Staying on Track: Keeping Well After Overcoming Low Self-Esteem

THE TALKING THERAPIES UK SELF-HELP SERIES



Staying on Track: Keeping Well After Overcoming Low Self-Esteem

A guided self-help programme for maintaining your progress and preventing relapse

A self-help workbook · 8 modules · about 8 weeks

TALKING THERAPIES UK

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First edition, 2026.

This workbook accompanies the Staying on Track: Keeping Well After Overcoming Low Self-Esteem programme on the Talking Therapies UK self-help platform. Its text is drawn from the programme and is kept current with it: whenever the programme changes, the workbook is set again.

Revision 5. This printing was set on 8 November 2026 from the programme as it stood that day.

A note on using this workbook. It offers self-help based on established psychological approaches for difficulties of mild to moderate severity. It is not a substitute for assessment or treatment by a qualified professional and is not designed for use in a crisis. The examples in it are fictional; no real person appears in them. If you are worried about your safety, or your difficulties are getting worse, the page headed “When self-help is not enough” says where to turn.

Set in Poppins and Roboto, the Talking Therapies UK typefaces.

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How to use this workbook

This evidence-based guided self-help programme uses principles from cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and compassion-focused therapy (CFT) to help you maintain the positive changes you have made in overcoming low self-esteem. Over eight structured modules, you will learn how to recognise early warning signs, consolidate your compassionate inner voice, and build long-term resilience against future setbacks. By working through practical exercises and reflection points, you will develop a personalised relapse prevention plan to support your ongoing emotional wellbeing. The programme is designed for independent completion alongside regular practitioner guidance within a stepped-care framework.

This workbook is the written form of the Staying on Track: Keeping Well After Overcoming Low Self-Esteem programme on the Talking Therapies UK self-help platform. It follows the programme module by module: each part of the book is one module, and each chapter is one piece of the module's teaching, set in the order the programme presents it.

Read the chapters of a part in order, then turn to the worksheets that follow them. The worksheets are the part of the work that changes things, so give them the time they ask for and come back to them as the weeks go on. You may copy or print the worksheets for your own use, as often as you need.

Most people work through one module a week, which takes the whole programme about 8 weeks. Go at the pace that suits you: a module done properly is worth more than two done quickly.

The check-in questionnaires let you see how things are changing. Complete each one when you reach it, note the date and your total, and compare it with the last.

When self-help is not enough

- If you are in danger now, or have seriously harmed yourself, call 999 or go to your nearest accident and emergency department.
- If you need help urgently but it is not an emergency, call NHS 111 or contact your GP surgery.
- Samaritans are there day and night, every day of the year: call 116 123 free from any phone.
- If you would rather not talk, text SHOUT to 85258 for free, confidential support at any hour.
- If your difficulties are getting worse as you work through this book, or you find yourself thinking about ending your life, stop and speak to your GP or a mental health professional. A workbook can be a good start, and some difficulties need more help than a book can give.

What this workbook will help you to do

- Review your personal journey of overcoming low self-esteem and identify the specific strategies that have been most effective for you. Consolidate your understanding of how your self-worth has shifted from conditional to unconditional acceptance.
- Examine the common trajectory of recovery, distinguishing between minor lapses and full relapses in self-esteem. Learn to reframe setbacks through a compassionate lens rather than

viewing them as personal failures.

- Map out your personal triggers, early behavioural changes, and cognitive red flags that indicate your self-esteem is starting to dip. Create an individualised warning system for early intervention.
- Deepen your practice of self-compassion to counter the return of critical inner dialogue. Learn how to soothe your threat system and activate your care-giving system during times of stress or self-doubt.
- Clarify your core personal values across key life domains and evaluate how well your current lifestyle aligns with them. Set meaningful, value-driven goals that foster a continued sense of personal efficacy and purpose.
- Apply structured problem-solving and assertiveness techniques to navigate interpersonal conflicts and everyday stressors without compromising your boundaries or self-worth.
- Synthesise your learning into a comprehensive, written relapse prevention plan detailing emergency coping strategies, support networks, and daily maintenance habits.
- Reflect on your completed self-help journey, celebrate your resilience, and establish a long-term maintenance schedule for self-monitoring and continued personal growth.

PART 1

Reflecting on Your Journey and Progress

Recognising how far you have come and what works for you

CHAPTER 1

Welcome to Your Relapse Prevention Journey

Welcome to Staying on Track: Keeping Well After Overcoming Low Self-Esteem. If you are reading this, you have likely done some profound and challenging work to overcome low self-esteem, whether through individual therapy, guided self-help, or dedicated personal effort. This evidence-based programme draws on principles from cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and compassion-focused therapy (CFT) to help you protect and maintain those hard-won gains. Over the next eight structured modules, we will work together to help you recognise early warning signs, consolidate a compassionate inner voice, and build long-term resilience against future setbacks.

A NOTE

This programme is designed for independent completion alongside your regular practitioner guidance within a stepped-care framework. You are the expert in your own life, and this guide is here to support you in customising a relapse prevention plan that fits your unique needs.

In this very first module, titled Reflecting on Your Journey and Progress, our focus is on looking back so you can look forward with confidence. The learning outcomes for this module are twofold: first, to review your personal journey of overcoming low self-esteem and identify the specific strategies that have been most effective for you; and second, to consolidate your understanding of how your self-worth has shifted from conditional to unconditional acceptance.

Life naturally brings ups and downs, and feeling vulnerable at times is a normal part of being human. Relapse prevention is not about aiming for a life free of difficult emotions or challenges. Instead, it is about developing a robust toolkit and an unwavering sense of preparedness so that when stress inevitably arises, you know precisely how to respond. Take things at your own pace, be gentle with yourself, and remember that every small step of reflection is an investment in your ongoing emotional wellbeing.

CHAPTER 2

Welcome to Your Relapse Prevention Journey

Welcome to Staying on Track: Keeping Well After Overcoming Low Self-Esteem. This evidence-based guided self-help programme uses principles from cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and compassion-focused therapy (CFT) to help you maintain the positive changes you have made. Over eight structured modules, you will learn how to recognise early warning signs, consolidate your compassionate inner voice, and build long-term resilience against future setbacks. By working through practical exercises and reflection points, you will develop a personalised relapse prevention plan to support your ongoing emotional wellbeing. The programme is designed for independent completion alongside regular practitioner guidance within a stepped-care framework.

In this first module, titled Reflecting on Your Journey and Progress, we focus on recognising how far you have come and what works for you. The primary learning outcomes for this module are to review your personal journey of overcoming low self-esteem and identify the specific strategies that have been most effective for you, while consolidating your understanding of how your self-worth has shifted from conditional to unconditional acceptance. When we work hard to overcome low self-esteem, it is very common to focus so much on the daily effort that we forget to look back and appreciate the distance we have travelled. Many people finish an active course of psychological therapy or self-guided work feeling a quiet sense of relief, but also a lingering undercurrent of anxiety. They might wonder: Will these changes last? What happens if life throws a major stressor my way next week? These questions are completely natural. Human beings have a built-in negativity bias—an evolutionary survival mechanism that alerts us to potential threats rather than celebrating successes. While this bias once helped our ancestors spot predators, today it often means our brains scan for lingering flaws while glossing over our hard-won victories.

A NOTE

Remember that noticing your doubts is not a sign that you are failing; it is simply your brain's evolutionary negativity bias at work. Acknowledging these thoughts without letting them drive the bus is a vital part of staying well.

To counter this bias, we must consciously train our minds to look backward with intention and kindness. Reflecting on your journey is not about engaging in unhelpful, boastful pride; rather, it is about gathering concrete evidence of your resilience. Think of your recovery journey as a physical expedition up a challenging mountain. When you are focused entirely on the steep incline directly in front of your boots, every step feels exhausting. It is only when you pause on a plateau, turn around, and look down at the valley far below that the true scale of your achievement becomes visible. In psychological terms, gathering this evidence helps to strengthen new neural pathways. Every time you consciously recall a moment where you challenged a harsh inner critic or acted in line with your true values, you reinforce the neural architecture of self-compassion. This makes those healthier responses much easier to access the next time you face a difficult day.

Sarah spent six months working through cognitive behavioural strategies to address her lifelong belief that she was only valuable if she achieved perfection at work and in her relationships. When starting this maintenance programme, she initially felt that her progress was fragile and insignificant. However, when she sat down to review her journey, she looked back at her journal entries from six months prior. She realised that six months ago, a single critical comment from her manager would have sent her into a three-day spiral of shame, overworking, and social withdrawal. Recently, when faced with similar feedback, she had experienced a brief flicker of anxiety, but had been able to pause, recognise that her worth was not defined by a single spreadsheet, and take an evening off to rest. By writing this down, Sarah transformed a vague sense of 'feeling a bit better' into concrete evidence of profound psychological growth.

As you begin this module, take a moment to consider what your own starting point looked like. What were the core beliefs that once held you captive? What did your inner critic sound like on a difficult day? By contrasting those past struggles with your current reality, you lay a robust foundation for the rest of this programme. Relapse prevention is not about preventing life from being difficult; adversity is an inevitable part of the human condition. Instead, staying well is about changing your relationship to difficulty, ensuring that old patterns of self-criticism and avoidance do not quietly creep back in while your attention is elsewhere. Take your time with this process, treat yourself with gentleness, and recognise that acknowledging your progress is the first and most crucial step in protecting it for the long term.