

'Beauty or brains... I was blessed with both!'

Is self-esteem overrated? *The Apprentice* returns next week, and the candidates have been unveiled. As usual, they ooze extreme self-confidence: a trait admired by some, but hated by others.



Suits: "Not one of the candidates is actually stupid," said Lord Sugar's aide Claude Littner.

"I have the beauty and the brains, typically people only have one. I was blessed with both." So claims Daniel Elahi — one of 18 **entrepreneurs** set to battle it out for £250,000 in a new series of *The Apprentice*.

It remains to be seen how much business talent will be on show. But when it comes to selling themselves, the candidates truly excel.

"There's no need to watch your back when I'm already two steps in front," claims marketing manager Frank Brooks.

Sian Gabbidon (who owns a swimwear brand) is the self-declared "Beyoncé of business", while consultant Jackie Fast says she is not "intimidated by anyone, or anything."

What links these outlandish statements? Each one shows the speaker has a high level of self-esteem, that is: belief in one's own importance.

The idea that high self-esteem leads to success is a very modern notion. For thousands of years, Judeo-Christian wisdom emphasised the importance of modesty, **humility** and helping others.

Things changed in the 20th century. Philosophers like Ayn Rand rejected traditional ideas of **altruism** and declared that individuals must only care about themselves.

These ideas have seeped into our culture. One long-running **study** tracked students' responses to the statement "I am an important

person". In the 1950s, only 12% agreed. By 1989, that number had soared to almost 80%. Is self-esteem overrated?

I, me, mine

Absolutely, some argue. The modern cult of self-esteem stems from a philosophy which taught that selfishness is better than caring for others. This leads to arrogance and narcissism, rather than a fulfilling life.

Not so fast, others respond. Encouraging people to have high-self esteem is crucial to their well-being. People who value themselves take charge of their own health, career and relationships.

Q & A

Q: What do we know?

A: The 14th series of *The Apprentice* will start next Wednesday. The selection process takes

12 weeks with the winner due to be announced in December. The winner will receive a £250,000 investment in their business.

Q: What do we not know?

A: How long the format will last. However, the BBC have already commissioned series 15 and 16, which will keep the programme on TV screens until 2020.

YOU DECIDE

Is it possible to have too much self-esteem?

ACTIVITIES

Sum yourself up in one sentence — just like the *Apprentice* candidates. Make your description as fun and interesting as possible. Share it with the class.

SOME PEOPLE SAY...

"The question isn't who is going to let me; it's who is going to stop me."

Ayn Rand

WHAT DO YOU THINK?



WORD WATCH

Entrepreneurs – Someone who establishes a business, taking on financial risk in the hope of profit.

Humility –

Having a low view of one's own importance. "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.'" 1 Peter 5: 5

Altruism – Showing selfless concern for the well-being and happiness of others.

Study – "Changes in adolescent response patterns on the MMPI/MMPI-a across four decades," by C.R. Newsom, R.P. Archer, S. Trumbetta and I.I. Gottesman.



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Notes

