



## Self-Esteem and Your Inner Voices

Willie Horton

[www.Gurdy.net](http://www.Gurdy.net)

In chatting recently to a client who was on the brink of making a major upward career move, I was told that, whilst he was totally relaxed in almost a carefree way about everything that seemed to be just effortlessly happening around him, in his odd quiet moment he still heard a little voice inside him whisper “No you can’t!” We all have voices in our head, some that egg us on, some that put us down, some that put us under such pressure that we are paralysed when it comes to our moment to perform. Many of my clients talk of those niggling voices that won’t leave them alone, despite an adult lifetime’s journey to distance themselves from these voices. Some of my clients can actually put a name to the voices that they hear – Dad telling me that I’m bloody stupid... I’m lazy... I’ll never be anything, Mum telling me that I’ll never get on in life... Mum asking me why can’t I be more like my sister. All of us have these inner voices.

And it is these inner voices that skew our self-image. More often than not, it is these inner voices that are at the root of what people blithely define as “low self-esteem”. But what is “low self-esteem”? Indeed, what is self-esteem at all? I am aware of the definition of the words – valuing your own attributes and talents. But who is doing the valuing and who is being valued? Are there two of you – one trying its best to do better, the other constantly critical? Have you a split personality that, despite your best efforts, will always make sure that you fall on your face? After all, why would I put myself down, why would I countenance entertaining the idea that I might be suffering from low self-esteem, why would I want to self-destruct?

Well, when you think about the “voices”, the answer to these questions kind of becomes blindingly obvious! You’re not trying to self-destruct, the people who made those remarks that struck a chord or stuck in your throat all those years ago are the ones that started this “self-destruction” process. Perhaps they said what they said with the very best of intentions – to try to give you a bit of “get up and go”, to inspire you, to motivate you to achieve great things – or perhaps they were going through the motions as parents or teachers. Whatever their motivation, you’re stuck with their voices rattling around inside your head – and there’s nothing you can do about it, they’re part of who you are.

Or are they? Perhaps, instead, they are part of who you think you are. Perhaps, after all, there is some form of split personality within – one being judged, the other bringing all the prejudices of those who made an impression on you during your formative years to bear in criticizing you and putting you down. There's no perhaps about it – we are all involved in an internal battle of sorts. There is our personality – from the Latin *persona*, meaning a mask – which is the accumulation of all the self-beliefs that you picked up during your childhood. Your personality is comprised of the things, people and events that impressed you when your mind was open and sponge-like, including those voices that we've talked about. Your personality thinks it's you – it thinks that you have all these perceived inadequacies that are, in fact, nothing more than the throw-away remarks or prejudices of those we encountered during our formative years. This is who all normal people think they are – their personality, a mask concealing the real you.

The real you lies within, beneath that formative years “programming” that has falsely led us to the conclusion that we're suffering from low self-esteem or lack of self-confidence. The real you doesn't have the flaws that others told you that you have. The real you is, to quote Nelson Mandela, “powerful beyond reason” – the real you can change your life. Or, more correctly, the real you can enable you start living, because hiding behind a deformed mask thinking that it's you could not be described as living at all. And the great news is that the real you is only one step beyond the normal person's grasp – a simple step that is well worth taking.

As I said, those “inner voices” will always be with you – they will never go away. But you, as a responsible adult can decide to not listen to those voices because, as a responsible adult, you can choose as to where you will devote your attention. And the choice is a simple one. You have two simple options – and the right choice is obvious. Here are your options: you can choose to waste your attention on people and events long past that make you feel bad about yourself or you can choose to pay attention to what's actually happening now. Take the first option and you'll believe that your suffering from low self-esteem – you really will! Take the second option and you will bypass your programming and discover that your free to live your life without those voice-shackles – that you've given yourself permission to unleash your inner power. And your inner power, if correctly focused, can lead you to places your mask-personality cannot take you (but that's for another article).

How do you pay attention to the present moment? Well, it's not as if you've never done it before – we were all experts at it as children – where we explored each new now with all of our five senses. You've got to become again like a little child to enter the life that's waiting for you here and now – you've got to lose your perceived life to find the real one.