

## THE WEAK AND THE STRONG

SURFACE  
LABELS LIKE  
'WEAK' AND  
'STRONG' DON'T  
TELL THE  
WHOLE STORY.  
THESE MANI-  
FESTATIONS  
HAVE DEEPER  
ROOTS  
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The world is pretty much divided into 'weak' people and 'strong' people. 'Weak' people cannot take too much stress, are unable to endure pain, and retreat from its onslaught. They are often unable to hold their own in confrontations and face defeat. The world does not have too much respect for 'weak' people and alas, 'weak' people do not have too much respect for themselves either.

'Strong' people, on the other hand, can take a lot in their stride. Unruffled by most eventualities they thrive under the challenges life throws them. Their threshold of pain is high, and consequently so is their endurance levels. They are sure of themselves with awesome confidence levels, and the world pays them obeisance.

How do people become weak or strong? For me this has always been more than an academic question since I have always perceived myself as falling into the weak category. However, through my inner explorations I am beginning to understand that the reason why some people can bear with more stress or pain than others is simply because they deal with it better. And the reason why they deal with it better is because their self-esteem is better.

It seems to me that the so-called 'weak' tribe have been unfairly tarred and feathered. Their (our) problem is not a fatal character flaw as is often made to be the case. It merely stems from poor self-esteem. As a member of this community I can testify that having poor self-worth creates so much internal disturbance and discomfort that it makes it almost impossible for a person to look at threatening situations and people. Someone with poor self-esteem is divided within – one part at war with the other part. The internal warfare is so draining and debilitating that there is very little energy left for the external world or the battles there.

As I become increasingly comfortable with myself, I am learning to experience my feelings, thoughts and sensations, no matter how uncomfortable. I am amazed to discover that this makes them either disappear or become manageable. I am no longer in their control. They are in mine.

One does not have to engage in a superhuman battle of wills to control one's emotions or needs. Experiencing simply eliminates them.

This is the simple secret of being 'strong'. 'Strong' people are comfortable with their feelings, even uncomfortable ones like anger, hurt or pain. Therefore, they experience them and are subsequently free of them. As long as one lacks that ability, one's threshold of pain is bound to be low because unprocessed pain is really hard to take.

Self-esteem seems to be the bridge between being able to process pain or not, because in order to process pain we need to be able to stay with it. If we lack self-esteem, we simply will not be able to look at ourselves or our feelings long enough to stay with it. Even if we do manage to look at our darker side, we will resist it so much that we will not be able to move into acceptance. And without acceptance we will be unable to process these parts by experiencing them, which alone can heal us.

The same holds true for self-control. When we can experience our feelings such as anger or resistance, we can process them internally and do not have to spray it out on the outer world. When we cannot do that, alas we have no alternative but to let the outer world have it. Even desires can be curbed if we have the ability to process them. If we experience the burning need of sex or gluttony, we find it actually decreasing and disappearing. If we lack this ability, we have no alternative but to give in, thereby strengthening the vicious cycle of low self-esteem and self-trust, which makes it that much more difficult to experience our inner states.

The bottomline then is to recognise that terms like 'weak' and 'strong' don't tell the whole story. These surface manifestations have far deeper roots and we need to recognise that. Very often, self-esteem is damaged in childhood and no matter how hard the person may try, it is difficult to repair in later life. Yes, it can be done, but it is a long hard upward struggle. Support them in the process, recognise their struggles, and they will love you for it. ☺