Self-Esteem — how I see or feel about myself

Start sentences with — *"I am..."*

Example: *I am the best husband she could have. → (not good enough)*

References: Column 3 Instructions | Common Fears | Examples

How to Identify This Area

If I feel ashamed or inadequate because of the event in Column 2, my **self-esteem** is affected. *(ref. 02-column-3.md)*

Using Bill's actor metaphor from Step Three — Self-Esteem is **my stage character, the role I've assigned myself.** It is who I believe I am (or need to be) in this situation. It is how I see myself — the identity I've built, the image I hold of myself.

Important Note

While writing about your self-esteem: If you truly had low self-esteem when the person in Column One did Column Two you would not have been resentful at them — you would have believed you got what you deserved. You will experience your difficulties easier in this area writing from a point of **high self-esteem**. It will take writing and seeing the fears bracketed alongside a few of these to understand this.

How to Write It

Start each sentence with **"I am..."** and write a statement about the role you've assigned yourself — the character you believe you are (or need to be) in this situation. Then bracket the fear next to it — the opposite of what you've just claimed.

The inflated statement reveals the fear underneath. *"I am a great guy to have around"* reveals the fear: *(not good enough)*. If I really believed it, I wouldn't need to declare it.

Template:

- I am _____. *(_____)*
- I am _____. *(_____)*

Alternate format: Some people find it helpful to use the two-part format: *"I see myself as...; I want to see myself as..."* This makes the gap between reality and demand visible.

- I see myself as _____; I want to see myself as _____. *(_____)*

Tips:

- No *"I think..."* or *"I feel..."* statements — write the claim directly *(ref. p.62-¶1)*
- Bracket your fears next to every sentence *(ref. p.67-¶3)*
- Write from high self-esteem — the inflated version of how you see yourself
- Use simple adjectives or nouns, not verb phrases — e.g., *"a conceited fool"* not *"someone who acts conceited"*

Examples from the Inventory

Every one of the twelve worked examples includes a Self-Esteem entry. Notice the pattern: the more afraid we are, the grander the claim.

- *"I am a great guy to have around." (not good enough)* — #1 Mr. Brown
- *"I am the greatest friend anyone could have around." (a bad person)* — #2 Mrs. Jones
- *"I'm the best employee they can have at my job." (not good enough)* — #3 My Employer
- *"I'm the best husband she could get." (bad husband)* — #4 My Wife
- *"I am the perfect friend." (not good enough, not important)* — #5 Susie

- *"I am a good person, a good husband and a good worker." (not good enough, not important)* — #6 Mr. Brown Alternate
- *"I am the good daughter." (not good enough)* — #7 My Father
- *"I'm a perfect brother." (not good enough)* — #8 My Sister
- *"I'm worth caring for and protecting. I am valuable." (powerless, no control, never be safe)* — #9 God Does Not Care About Me
- *"I am desirable. I have what he/she wants." (ugly, pathetic, undesirable, alone)* — #10 Not Fulfilled Without a Relationship
- *"I am important. I matter! I am loved." (broken, disposable, worthless)* — #11 I Am Unloveable
- *"I am what I have and earn. I am powerful and attractive." (failure, money won't fix it, unwanted)* — #12 Not OK Without Money

Additional Examples

These are additional examples showing the range of how Self-Esteem shows up. Some use the BBA *"I am..."* format, others the alternate *"I see myself as... / I want to see myself as..."* format.

- *"I see myself as a conceited fool. I want to see myself as an effortless worker."* — Gillian (client's employee who criticised my work)
- *"I see myself as touchy. I want to see myself as poised."* — Milford (secretary of home group who polices people doing service)
- *"I see myself as hoi polloi. I want to see myself as a VIP."* — Immigration system at airport (understaffed, officious)
- *"I see myself as a non-entity. I want to see myself as a mover and shaker."* — Peter (colleague who ignored me in the corridor)
- *"I see myself as a flawed failure. I want to see myself as a star."* — Andrew (teacher who shouted at me)
- *"I see myself as a failure. I want to see myself as a success."* — Martina (she has a successful career)
- *"I see myself as inefficient and useless. I want to see myself as effective and competent as a sponsor."*

- *"I see myself as error-prone and uninteresting. I want to see myself as flawless and impressive as a writer."*
- *"I am a good employee." (not good enough)*
- *"I am a good husband." (bad husband, not good enough)*
- *"I am a good provider." (bad provider, not good enough)*
- *"I am likeable." (not liked, unlikeable, worthless, unwanted)*

Common Fears Under Self-Esteem

These fears commonly appear under Self-Esteem in the inventory. Each one is the opposite of the inflated *"I am..."* claim.

- **a bad person** — *"I am the greatest friend anyone could have around."* — #2
- **alone** — *"Wives stick by their husbands no matter what."* — #4, #9, #10, #12 | fear example
- **bad husband** — *"I'm the best husband she could get."* — #4
- **broken** — *"I am important. I matter! I am loved."* — #10, #11
- **disposable** — *"I am important. I matter! I am loved."* — #11
- **failure** — *"I am what I have and earn. I am powerful and attractive."* — #12
- **money won't fix it** — *"I am what I have and earn."* — #12
- **never be safe** — *"I'm worth caring for and protecting. I am valuable."* — #9
- **no control** — *"I'm worth caring for and protecting."* — #9, #10
- **not good enough** — *"I am a great guy to have around."* — #1, #3, #5, #6, #7, #8 | fear example
- **not important** — *"Others should see how important I am."* — #5, #6, #7
- **pathetic** — *"I am desirable. I have what he/she wants."* — #10
- **powerless** — *"I'm worth caring for and protecting. I am valuable."* — #9
- **ugly** — *"I am desirable. I have what he/she wants."* — #10
- **undesirable** — *"I am desirable. I have what he/she wants."* — #10
- **unwanted** — *"A real man is wanted anywhere."* — #2, #4, #6, #10, #11, #12 | fear example

- **worthless** — *"I need others to see my value as a person to be okay."* — #2, #9, #10, #11 | fear example

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Deeper Understanding

Self-Esteem is the **central battleground** of the inventory. It appears in every single one of the twelve examples, and the pattern is always the same: an inflated claim about who I am, paired with a fear that reveals the opposite.

The claim is never casual. *"I am the perfect friend," "I am the best employee," "I am a good person, a good husband and a good worker"* — these are declarations of identity, not descriptions. They are the role I've assigned myself in the play. And the fear in parentheses is the role I'm terrified of being assigned instead.

The Inflation-Deflation Pattern

The most common fear under Self-Esteem is **not good enough** — it appears in six of the first eight examples. This makes sense: Self-Esteem is where I define who I am, and the fundamental fear is that who I am is insufficient.

Look at the progression in the two-part format:

I see myself as...	I want to see myself as...
a conceited fool	an effortless worker
touchy	poised
hoi polloi	a VIP
a non-entity	a mover and shaker
a flawed failure	a star

The left column is the deflated self — how I really feel. The right column is the inflated self — the character I demand to play. The BBA *"I am..."* format captures only the inflated side

(with the fear in parentheses), while the two-part format shows both sides of the gap. Either format works; use whichever opens up the resentment for you.

Three Types of Self-Esteem Entries

In the **person-based resentments** (#1–8), Self-Esteem entries are about **roles in relationships:**

- *"I am a great guy to have around"* — the good friend
- *"I'm the best employee they can have"* — the star worker
- *"I'm the best husband she could get"* — the ideal partner
- *"I am the good daughter"* — the dutiful child

These are characters in specific relationships. The resentment comes when the other person's behavior threatens the character.

In the **principle inventories** (#9–12), Self-Esteem entries shift to **core identity claims:**

- *"I am valuable"* — fundamental worth
- *"I am desirable"* — attractiveness and acceptance
- *"I am what I have and earn"* — identity tied to material outcomes

These reveal the foundational beliefs about self-worth that sit underneath all the relational fears. They are the bedrock — the beliefs that generate all the role-specific characters above.

In the **additional examples**, the two-part format reveals **the gap itself:**

- *"I see myself as a flawed failure; I want to see myself as a star"* — the distance between who I fear I am and who I demand to be is the source of the suffering.

Why the Resentment Exists

The key insight: if I truly believed the inflated claim, I would not have been resentful. The resentment is the evidence that the claim is fragile — that underneath *"I am great"* lives the fear *"I am not enough."*

When someone threatens my self-esteem, they are not creating the problem. They are exposing a problem that was already there. The identity I built was always fragile because it was built on performance, not on something stable. The inventory reveals this: **my sense of self goes up and down in response to external circumstances, which means it was never secure.**

What Self-Esteem Reveals About "My Way"

Self-Esteem is where I am concerned about what I think about myself. What I really am is spirit, born of God. I inhabit a human existence where I play roles assigned, but I am not the characters I play. What I am is of infinite value and changeless. Any sense of self-esteem that goes up and down in response to my performance in the world will be perpetually fragile. My sense of self must stem from something deeper — from being a child of God, made in His image. If that is the substance and everything else a transient dream, self-esteem ceases to be a problem.

This list is not exhaustive — your inventory will reveal self-esteem patterns unique to you. Use this as a starting point to help identify how you see yourself in each resentment.

From the Big Book Awakening Step Four guide at bigbook.it/step-4/ · a page of the guide, not the workbook itself: the workbook's own pages are linked from "Originals & sources." · source self-esteem.md