

Seminar Looks Beyond Self-Imposed Limitations
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The only limits to my accomplishments in life are self-imposed.

— *Denis Waitley, motivational speaker and author*

In an effort to help people better understand what self-esteem is and how to build it, the Philadelphia Region women's division recently sponsored a five-hour self-esteem seminar at the Philadelphia Community Center.

The event attracted nearly 200 participants, who examined some of the latest research and explored specific steps they could take toward building self-esteem.

In "Self-Esteem and Peer Pressure," participants learned that while peer pressure is normal for school-age children, those with high self-esteem tend to be less influenced by negative pressures. Those with low self-esteem can be easily influenced.

Facilitators advised adults to work closely with children because they often internalize whatever they hear and need continual support to bolster their self-esteem.

In "Winning in Life and On the Job," members shared how they use their practice to change difficult circumstances at work into positive outcomes. Some of the experiences pertained to bosses, others to co-workers. But in almost every case, members said they found that once they took responsibility for the situation, they could confidently take the action necessary to overcome the problem.

Most admitted, however, that their success didn't come without a struggle.

Several of the workshops featured exercises, including one that assessed the participants' self-esteem level. They responded to questions such as "Are you easily hurt by criticism?" "Do you try to hide your feelings from others?" "Do you fear close relationships?" Then they evaluated how they felt about themselves and what they could do to raise their self-esteem.

The day ended with a question-and-answer session with SGI-USA Vice General Director Sheilah Edwards. Participants posed questions ranging from deeply personal subjects about relationships to fulfilling leadership responsibilities within the organization.

In response to one question about breaking through a persistent problem, Ms. Edwards spoke on the importance of attitude during gongyo. "You can celebrate your life twice a day with the forces of the universe," she said. "Gongyo is when you promise to protect the Law, and in return the Law will protect you through all eternity."

Ms. Edwards encouraged the participants to make goals and forget about limitations. "With Buddhism," she said, "the sky is not the limit. There is no limit. You can be what you want to be when you want to be it." She added that members shouldn't let self-esteem get so low that they can't face the Gohonzon and face themselves.

— *With reporting by WANDA PEACOCK FLOWERS*