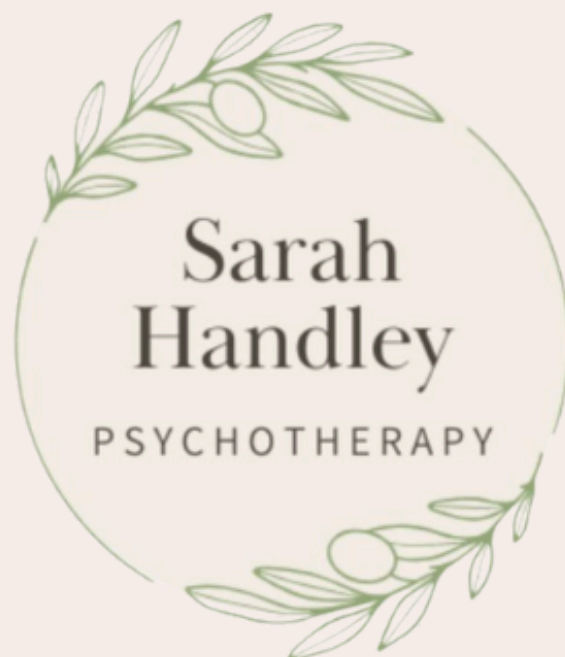


# *Why do I feel like I'm not good enough?*



*A gentle guide to understanding low self-worth*



# Opening

If you've ever had the thought, "Why do I feel like I'm not good enough?", it can feel incredibly isolating.

On the surface, your life might look fine. You might be managing work, relationships, day-to-day responsibilities. But underneath there's this quieter feeling... like you're somehow falling short, even if you can't fully explain why. A lot of people I work with say things like, *'I don't even know why I feel like this – nothing's that bad.'*

This is far more common than it seems. Research consistently shows that low self-worth is closely linked with anxiety, depression, and emotional distress. But that doesn't mean there's something wrong with you.

It means there's something that needs understanding.

***"The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change." - Carl Rogers***



This guide isn't about fixing yourself. It's about beginning to understand yourself differently.

# Where this feeling begins

Feelings of “not being good enough” are rarely random. Often, they develop gradually through our early experiences and relationships.

We learn who we are through how other people respond to us, especially when we’re younger.

If you were criticised, compared to others, or made to feel that your needs were too much – or not important enough – your mind begins to form meanings around that. Not consciously, but over time.

This doesn’t mean anyone has done something ‘wrong’. Often, these patterns come from environments where people were doing their best, but your emotional needs weren’t fully met.

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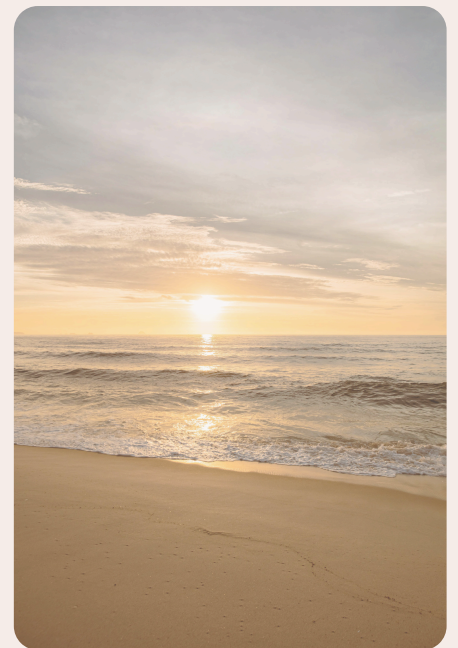
These meanings often turn into what psychology refers to as *core beliefs*. Deep, underlying assumptions such as:

- *“I’m not important”*
- *“I have to be better to be accepted”*
- *“I’m not enough as I am”*

Research into cognitive models of self-esteem shows that these beliefs become embedded and begin to shape how we interpret everyday experiences. We don’t just *have* these beliefs, we start to see the world through them.

As Carl Jung put it:

*“Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.”*



# How it shows up in everyday life

Low self-worth doesn't always look obvious from the outside. In fact, many people experiencing it are high-functioning, thoughtful, and deeply self-aware. But internally, it can feel very different.



You might find yourself replaying conversations, worrying about how you came across. You might even get a compliment and immediately dismiss it or question whether they really meant it. You might struggle to switch off, with a constant sense that you should be doing more or being better.



In relationships, it can show up as people-pleasing or feeling overly responsible for others. In private moments, it might appear as a harsh inner voice, one that criticises, doubts, or minimises you.

For some, it connects to coping behaviours like emotional eating. Not because of a lack of willpower, but as a way of managing difficult feelings, even if only temporarily.

Research suggests that when self-worth is low, the brain becomes more attuned to perceived threats, including social judgement, and is more likely to discount positive feedback. This can create a cycle where self-doubt is constantly reinforced, even when there is evidence to the contrary.

# Why it's so hard to change

You may have tried to challenge these feelings by telling yourself to “be more confident” or “think positively”.

And if that hasn't worked, it can be easy to assume the problem is you.

*But the difficulty isn't a lack of effort, it's the depth of the pattern.*

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These beliefs have often been reinforced over many years. The brain, naturally, looks for consistency. So if it holds a belief like “I'm not good enough”, it will tend to notice and remember experiences that support that, while overlooking those that don't.

Research into self-esteem and cognitive processing shows that people with lower self-worth can find it harder to integrate positive information about themselves, even when it's clearly present.

So change doesn't come from forcing yourself to think differently.

It comes from gradually creating new experiences, new understandings, and a different relationship with yourself.

# A different way of understanding it

One of the most powerful shifts can be moving from:

*“What’s wrong with me?”*

to:

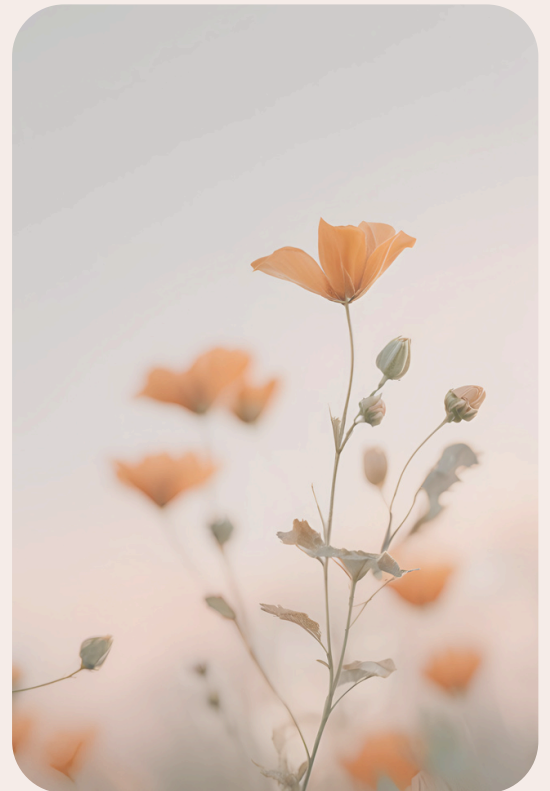
*“What happened to me?”*

This isn't about blaming or staying stuck in the past. It's about recognising that your current patterns make sense in the context of your experiences.

When you begin to understand yourself in this way, something usually softens.

The inner critic may still be there, but it becomes something you can notice, rather than something you automatically believe.

And from that place, change becomes more possible.



# Beginning to support yourself

There isn't a quick fix for feeling this way, and I won't pretend there is.

But there are small, realistic ways you can start to shift your relationship with yourself. Not by forcing confidence, but by beginning to understand and respond to yourself differently.

One place to start is simply noticing your inner voice.

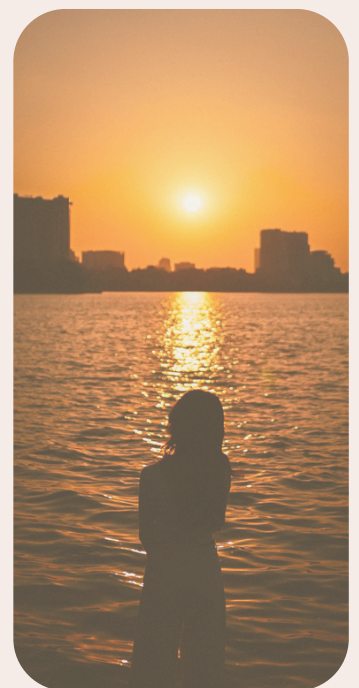
Most people I work with are surprised by how harsh it actually is when they slow down and pay attention. A helpful exercise can be to write down what that voice says – word for word – especially after something feels uncomfortable or “wrong”. Seeing it on paper often makes it clearer that this isn't a balanced or fair perspective, even though it feels true in the moment.

From there, instead of trying to replace those thoughts with something overly positive, try softening them slightly.

For example:

“I'm not good enough” can become  
“I'm feeling like I'm not good enough right now.”

It's a small shift, but it creates a bit of space between you and the thought, rather than fully believing it.



# Continued...

Another important piece is beginning to relate to yourself with a bit more understanding.

If you've spent years being hard on yourself, self-compassion can feel unfamiliar, even uncomfortable. That doesn't mean it's wrong, it just means it's new.

You might start by asking yourself:

“What would I say to someone I care about if they felt like this?”

And then gently offering yourself even a small part of that response.

It can also help to build small experiences that challenge the idea that you're “not enough”.

Not big, overwhelming changes – but small, everyday moments.

Saying “I'll get back to you” instead of immediately saying yes.

Letting something be “good enough” instead of perfect.

Doing something even when you're not 100% confident.

These moments might seem small, but over time they begin to create new evidence about who you are.



# Reflection & Exercise

If it feels okay, you might want to spend a few minutes reflecting on this. You don't need to answer all of these. Even sitting with one of them for a few minutes is enough.

There's no right or wrong way to do it. Just take what feels helpful and leave the rest.

## **Gentle journaling prompts:**

- When do I notice this “not good enough” feeling the most? What tends to trigger it?
- What does my inner voice actually say to me in those moments?
- If this feeling had a beginning, what might it have come from?

## **A short compassionate exercise:**

Next time you notice that “not good enough” feeling, try this:

Pause for a moment and gently acknowledge what's happening.

You might say to yourself:

“This is a hard moment.”

“I'm feeling not good enough right now.”

Then, place a hand on your chest or somewhere that feels grounding, and take a slow breath.

Ask yourself:

“What do I need right now?”

It might be reassurance, space, rest, or simply kindness.

You don't have to fix the feeling straight away.

Just responding to yourself differently — even for a moment — is a powerful place to begin.

# Getting Support

Although self-reflection can be a powerful starting point, low self-worth is often rooted in experiences that are difficult to fully explore on your own.

Therapy offers a space where you don't have to get it right, explain yourself perfectly, or be anything other than how you are. It's a space where you can begin to understand not just what you're feeling, but why.

Within a safe and supportive relationship, it becomes possible to explore patterns, process past experiences, and gradually develop a different relationship with yourself.

Research into therapeutic approaches shows that, over time, people can develop greater self-acceptance, reduced self-criticism, and a more stable sense of self-worth.

This isn't about becoming a completely different person. It's about feeling more at ease with who you are.



# A gentle next step

If you've recognised yourself in any of this, that matters.

You don't need to wait until things feel worse.

And you don't need to have everything figured out before reaching out.

If you're reading this and thinking 'this sounds like me', that might be a good place to start. If you're curious about therapy, or even just wondering whether it might help, you're very welcome to get in touch.

There's no pressure — just a space to start where you are.

Visit [www.sarahhandleytherapy.co.uk](http://www.sarahhandleytherapy.co.uk) for more information about how we could work together and help you take the first step closer to feeling **Good Enough**.

