Researchers Tara MacDonald and Alanna Martineau were interested in the effect of female university students’ moods on their intentions to have unprotected sexual intercourse (MacDonald & Martineau, 2002)[1]. In a carefully designed empirical study, they found that being in a negative mood increased intentions to have unprotected sex—but only for students who were low in self-esteem. Although there are many challenges involved in conducting a study like this, one of the primary ones is the measurement of the relevant variables. In this study, the researchers needed to know whether each of their participants had high or low self-esteem, which of course required measuring their self-esteem. They also needed to be sure that their attempt to put people into a negative mood (by having them think negative thoughts) was successful, which required measuring their moods. Finally, they needed to see whether self-esteem and mood were related to participants’ intentions to have unprotected sexual intercourse, which required measuring these intentions.

Do You Feel You Are a Person of Worth?

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1989)[2] is one of the most common measures of self-esteem and the one that MacDonald and Martineau used in their study. Participants respond to each of the 10 items that follow with a rating on a 4-point scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. Score Items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7 by assigning 3 points for each Strongly response, 2 for each Agree, 1 for each Disagree, and 0 for each Strongly Disagree. Reverse the scoring for Items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 by assigning 0 points for each Strongly Agree, 1 point for each Agree, and so on. The overall score is the total number of points.

1. I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. I certainly feel useless at times.
10. At times I think I am no good at all.
