry.

*People with lower self-esteem tend to be more reactive and defensive than those with higher self-esteem*

### Obstacles Into Options Self-Esteem Classes

**A**s infants & toddlers we felt good about ourselves. We didn't worry if people liked us. In fact, we had every confidence that we were completely lovable and likeable. We didn't try to hide what we felt or who we were from others.

We easily shared our feelings, thoughts & accomplishments. As we grew up we were given the message that what we felt, did or thought was not okay.

Our self-esteem affect all aspects of our lives and

our relationships. By learning how our childhood self-esteem turned into adulthood self-doubt we can easily reverse the process.

These classes teach you to:

- Turn obstacles into options
- Regain your natural esteem
- Enhance your relationships
- Recognize your strengths
- Change fear patterns
- Feel consistently confident
- Find the adventure

**For Information Call:**

**773- 338-2889**

When we do these behaviors we limit our ability to gather accurate information. Which keeps us from learning how to raise our level of self-esteem. The more we react in these ways the more we become convinced that there is something wrong with us.

On the other hand, when we have high self-esteem we don't respond from a shame-base very often. We don't shame those who are different from us and we automatically esteem those around us. Much of our energy is spent on taking care of ourselves instead of trying to get (continued on page 3)

**Inside...**

**Self-Esteem: With & Without Shame**  
**What Is A Good Person**  
**Thinking Through Reactions**  
**About Cheri DeMoss & Empowering Options**

**Pages 1 & 3**  
**Page 2**  
**Page 2**  
**Page 3**



# Thinking Through Reactions

By Cheri DeMoss

**L**earning to think through reactions is a skill we, as children, are not taught. Most of us respond in a child-ish, immature way when we're confronted by our behaviors. We become reactive because we've never been taught to do anything else - anything other than what we've seen role-modeled in our families.

Here is a guide to help you get some practice in thinking through reactions rather than

*We only judge something (someone) when we feel scared or threatened by it (them).*

acting them out. Answering the questions below will help you learn to be in charge of your reactions, instead of letting them be in charge of you.

## What Am I Feeling?

First you have to be able to identify what you're feeling, in order not to react. It works best if you can figure out the feeling beneath the reaction. *Example; Honking & giving another driver the finger would-be acting out. The feelings underneath that reaction would be angry or fear).*

## What Behaviors Just Happened To Trigger The Feelings You're Having?

This means you need to focus on what behaviors (things said or done) that occurred just prior to your reaction.

## What Does This Remind You Of In Your Past?

When has something similar

happened to you before? Pay particular attention to when you were a child.

## What Is Real?

Sort out the difference between what you feel they did and what they actually did. Focus on their behaviors, do not make up their intentions. *Remember: What is being trigger is your little kid's absolute conviction that what just happened is EXACTLY the same as when you were a child. That is why it's hard to think.*

## What Is Going On With The Other Person?

This is a challenging part because you need to become aware of the other person while you're in the middle of your own reaction. Your little kid will not want to do this. But learning what is going on with the other person helps you stay focused on what is real. By allowing yourself to become aware of the other person you are doing a behaviors that your family didn't

do for you; which is to be grounded enough in the moment so that you can still be connected to the other person.

## How Does This Effect My Life?

Very often the degree of our reactions so impacts us that we can't think. We're unable to see that what just triggered us doesn't really effect our current life or relationship very much. It may feel like it does, especially because when we were little the same behaviors seriously effected our lives. But in reality it doesn't us anymore than a sneeze affects our day.

The more we can think through our reactions, the more we raise our self-esteem. The higher our self-esteem the less reactive and defensive we act.

For Information Call:

**773- 338-2889**

**By Cheri DeMoss**  
**D**id you know that when you were a child you smiled and laughed an average of 166 times a day?

The average adult smiles or laughs about 6 times a day.

So what happened between then and now? As children we were spontaneously open, expressive & naturally felt good about ourselves.

Without consistent nurturing of our self-esteem by our parents we start to shut down that part of us. We feel less joy, become less creative & less expressive of our good feelings.

To reverse the impact parental shame has on us we need to make a conscious effort to honor our joy in things and express our laughter & fascination with our world.

## What Is A Good Person?

**B**elow is a list of many of the things we were taught to believe is the recipe for being a good person. Notice that doing the things on this list means trying to be perfect - instead of just being human with all of our feelings, moods and human fragilities that make us unique. A good person:

- Doesn't Swear
- Doesn't Hate Anyone –Ever
- Doesn't Get Angry
- Never Cuts People Off In Traffic
- Is Always Compassionate
- If Upset With Someone—Never Lets it Show
- Always Embraces Suffering
- Is Always Understanding When Someone Is Unkind
- Never Gossips
- Loves Their Family Always
- Never Argues, Especially With Parents
- Is Liked By All
- Always Places Other People First
- Always Puts A Positive Spin On Anything Negative
- Is Always Completely Available
- Never Complains



By Cheri DeMoss

One of the most common ways we diminish a child's or adult's self-esteem is to say things we don't mean or mean things we don't say.

All of us, at one time or another, have said very cutting or hurtful things to someone we love. Later, after we've cooled down, we realize we said things we didn't mean. We said them to attack the other person or defend ourselves.

Conversely, we've been in situations where we mean one thing but say another. IE: Someone asks us if we're mad and we say "no" as we grit our teeth in anger.

We do these crazy-making behaviors because we've learned, as children, that to tell the emotional truth of the situation gets us shamed. When we told the truth we were made to feel bad about ourselves and what we said.

Continuing to not say what you mean or not mean what you say is crazy-making behavior. As an adult, saying things we don't really mean (even if we have a "good" reason) or saying the opposite of what we really mean diminishes our ability to trust ourselves or others. It robs those around us of the chance to know what we feel.

More importantly, it strengthens the childhood belief that we can't trust ourselves or others; makes us hide ourselves from others and at the same time diminishes our self-esteem.

# Self-Esteem Basics

(Continued from page 1)  
others to take care of us. We look at ourselves first instead of trying to manipulate, control or change others.

When our esteem is high we don't have the need to make others feel bad about what they do, how they feel or who they are. In fact, we tend to do the opposite—we are encouraging, supportive and own our own behaviors and feelings without blaming others. Feedback about ourselves fascinates us.

The higher our self-esteem the easier it is for us to understand, look at and own our feelings and our behaviors. This causes us to be less reactive and more thoughtful before we respond. The more we focus on raising and maintaining our self-esteem the greater our ability to gather clear & accurate information. We start to see that compassion and objective observa-

tion is essential to making good life decisions. The better our skills at understanding ourselves the better we understand the things around us. Our ability to connect with others (particularly with those we care about) becomes stronger the safer we feel in the world. We become less and less convinced that we need to be afraid that something or someone is going to make us feel bad about ourselves.

Being free from shame makes us emotionally stronger. It raises our sense of self; our self-esteem and allows us the ability to understand both sides without fear of losing our side. High self-esteem lets us be more connected to those around us. It makes us less frightened and more confident.

For Information Call:

**773- 338-2889**



**T**ry raising your self-esteem by raising your level of excitement in your own life. Trying new and different things, whether they turned out the way you thought they would not, immediately raises our esteem.

Try one of these:

- Compliments as many people as you can in a day. Notice how they respond. Notice how you feel.
- Catch yourself "getting it right". Every time you dress the way you want, floss your teeth the way you want to; ANYTHING you do the way you want to do it. Notice how you feel.
- Write 3 things you like about yourself. Add 3 more things each day for a month. Each time you add things re-read the whole list. Notice how you feel.

## About Cheri DeMoss & Empowering Options

**C**heri DeMoss is Founder and Director of *EMPOWERING OPTIONS*®, an organization specializing in personal empowerment. For the past 17 years Cheri has been teaching others how to turn obstacles into options. Cheri's warm, innovative approach focuses on how learned shame and dysfunctional beliefs from childhood dictate our behaviors as adults. She creates a shame-free, completely supportive and positive environment where you can easily understand and explore the behavior patterns and ideas that no longer serve you.

In addition to working with individuals, groups and couples *EMPOWERING OPTIONS*® offers seminars, workshops, CD's, newsletters, and uniquely effective classes for couples. Cheri provides a safe, encouraging environment for clients to understand how these patterns shape our experiences in relationships, work situations, and our own self-esteem. She provides information, validation, and ideas that make it easier to create the changes you want.

Cheri maintains a private practice, as well as designs, produces and presents *EMPOWERING OPTIONS*® **Empower By Example** seminar series. Cheri also provides in-service training for school districts, and customizes workshops, classes & training seminars for mental health professionals and local communities. She provides consultation for a wide variety of businesses and presents at national and state conferences. Cheri and her associates conduct a full time private practice in Chicago.

The more information, the easier it is to see the options in our lives. Raising our esteem helps us feel safe in the world and reach our goals. For more information about relationships, parenting, new ideas, behaviors and options go to [www.EmpoweringOptions.com](http://www.EmpoweringOptions.com)

# The Need To Be Right

By Cheri DeMoss

**H**ave ever thought about how hard we all try to be "right"? Usually at the expense of someone else's self-esteem

We try to be right instead of trying to un-

***In conversations, our focus is on us & what we want to say next instead of on what the other person is trying to share with us.***

derstand what the other person is sharing with us. We will often miss the gift they are giving us - the gift of their inside track, their thoughts, the essence of who they are - because we have been taught to have a driving NEED to be right.

A need to be heard and understood, so intense that our focus in conversations with others, and especially those closest to us, is on what we are going to say next to refute what we are hearing. Our focus is on *us* being heard, *us* being

understood, *us* being validated...*us being right.*

The downside of needing to be right is that it leaves no room for the other person. And eventually they leave us in mind or body. What choice do they have? They can't spend most of their self-esteem being wrong so we can be right. Being not understood so we can be understood. Being ignored so we can be heard. Everyone has a limit of how much they can tolerate be-

***The down side of having to be right is that the other person leaves us in mind or body...eventually.***

ing misunderstood, invalidated, not heard and not seen for who they are.

Notice how we behave. The more mature part of us truly wants to understand, wants to hear—wants to be right, along with the other person. The less mature part of us

only wants to win, to be right and to emotionally or physically over power those around us. To make them, make us comfortable.

Most people are willing to be affected by us if we are open to

***It's about having your first thought be about how the other person is right. How, what they are expressing, makes sense.***

being touched by them. Life and just about all relationships (friends, partners, parent, child) is about emotional balance. About learning to have your *first thought* be about how the other person is right. It's about verbally demonstrating to them how, what they're expressing, makes sense. It's stepping out of your emotional shoes and into theirs for just a *few* minutes.

It's about understanding someone who isn't you. It's

about giving what you so deeply want to get. It's about putting as much effort into figuring out how what they're sharing with you makes sense as you have put into proving they make no sense at all.

It's showing them you understand even if you feel threatened or see them as different than you. It's putting as much effort into understanding them as you want them to put into understanding you. It's putting as much energy into how they are right and valid as you have habitually put into making them wrong or bad.

***It's about putting as much effort into understanding them as you want them to put into understanding you.***

When we stand on having to prove our friends, family, partners and children wrong or bad we very often end up standing alone.

For Information Call:

**773- 338-2889**

***Inside . . .***

Self-Esteem Basics: With And Without Shame  
What Is A Good Person?  
Say What You Mean—Mean What You Say  
The Need To Be Right

Page 1  
Page 2  
Page 3  
Page 4