



Metacognitive Training (MCT)

MCT 9 A – Self-Esteem

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Self-Esteem: What is it?



???



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- The subjective appraisal of one's self.



Self-Esteem: What is it?



- The value we attach to ourselves.
- The subjective appraisal of one's self.
- This does not necessarily have anything to do with how others perceive you.



Low self-esteem can impact our mental health

- People with mental illness often suffer from low self esteem.
- Low self-esteem may contribute to psychological problems such as:
 - Self-doubt
 - Fear
 - Depressive symptoms
 - Loneliness



Difference between exaggerated self-esteem and healthy self-esteem

During psychosis, many of those affected (but not all) feel persecuted or pressured. This feeling can lead to reduced self-esteem. On the other hand, some can feel increased self-esteem if they feel destined for special tasks or believe to be chosen for a major mission.



CAUTION: Ideas of megalomania (such as beliefs that we are more powerful or more important than others) may temporarily increase our sense of self-worth but have nothing to do with “healthy” self-esteem!

- This feeling won't last long
- ... and is not based on reality and actual strengths.



But ...

- All people have real strengths, often only waiting to be discovered.
- You can and should be proud of these strengths!
- Awareness of these strengths form the basis of your self-esteem.



Why are we doing this?

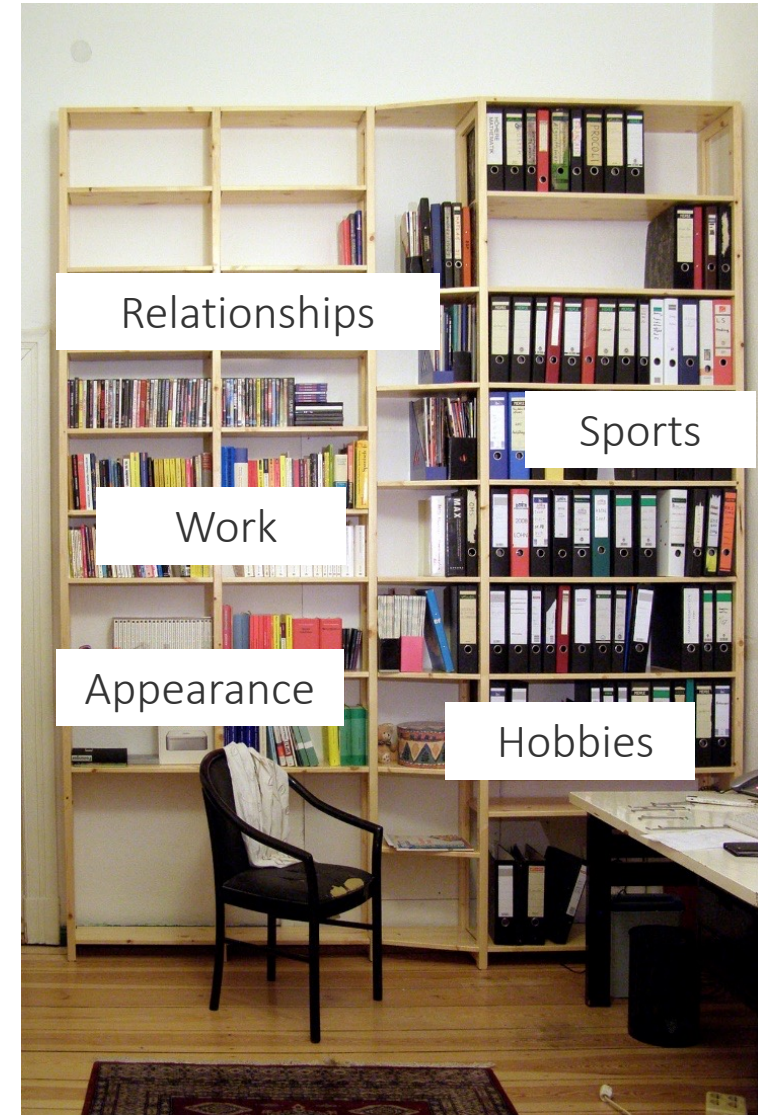
Many (but not all!) people with psychosis have low self-esteem, often due to negative interpersonal experiences. Improving self-esteem and other depressive symptoms increases mental stability. This can also help to reduce psychotic symptoms.





Sources of Self-Esteem

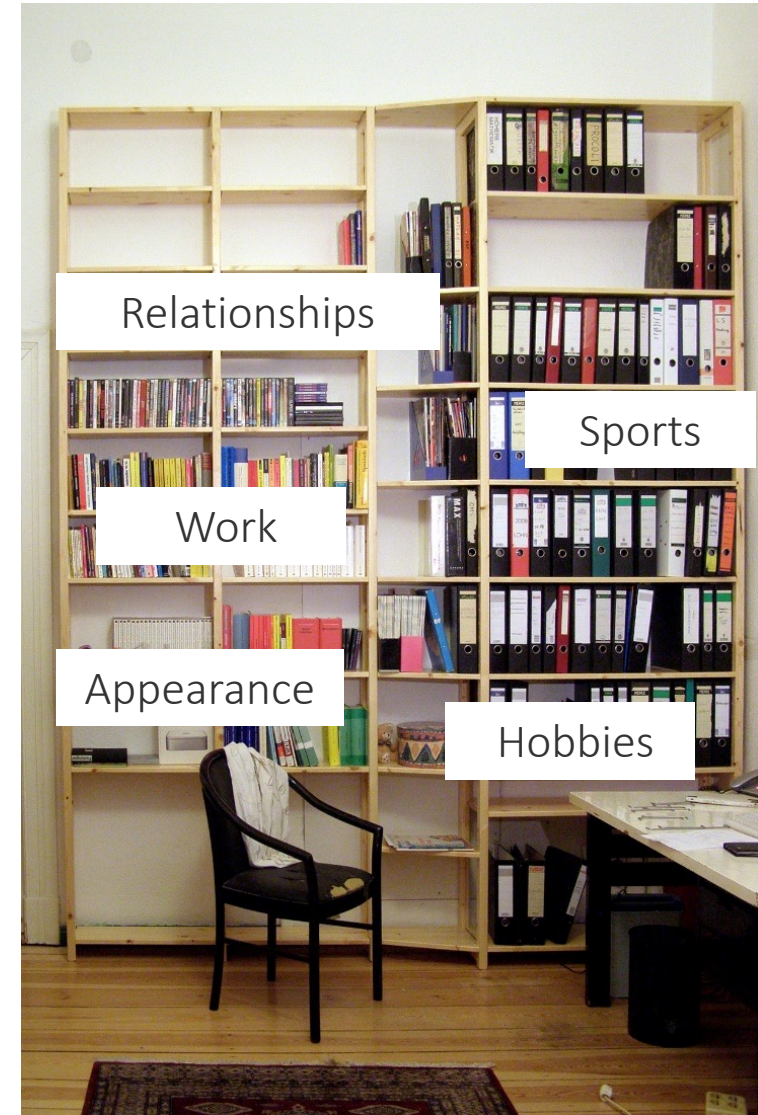
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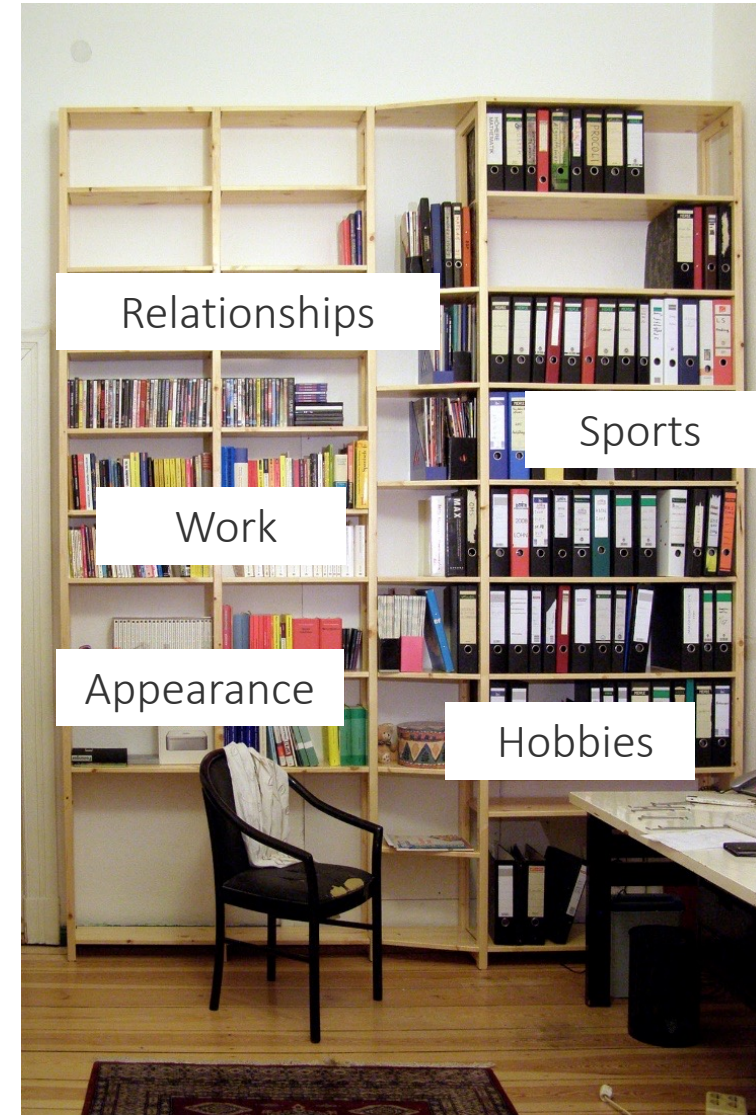
- Self-esteem is not a constant, but may occur in various areas of your life and in different forms (symbolized as a shelf on the right).
- What matters is whether we focus only on our own weaknesses (= empty trays on the shelf) rather than also considering our abilities and strengths (= full trays).





People with low self-esteem ...

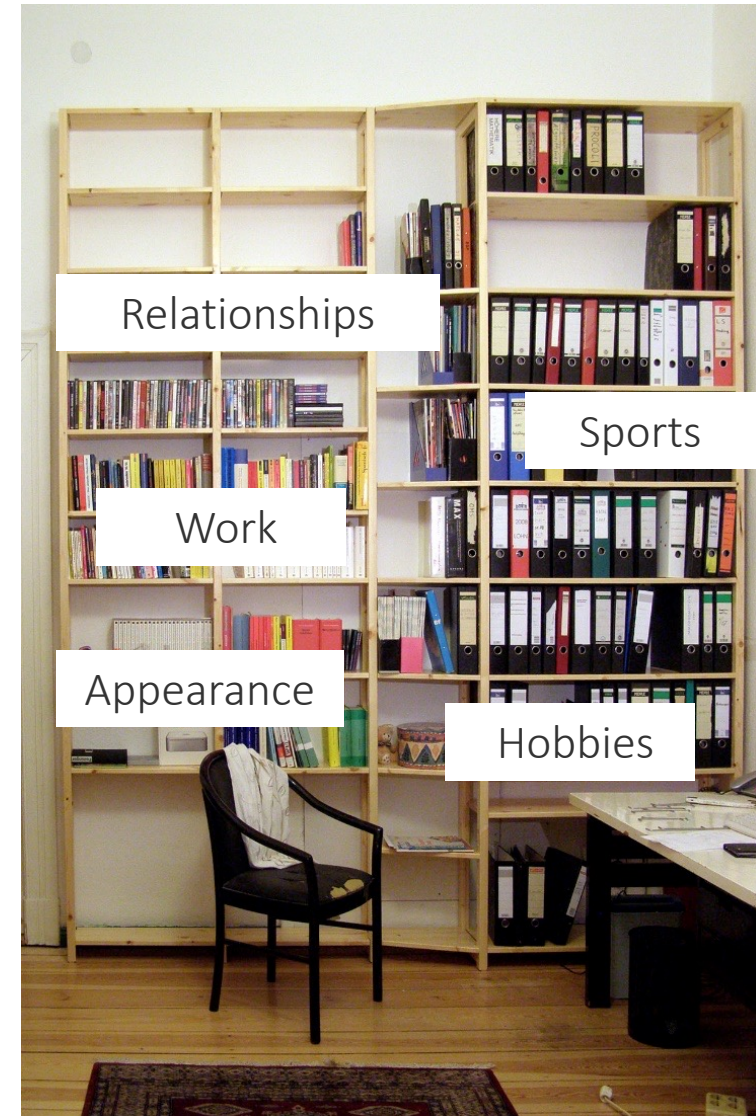
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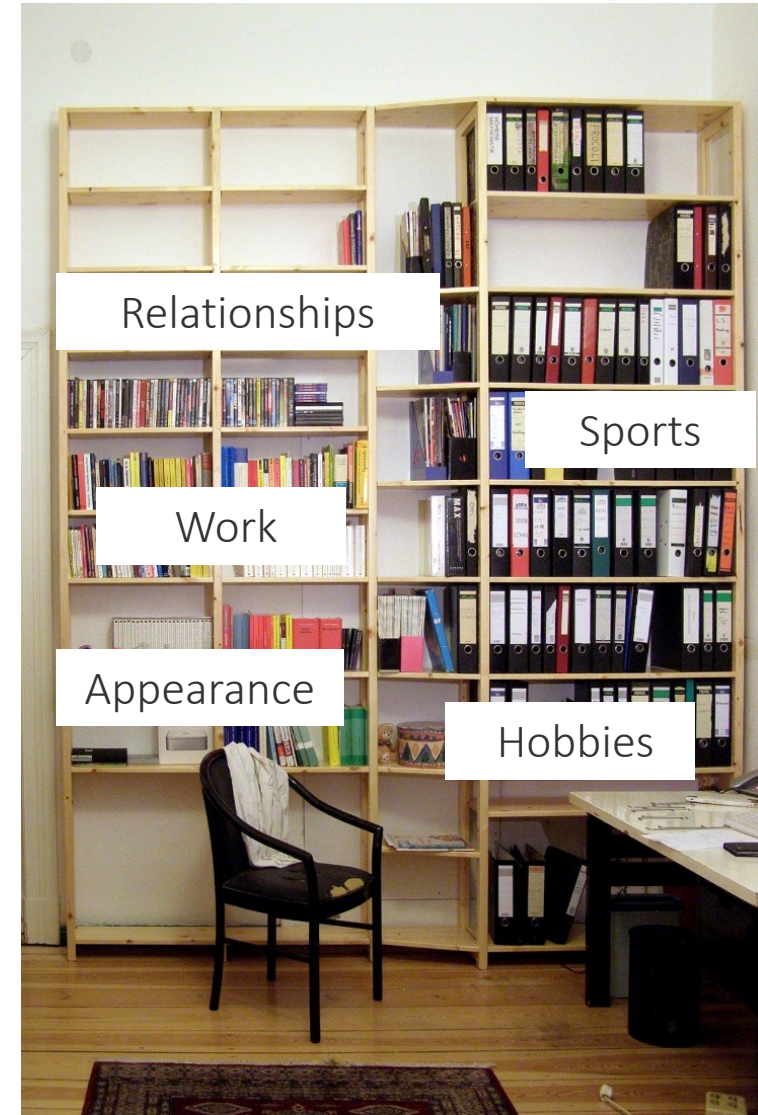
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- ... tend to make generalised negative self-judgments (e.g., “I am worthless”).





People with low self-esteem ...

- ... tend to focus on their own empty trays, but on the full trays of others.
- ... tend to make generalised negative self-judgments (e.g., “I am worthless”).
- ... do not differentiate between the person as a whole and behaviour (e.g., “If I am unsuccessful at one thing, it means I’m a loser”).



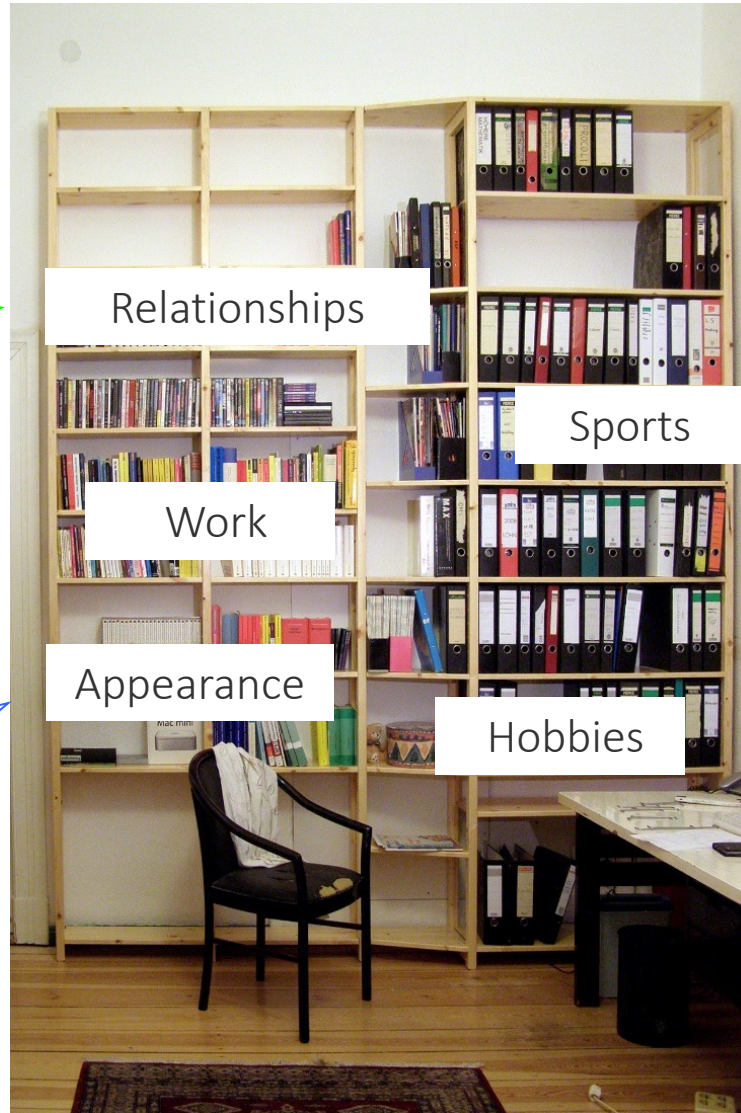


Do not forget ...

I'm a good listener, very reliable, able to maintain my friendships and make others laugh ...

I'm unemployed at the moment; failed the last test

I'm satisfied with my hair and I like my eyes, but I'd like to be taller ...



I was chosen last for my sports teams at school; I'm bad at throwing a ball but good at dancing ...

I like cooking and I know plenty about music and politics. I'm interested in literature and films ...

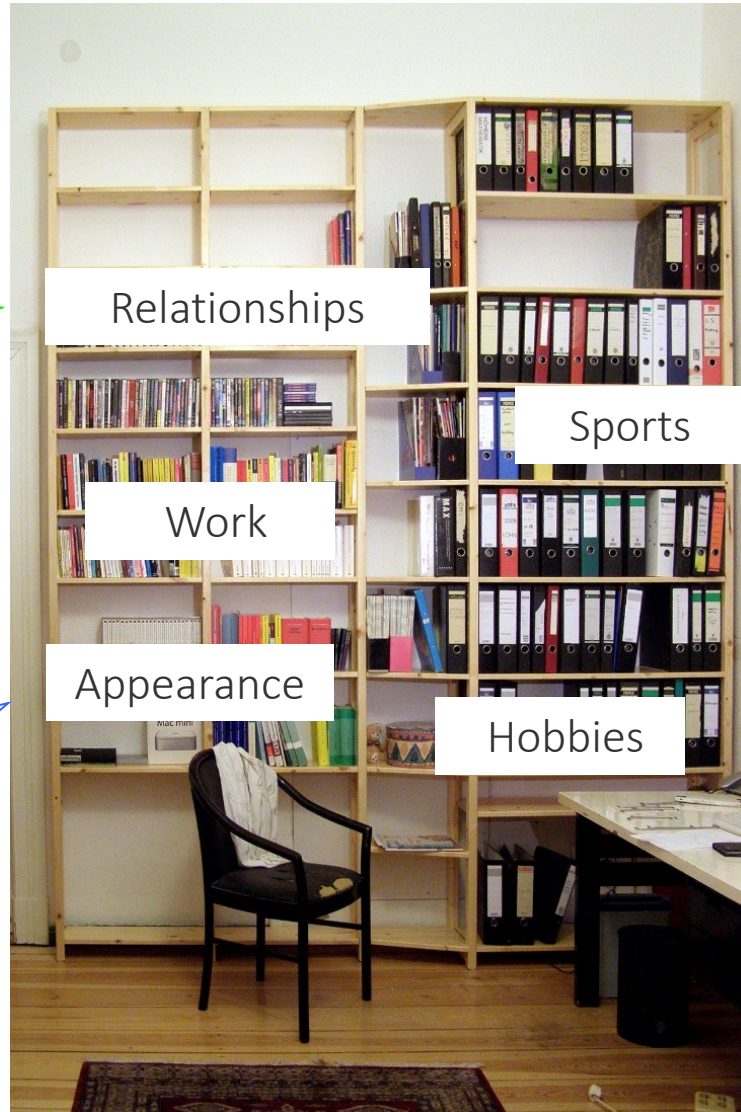


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In which tray haven't you been looking for quite a long time? What hidden treasures may be there?



What identifies people with high self-esteem?

- Voice: ???
- Facial expression/Gesture: ???
- Posture: ???





What identifies people with high self-esteem?

- Voice: clear, well-articulated, appropriate volume
- Facial expression/Gesture: eye contact; confident appearance
- Posture: upright

As with anything: don't overdo it (e.g., staring at other people, interrupting them constantly, don't boss others around).





Characteristics of high self-esteem that are not directly observable

???





Characteristics of high self-esteem that are not directly observable

- Confidence in one's own ability.
- Accepting one's own errors or failures (without devaluing oneself).
- Introspective and willingness to learn (from one's own errors/failures).
- Positive attitude towards oneself, for example, praising yourself for success.





Realising strengths

Why is identifying our own strengths so difficult sometimes?

- Common assumption: “If I praise myself, I'll become vain.”
- During phases of acute illness, it can be harder to see or show your strengths.



Realising strengths

Regaining “lost treasures”:



- Just ask your friends or family, what strengths they value you for.
- Think of concrete situations in which you handled something well and may have even been complimented (even small things count).
- ... and write these experiences in a “joy-diary”*, so you remember them in bad times.

* In your “joy-diary” only positive aspects of the day should be written down.



Exercise 1

What do you like about yourself?

What are you good at?

Think of one strength each!



Exercise 2

- Get up and let your head hang down.
- Look down, let your shoulders and your arms dangle, arch your back a little.



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How does it feel?



Exercise 2

- Now please let your entire upper body hang down in a relaxed manner and then very slowly align yourself upright, vertebra by vertebra. Imagine somebody would pull you up by the ends of your hair.



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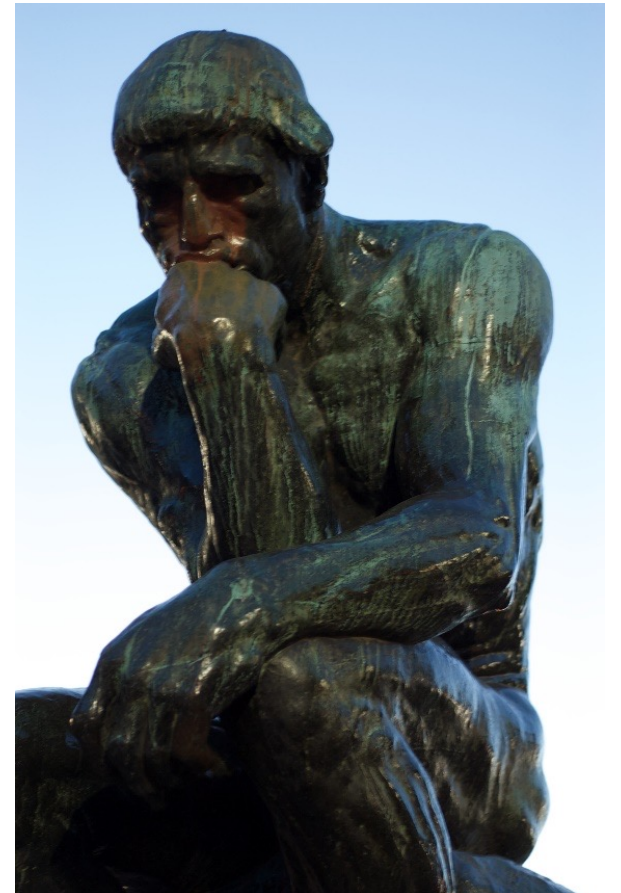
- You may have noticed that you were much more upright and secure.
- A firm position and an upright posture does not only look more confident to other people, it also has a positive impact on self-esteem.
- Developing a new internal attitude with the right body posture: A body language that says “I’m confident” (straight posture, eye contact, clear voice) fosters real strength and real self-confidence inside you.

What begins with “posturing” turns into a real attitude!



Ruminating: Spinning in circles, but not moving forward

- Many people with psychological symptoms suffer from endless “ruminating” or “brooding”
- Have you noticed yourself ruminating?

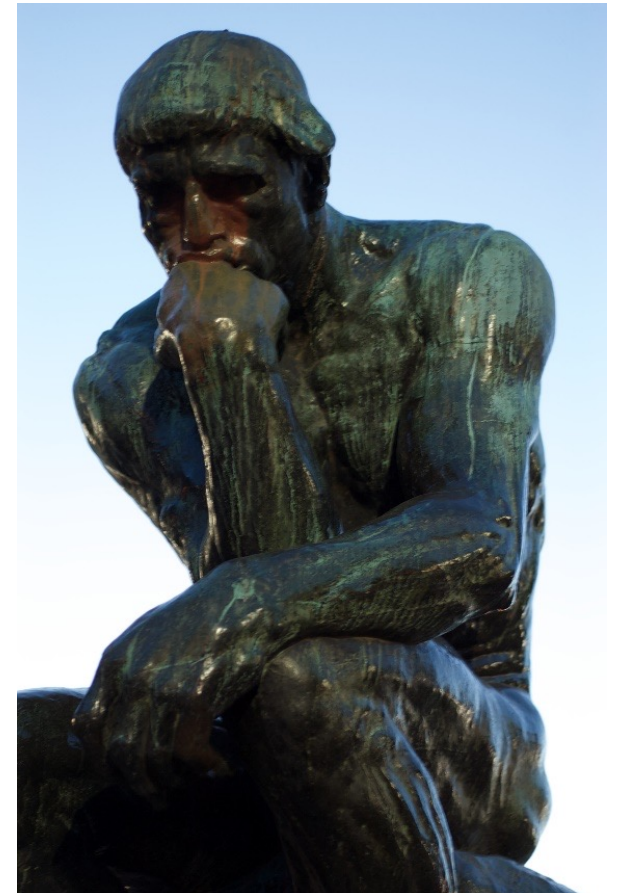




Problems

Ruminating is problematic for several reasons:

- The thoughts are running in circles: Problems are present without being solved.
- Self-esteem is further undermined, because useful and beautiful thoughts or actions are not attended to or even noticed.
- Unlike goal-directed thinking, ruminating is characterized by the same unsuccessful thoughts and self-accusations again and again.





What to do?

The first and most important step is to acknowledge rumination as a problem rather than a helpful strategy. Rumination clearly leads to more problems instead of solving them.

- Ruminating thoughts are just thoughts ... they're not reality!
- Try to notice them, but don't place too much value on these thoughts.



Anti-Rumination Exercise 1: Looking for inner separation ...

- Consider what happens inside you without interfering or devaluing (“I’m an idiot, I can't stop ruminating!”; “Why do I have this problem?”)
- Watch the thoughts like departing trains at the station, drifting clouds in the sky, or leaves carried by the wind.

These problematic thoughts are not persistent because they are true, but because they scare you. And that’s why you think about them repeatedly.





Anti-Rumination Exercise 2: Physical distraction

Physical exercise

1. Get up!
2. Put your left hand to your right shoulder
3. Put your right hand to your left shoulder
4. Lift one leg ...
5. ... and rotate it



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What are you thinking about?



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Because you have to concentrate on this exercise, it helps to break through the endless rumination loop.



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- Express your own wishes to other people.
- Try to speak loud and clear.
- Make eye contact (try to start with people you know, then proceed with strangers).
- Stand tall: Remember the impact of an upright posture on your own self-esteem and on the people around you!



Homework

Tips how to appreciate the positive things that happen in your day:

- When you leave home, take a handful of small pellets in the right pocket of your jacket (beans, marbles, etc.).
- Any time something positive happens (e.g., getting a smile from a friend, having a nice conversation, having a delicious lunch, etc. ...), move one pellet from your right to your left pocket.
- When you are back home at night, get the pellets from the left pocket and remember all beautiful things you have experienced during the day.
- In doing so, you keep track of all the positive, beautiful memories and enjoy the moment. Sadly, all too often we leave the pleasant things unnoticed and let them pass too quickly.



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Do you know other ways to enjoy and remember nice things during the day?



What does this have to do with psychosis?

Learning Objectives:

- Self-esteem is the worth that a person places on her- or himself.
- Become aware of your strengths in different areas of your life and try to improve your self-esteem using the strategies discussed.
- Search for forgotten strengths (“hidden treasures”) by asking your friends or keep a daily joy diary.
- Be mindful of the positive moments that happen in your day!



What does this have to do with psychosis?

Many (but not all!) people with psychosis have low self-esteem and have negative thought patterns (e.g., a tendency to brood), which can further reduce their self-esteem.



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Example: Harry receives a bad assessment in a final exam at the end of his training.

Evaluation: At first, he questions himself as an employee, but increasingly he also devalues himself as a person. He feels depressed and doubts himself.

But: Friends help Harry in the following days by making it clear to him that the test does not evaluate him as a person but is a snapshot of his performance in just one of many areas. He should not take the results lightly, but it is also important that he keep in mind his strengths (at work as well as in other areas) and not be too hard on himself.

Important: Even if you experience a failure, you should never ignore the things that go well in your life!



Thank you for your attention!

for Trainers:

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