

POOR SELF-IMAGE

Self-image refers to teens' mental picture of themselves in terms of both their physicality and personality. It's a combination of their thoughts about what they think they look like, how they see their personality, their beliefs on what others think of them, how much they like themselves, and how they see and feel about their status in life. Self-esteem is closely related to self-image as self-esteem is a person's feelings about themselves, and these feelings are normally informed by their self-image.

Self-image plays a crucial role during the adolescence stage. Teens are going through puberty, a time of sexual maturation, and also cognitive development, which brings a new level of social awareness and moral judgment. They start to notice these changes in themselves, their own environment, and the outside world. Adding to this, another aspect of adolescent adaptation is the decision to become independent or dependent. In the course of these adaptations, teens form their own identities and self-image, and how they cope with them has an impact on a teenager's self-image.

When adolescents attempt to initiate themselves, asserting self-image, they can do so in ways that are risky or destructive. There are certain characteristics of 'high-risk' adolescents who have low self-esteem and /or a poor self-image: Teens who have low self-esteem most likely have weak perceptions of personal capabilities, significance, and power or control in life. They may also have weak intrapersonal skills and lack self-discipline and self-control.

Low self-esteem and poor self-image have long been associated with anxiety, eating disorders, depression, addictive behaviors, domestic violence and sexual issues in adolescence through to adulthood.

POSSIBLE CAUSES OF POOR SELF-IMAGE

Here are some of the things that may contribute to poor self-image and self-esteem:

- Unrealistic perceptions of people (an effect of social media)
- Academic issues/failure
- Early separation from parents – causing fear of abandonment
- Excessive criticism by others
- Lack of outside support and praise
- Little affection, support or respect
- Criticism for weight or appearance
- Lack of encouragement in school and other personal endeavors
- Childhood illness and inability to participate in normal activities
- Subject of bullying, frequent teasing or laughter
- Overly strict, cruel, or age-inappropriate punishment
- Negative comparison to siblings or other children
- Being shamed
- Not being allowed to participate in school activities, play with neighbors and friends, or do normal things other kids do
- Being blamed for their parent's problems
- Not being taught appropriate social skills (because it is learned behavior)

HOW CAN PACIFIC QUEST WILDERNESS THERAPY HELP?

Lacking guides and healthy mentors, the path to adulthood can be elusive for some adolescents. Individualized treatment plans are at the core of Pacific Quest's successful treatment process. With our small enrollment and specialized programming, we offer each student and family a chance to experience growth at Pacific Quest on a very personal level so that a variety of needs can be met.

Central to the therapeutic model are the experiential nature of the program and holistic approach to wellness. The program structure; intentional design of the phases; curriculum; daily activities; and focus on health and wellness, and peer culture complement the individual treatment plan providing the foundation for developing personal awareness and cultivating tools for personal development. Unique to Pacific Quest, our Rites of Passage are woven into the curriculum throughout each student's

experience, which are key to students developing a positive adult image. The experiences follow a consistent template found in Rites of Passage from around the world: Severance – letting go of the old that no longer serves; Threshold – engaging in a period of reflection, new learning, and new experiences; Incorporation – bringing back what one has learned into their life moving forward.

Lastly, through horticulture therapy, the garden is one of many areas in the program that students learn to practice the skills to live a more independent and productive life. As students develop the courage, knowledge, and skills to care for a garden, they experience tangible success that builds greater confidence in themselves helping to create a positive self-image. They also realize their ability to internalize care for themselves, applying new skills and insights to aspects of their lives that reach far beyond a therapeutic garden in Hawaii.

Each aspect of Pacific Quest wilderness therapy is an essential ingredient in helping create a positive self-image and high self-esteem; there is no one thing that helps build positive self-image because it is the accumulation of many internal and external factors. The blend of therapeutics and experiential education lends itself to sustainable growth for the students allowing them the ability to apply healthy coping skills beyond the shores of the Hawaiian Islands.