

Boosting Self-Esteem During Unemployment



Keeping Your Self-Worth Separate from Your Work Identity

Losing a job or being between roles can sometimes feel like losing part of yourself. Work often provides structure, purpose, and a sense of achievement — but it's important to remember that your value as a person is *not* defined by your job title, income, or employment status.

Why Self-Esteem Can Drop During Unemployment

- Cultural Pressure: Society often links success to career achievement.
- Loss of Routine: Without daily work structure, it can feel harder to feel productive.
- Reduced Social Contact: Missing out on workplace connections can lead to isolation.
- Financial Stress: Money worries can fuel self-criticism.

Recognising these influences helps you challenge them and protect your sense of self-worth.

Ways to Keep Your Worth Separate from Your Job

1. List Your Non-Work Strengths

Write down qualities, skills, and experiences that have nothing to do with employment — kindness, creativity, problem-solving, community involvement.

2. Maintain a Sense of Purpose

Find activities that give you a reason to get up in the morning — volunteering, hobbies, learning, caring for others, or personal projects.

3. Keep a Daily “Wins” Log

Record small achievements each day — cooking a meal, completing a workout, helping a friend. These reminders reinforce that you are capable and valuable regardless of job status.

4. Stay Socially Connected

Engage with friends, family, or community groups. Your relationships and contributions to others matter just as much as — if not more than — your career.

5. Set Personal Goals Unrelated to Work

Work on fitness, creative projects, home organisation, or learning something new. Progress in these areas supports confidence.

6. Speak to Yourself with Respect

Notice self-critical thoughts and replace them with kinder, more balanced statements — “I am more than my job” or “I have value in many areas of life.”

7. Challenge the ‘Success = Career’ Myth

Remind yourself that life satisfaction comes from multiple areas — health, relationships, growth, contribution, and joy — not only from work.

Remember: Your job is something you *do*, not who you *are*. Skills, relationships, values, and character travel with you through every stage of life, no matter your employment status.
