



# Should we pay more attention to self-esteem in young people?

By Dr. Jessica Edwards

Researchers in Bordeaux, France have investigated the association between self-esteem (assessed in adolescence or adulthood), with adult academic and psychosocial outcomes. Julie Arsandaux and colleagues recruited 131 high-school students (mean age 11.4 years) who had experienced a mixed level of academic success. After 10 years, the researchers obtained information on academic, socio-professional and health-related outcomes from 100 of the original students. They then used the data to estimate the association between self-esteem at baseline and follow-up, and change in self-esteem (i.e. high vs. low) on all outcomes.

They found that ~38% of the participants experienced a change in their self-esteem over the 10-year period: either a decrease or an increase compared to baseline. A high level of self-esteem in adolescence predicted meeting long-term personal goals, better self-rated physical health and fewer depressive symptoms. A high level of self-esteem in young adults predicted better life satisfaction, less treatment seeking for physical or mental disorders and better self-rated mental health (including fewer depressive or anxiety symptoms).

The effects of self-esteem on negative outcomes depended on how the self-esteem experience changed, as well as the period of life in which the self-esteem difficulties were considered. Notably, self-esteem difficulties in young adults were most highly associated with negative outcomes (such as life satisfaction, alcohol, and health outcomes) in the same period of life. The researchers thus recommend that self-esteem interventions should be implemented across the life span, but most especially focused during young adulthood.

## Referring to:

Arsandaux, J., Galéra, C. & Salamon, R. (2020), *The association of self-esteem and psychosocial outcomes in young adults: a 10-year prospective study*. *Child Adolesc. Ment. Health*. doi: 10.1111/camh.12392.

## Glossary:

**Self-esteem:** In 1965, Rosenberg defined self-esteem as the overall aggregated opinion of oneself at a given time.