

# Admiring celebrities can help improve self-esteem

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A new study appearing in *Personal Relationships* shows how "connections" to celebrities, i.e. parasocial relationships, can allow people with low-self esteem to view themselves more positively.

For many people, the admiration of celebrities can have some important benefits. Jaye L. Derrick and Shira Gabriel of the University at Buffalo, State University of New York illustrate how parasocial relationships can provide a safe route for people who have a difficult time with real interpersonal relationships. People with low self-esteem can use their parasocial relationships to feel closer to the ideals they hold for themselves.

Researchers conducted three studies using approximately one hundred undergraduate university students each to examine the relationship between self-esteem, parasocial relationship closeness, and self-discrepancies. Participants identified their favorite celebrity and described that celebrity in an open-ended essay. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale assessed global self-evaluations.

Results showed that people with low self-esteem saw their favorite celebrities as very similar to their ideal selves. Low self-esteem people primed with their favorite celebrity felt more similar to their ideal selves than low self-esteem people primed with a control celebrity. Also, people with low self-esteem primed with their favorite celebrity felt more similar to their ideal selves than low self-esteem people primed with a close relationship partner.

The current research demonstrates that parasocial relationships can have self-enhancing benefits for low self-esteem people that they do not receive in real relationships. These parasocial relationships, which have very low risk of rejection, offer low self-esteem people an opportunity to reduce their self-discrepancies and feel closer to their ideal selves.

"Even 'fake' relationships with celebrities, relationships without any actual contact, can have benefits for the self," the authors conclude. "We found that parasocial relationships can sometimes have benefits for people with low-self esteem that 'real' relationships do not."

Source: Wiley

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