



“ADHD and Low Self-Esteem: Manifestations, Costs and a Remedy”

Alan P Brown ([00:00](#)):

Hello, and welcome to TADD Talks with ADDA. I'm Alan P. Brown, ADHD productivity coach and business coach to coaches joining you from ADD Crusher headquarters here in sunny San Diego. And today I'll be sharing some insights on ADHD and our self-esteem, along with a simple writing exercise that can help boost your self-esteem. You know, it's well established in the research that ADHD adults, children, and adolescents will all tend to have lower self-esteem than their neurotypical peers. And low self-esteem means lower levels of self-respect, lower self-acceptance, and a negative self-sense of worth, which creates self-doubt, self-criticism, and distorted perceptions about ourselves, which can lead to emotional distress and lots of other negative stuff. So let's start by answering this most important question, which is, how is low self-esteem manifested, and what it cost us? So our negativity bias is on steroids with low self-esteem.

Alan P Brown ([01:05](#)):

We put a magnifying glass on every one of our mistakes, and we almost completely ignore our successes, the cost to us. Well, perceiving only a track record of fails. We don't expect successes, which reduces motivation and exacerbates our procrastination. And of course, we further reinforce all our negative stories. Another manifestation is that we protect ourselves. That's in quotation marks with perfectionism, fed by an underlying feeling that, and I'll quote Brene Brown, if I look perfect, live perfect, and work perfect, I can avoid critic, criticism, blame, or ridicule. And the cost, of course, is when we're practicing any degree of harmful perfectionism, we're subconsciously keeping our world small and our possibilities fewer. Another manifestations related to this is we also protect ourselves by not taking risks. As Brene Brown, I love quoting her, says, you can't do anything brave wearing a straight jacket of what people will think.

Alan P Brown ([02:10](#)):



And the cost is, of course, not taking risks, which not only results in missed opportunities, but we don't get the learning that comes from making mistakes. And further to furthering our procrastination, our self-doubt and perfectionism make tasks seem more monumental than they are. So we procrastinate on not just our toughest task, but all on things that actually aren't so tough. Another manifestation is that we don't feel we deserve things, and not just things, but we don't feel we we deserve our own personal boundaries or to express our own needs. As a result, we say yes, yes, yes to others, and we say no to booking our special vacation, to upgrading our living situation, to asking help of others, delegating things.

Alan P Brown ([02:59](#)):

There's a big manifestation. We don't live our values. We do not what's right for us, but what keeps us safe from judgment. Now, in some, you could say that we are self-sabotaging in so many areas of our lives, and if you think about it, we're kind of screwing ourselves on a daily basis. Now, I know this paints a very bleak picture, but I'm just gonna put a little more research backed icing on this kind of crap cake I've just shared with a quote from two experts in this area. Lowered self-esteem is associated with lower quality of life, more psychological difficulties, lower job satisfaction, lower relationship satisfaction, lower life satisfaction, and the list goes on. So what can we do about our destructive self-esteem situation? Well, I'm gonna share an exercise, a really simple exercise, a writing exercise that can actually help you boost your self-esteem.

Alan P Brown ([03:56](#)):

This exercise has been around for a long time in different forms, but I'm gonna attribute it to David Giwerc, the founder of ADDCA. He's a mentor of mine and he teaches a similar exercise. I think he calls it magic Moments on the mountain, but this one's called the Seven Stories, and it's designed to call up your positive traumatic events. And what the heck is a positive traumatic events? Well, most of the research on human trauma and its impact focuses on negative traumas, right? And we of course, associate the word trauma with the most negative of life events, combat, assault, major illness or loss, physical or emotional abuse, et cetera. But there are also positive traumas. I mean, you'll never forget the feeling of falling in love, right? That's a big positive traumatic event. But a true positive trauma can be when you got a big promotion or a dream new job, an award you received.



Alan P Brown ([04:48](#)):

Really, it's any significant accomplishment or positive moment of pride from childhood right up to last week. Recalling positive traumatic events can help us shift out of negative stories and into positive, enabling ones. And the seven stories will help you identify. Set aside an hour or so of quiet time to do this full four-step exercise, but I invite you to just start, maybe just start a little bit of writing right now. And step one is to just write, and it's important to write a list rather than to type or to just think about it. You know, write a list of about 20 to 25 of the things you are most proud of. All the moments where you achieve something meaningful, maybe against the odds all the times when you felt you were really in flow really aligned with your passion and your strengths, et cetera. And what you would do after you've listed 25 or so, step two is to review all those positive events and circle

Alan P Brown ([05:57](#)):

Your top seven, hence the seven stories. And you, you're going to choose your top seven based on terms of impact or pride or any other criteria you deem relevant. Then step three, for each of the seven things you circled, write a short story, like one paragraph of about three sentences. And in those paragraphs, you will describe A, what you did, B, what skills, strengths, or values you called on to achieve it, and then C, why you are so proud of it. Those questions are important. And then step four is you take a step back and, using a highlighter, look for patterns, words, or phrases that come up repeatedly. Any other themes you can spot, because in those patterns, you'll see strengths of yours across multiple events you might have forgotten about, and you'll also see some of your core values. This is super powerful because when you turn the spotlight of your attention on your strengths and values, a few things happen.

Alan P Brown ([06:59](#)):

You see direct credible evidence refuting some of your disempowering beliefs. You create new beliefs about what you're capable of. You begin to form new neural pathways that support your new positive narrative as it's called, particularly if you reread them regularly, which is an important part of this too. It's true that writing exercises like this are shown by research to help tamp down our automatic negative stories and increase the presence of more positive, empowering stories in our minds. I want to thank you again for joining me today. For this ADDA TADD Talk on our self-esteem. I'm Alan P. Brown, and by the way, if you like learning about why we are the way we are,



like for instance, why we procrastinate so much, I invite you to grab my free worksheet. It's called How to Leverage The Psychology of Procrastination. This is a one-pager worksheet that shares three research-based insights to help you start judo flipping your procrastination. You can grab it @ addcrusher.com. Just scroll down a little bit on the homepage there. Thanks again for listening. I hope you'll get out there and crush it today. Bye-Bye bye.