**Self-doubt**

Self-doubt is a lack of confidence in oneself and one’s abilities(Persky, 2018). Feelings of self-doubt can be beneficial as a source of motivation to work harder. However, for those who experience chronic self-doubt, these feelings can work to hinder success.

**Coping mechanisms**

Those who face self-doubt often display two coping strategies: self-handicapping behavior and subjective over-achieving (Zhao & Gong, 2018). Self-handicapping behavior involves behaving or claiming to behave in ways that undermine one’s own performance (Zhao & Gong, 2018). Subjective over-achieving is an opposite coping mechanism in which individuals expend an extraordinary amount of effort on a task to protect themselves from failure (Zhao & Gong, 2018). While this extreme work often results in high performance, it comes at a cost to the individual. Continuously putting in this level of effort on tasks can quickly lead to burnout.

**Sources**

Researchers seem to agree that self-doubt is generally a learned consequence of criticism experienced in childhood (Parkman, 2016; Peer & McAuslan, 2016). When parents set unrealistic standards and chastise children for failure, the child can learn to use self-doubt as a way to avoid feeling the shame associated with the criticism received.

**How to Address Self-Doubt**

**Step 1.** Acceptance. Let’s admit to ourselves that we have a problem with self-doubt. We can’t address an issue we haven’t identified.

**Step 2.** Self-reflection. Next, we need to self-reflect. Ask yourself some hard questions: Are you being overly critical? Are you attributing your success to external factors? Are you, consciously or not, engaging in behaviors that undermine your potential success? Are you underestimating yourself and your abilities?

**Step 3.** Separate feelings from fact. Just because you ***feel*** inadequate doesn’t mean you ***are*** inadequate.

**Step 4.** Accept yourself. It is unrealistic to know everything, to be everything, or to do everything. It is normal to feel imperfect. It is normal to make mistakes. Acknowledge your strengths **AND** weakness.

**Step 5.** Challenge those thoughts. Self-doubt, when left unchecked, can erode at your self-image.

**Step 6.** Adopt a growth mindset. Recognize the value in challenging and uncomfortable situations.

**Local Resources**

**Walking to Relax**. A group provided through the North Carolina A&T State University counseling services. Focus is on practicing mindfulness. This group is free for students. More information can be found at <https://www.ncat.edu/student-affairs/student-services/counseling/services/groups.html>. Or by contacting Counseling Services in Murphy Hall, phone number: 336-334-7727.

**MBSR – Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction.** Rossana Magalhaes by phone, 336-543-6624, or email rossanacounseling.com.

**Thrive.** Support group for young adults (ages 18 – 30) with mental health challenges. Meets the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 7 pm-8:30 pm. Sessions are held at Mental Health Association, 1509 S. Hawthorne Road, Winston-Salem. Their phone number is 336.768.3880

**Assertiveness Trainings.** Undergoing assertiveness training can help to improve self-confidence and reduce self-doubt. Sessions are held on campus in Murphy Hall. Their contact number is 336-334-7727.