You're a Bad Girl!

Or, you're a bad boy! How many times did you hear that growing up? Plenty of times for most of us.

Whoever said that was equating your behavior with your worth. It could be a parent, a teacher, a religious figure or a policeman who used this to get you to conform to their rules and to control your behavior. Then in an effort to gain and keep their approval you begin to judge yourself by their rules and feel guilty if you violate them.

This is very common, but wrong.

There is nothing wrong with standards and rules of conduct.

But there surely can be a lot wrong with how they are applied. "Do as I say, not as I do!" is the common double standard. Discipline is often inconsistent and the growing child becomes further confused. When a child's value and worth are made a part of the teaching and training, the negative emotions of guilt and shame are learned. This leads to a form of self-rating and self-measurement which is commonly referred to as "self-esteem."

People commonly base their "self-esteem" on how well they think they have performed and what they think other people think of them. There is nothing wrong with having a good healthy self-regard, but it is not a measure of one's inestimable worth as a human being. Your worthiness is not a

variable. But your performance and other people's approval are notoriously variable!

What is the remedy for this?

It is to bypass the whole "rating game" and take an objective view of your performance free from those negative emotions. It is called "Unconditional Self-Acceptance." ...or USA. The goal of this is to recognize that no one is perfect and that you can deal with perceived shortcomings best by accepting your weaknesses along with your strengths. If you can change something or improve it, fine. But if you cannot change something, then accept it and still do as well as you can. Otherwise you agonize over it and make yourself miserable.

It's not complicated. It is an area where we can simplify our lives with a different approach. It's bad enough when others seem to put you down finding fault, but it is not necessary for you to internalize it and continue to do it to yourself. Think of it this way: your mistakes do not diminish your worth.

Then it follows that your past mistakes do not diminish your worth either, any more than a good performance would make you a better person. You surely may regret certain things and strive not to repeat them and correct any wrongs that you can. But you are always human and you can be wrong some of the time without punishing yourself endlessly about it. There is no such thing as a "bad girl" or a "bad boy." In the future let's try to eliminate such unwarranted self-rating (and rating of others) and get started doing something constructive.

Why do we put so much emphasis on this subject?

First because it's something that would be well changed in our society. And also because it is a real factor in achieving better adjustment to life's problems, ones that all too often lead to self-destructive behavior. When you eliminate unnecessary self-judgment you develop a better respect for your role in life. And that respect for yourself helps you recognize and appreciate the benefits that will come from changing bad habits. That's something you can do something about. This exercise is also to help you realize that you are worth the effort.

You can crumple up and kick around a twenty-dollar bill and get it pretty dirty. But you know what? It's still worth twenty bucks, isn't it? Please never call a child a bad girl or a bad boy. Just deal with their behavior. Cut them a little slack and things work out better. Now do you think you could treat yourself as well? Those things you sometimes feel guilty about may be real but they don't reduce your worth! If you can do something to fix things, then do it. If you can't then accept it and start again fresh. Every highly successful person has a closet full of failures and lost opportunities to go along with the better stuff. But they learned not to let the mistakes bog them down to inaction and depression.

Here are a few ideas to think about.

If you accept yourself wholly and unconditionally, none of your life will be wasted.

It is good to change the things you can and learn to accept the things you cannot change and figure out the difference.

If there are things that you still can’t accept, then forgive yourself for them and start with a clean slate.

When you learn the serenity of unconditional self-acceptance, it is a natural step to be more tolerant of others.

When you accept yourself unconditionally, you come to realize that your feelings about life are nearly all in your own control.

Learn Unconditional Self-Acceptance (USA) and feel the emotional growth.