

Self-Understanding and Assessment

SELF-CONCEPT is what you believe about yourself, including your attributes. It can be called self-identity or self-perspective. Self-concept is a collection of beliefs about yourself derived from academic performance, gender roles, religious beliefs, racial identity, and more.



Objectives:



1. Explore the importance and ingredients of self-concept.
2. Identify the factors that affect the development of a positive self-concept.
3. Describe the characteristics of people with a high self-concept.
4. Explain how leaders can raise the self-concept of others.

Key Terms:



anxiety
attitude
conceit
desire
doubt

fear
motivation
resilient
self-concept
self-confidence

self-determination
self-esteem
self-image
self-responsibility

Importance and Ingredients of Self-Concept

Self-concept is a set of opinions or beliefs a person has about himself or herself. It is how you perceive yourself as well as your strengths and your weaknesses. Self-concept is your belief in and acceptance of yourself. Your personality develops and your performance grows as your self-concept improves, so you feel less negative about yourself. A person with a positive self-concept is pleasant, secure, and content. Therefore, having a positive self-concept is the most important factor in achieving success.

POSITIVE FACTORS

To gain the respect of others, you must first appreciate your own worth, merit, and value. By believing in yourself, you will gain the respect of your peers. A positive self-concept has many rewards. As you have more confidence and trust in your ideas, skills, and knowledge, your positive self-concept gives you the ability to capitalize on opportunities and use mistakes as learning experiences. With a positive self-concept, you will be a more dynamic and interesting person. In addition, you will be able to focus on bigger goals. Your positive self-concept will improve your emotional security and give you the ability to control your personal future by being able to lead and create, instead of just following circumstances.

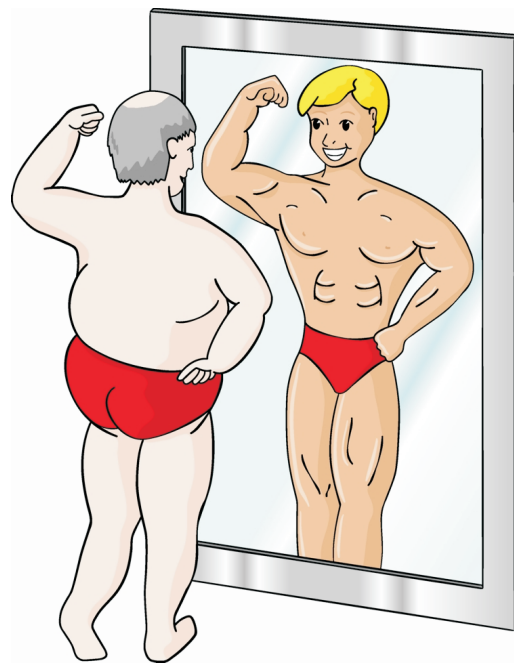


FIGURE 1. What matters most is how you see yourself!

SELF-CONCEPT VS. CONCEIT

Self-concept and conceit are extremely different. **Conceit** is the excessive feeling of one's own worth. Therefore, a conceited person is boastful and arrogant. In contrast, a person with a positive self-concept does not need to brag about his or her own personal self-satisfaction or worth. Results of a positive self-concept include self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence, self-determination, and self-responsibility.

- ◆ **Self-esteem** is how you feel about yourself. It is how you accept yourself and how you perceive your worth as a person.
- ◆ **Self-image** relates to self-acceptance and presenting yourself in a confident manner.
- ◆ **Self-confidence** is being secure with your abilities and the opportunity to face new challenges.
- ◆ **Self-determination** involves motivation from within. To be self-determined is to be in charge of your fate.
- ◆ **Motivation** is the energy that allows you to meet new challenges.
- ◆ **Self-responsibility** is the ability to accept consequences for any effort—good, bad, or otherwise. To be self-responsible, you must be **resilient**—have the ability to bounce back.

Development Stages

Three types of factors affect the development of self-concept: chronological, external, and internal.

CHRONOLOGICAL

The chronological development of self-concept is divided into three segments: childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. The self-concept formed in childhood lays the foundation of your attitudes toward work, future success, and abilities. Parents do not actually teach self-concept, but they mold and shape it through positive or negative actions and behavior.

EXTERNAL

In all stages of development, external factors affect self-concept (e.g., family, relationships, school, work, and social activities). Your home environment is highly influential in your development during your formative years—birth to 18. Your family environment provides your basic needs of survival, safety, and security.

Between ages 5 and 20, school is where you spend the majority of your time. As a result, education plays an important role in developing self-concept by offering constant challenges and obstacles to overcome.

Contacts outside of family provide a network of past, present, and future relationships. Relationships exert certain influences on self-concept, either consciously or unconsciously. The friends you choose reflect your level of self-concept, as friendships sometimes mirror your own feelings, thoughts, likes, and dislikes. Yet peer pressure can be demanding and challenging.

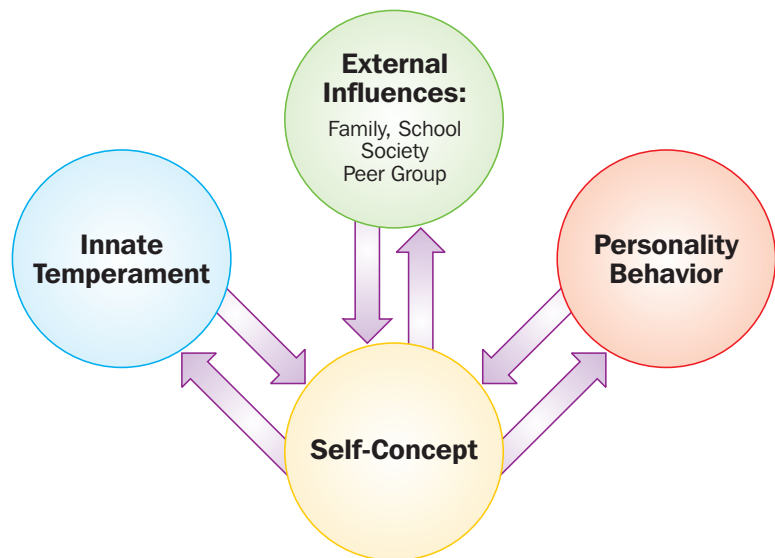


FIGURE 2. Determinants of self-concept.

Adolescence

Adolescent development involves comparing yourself to others as you mature. Typically, you become less happy with whom you are. Often, you wish to be like others. Media plays a

big role in the self-perception of adolescents. Musicians, television, and movie characters often portray unreal images to adolescents. Ages 12–18 are critical years in the development of self-concept because adolescents are dealing with physical change, peer group relationships, confusing identity, loss of childhood, and the assumption of adult responsibilities.

Adulthood

When you reach adulthood, your self-concept has been formed by past experiences. Adults tend to define themselves in terms of things they possess, what they do for a living, and their own internal value system and emotional makeup. Throughout your life, the friends you choose reflect your level of self-concept. The world of work provides you with the opportunity to display self-concept. Companies desire people with a high self-concept because these people possess more tools to meet challenges and show initiative.

INTERNAL

Internal negative factors that affect self-concept are fear, doubt, and anxiety. For example, **fear** is a basic human emotion caused by an overwhelming anticipation or awareness of danger. **Doubt** is the state of questioning your ability to learn, think creatively, accomplish, and succeed. In addition, **anxiety** is distress (an uncomfortable feeling) or uneasiness about a solution or event; it is sometimes referred to as “having butterflies.” Ingredients of a positive self-concept include the ability to cope with fear, doubt, and anxiety to achieve success, have positive feelings for others, and handle challenges.



BROADENING AWARENESS...

AMAZING ASPECTS:

Self-Concept Affects Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication reflects your self-concept, revealing who you are and what you stand for. Your speech habits, vocabulary, and voice inflection are indications of how you feel about yourself. Your beliefs, attitudes, feelings and values are communicated to other people. Such aspects of your life, as gender, motivation, and psychological type, influence your self-concept, which not only affect how people perceive you, but how you perceive yourself. To effectively communicate with others, you must first understand yourself; your self-concept affects the way you communicate.

The higher your self-concept, the more likely you are to leave a positive impression on others. Through communication, your self-concept is revealed to others, and affects how others react to you, influencing their responses. Your self-concept will affect others' perception of you, and either enhance or impede your communication effectiveness.

The person with a positive self-concept communicates well with others and enjoys interpersonal contact. Communicating and interacting easily with others will aid you to succeed professionally, socially, and personally.

POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Developing a positive self-concept requires a series of steps.

Acceptance

The first step to developing self-concept is to accept yourself as you are. This is called restoring and nurturing a healthy self-concept. You must accept that you can only control the future, not the past.

Restoring and nurturing steps to build a healthy self-concept include:

- ◆ Accepting limitations
- ◆ Making a list of talents
- ◆ Making decisions for yourself
- ◆ Avoiding procrastination
- ◆ Finding a mentor
- ◆ Dressing successfully and using positive language
- ◆ Always learning and accepting new challenges
- ◆ Choosing friends and associates carefully
- ◆ Learning from mistakes and failures
- ◆ Going the extra mile
- ◆ Finishing every job that is started
- ◆ Believing in yourself and doing good things for others

Desire to Change

The next step in the development of a positive self-concept is having a genuine desire to change. **Desire** is a wish or craving for something. You need to create the proper environment to allow desire to grow.

Attitude

Another step in developing a positive self-concept is a positive attitude. **Attitude** is a state of mind with respect to feelings, beliefs, or outlook (positive or negative) about an event. When your attitude stays positive, desire can be maintained. Be aware of the attitudes of those with whom you associate, but determine your own attitudes.

Goals

A direct relationship exists between goals and self-concept. You develop purpose and direction by establishing goals. Generally, goals are categorized into short, medium, and long term. Setting goals includes several steps:

- ◆ Define the goal.
- ◆ Establish a time frame (e.g., short, medium, or long term).
- ◆ Make an agenda, and list the steps involved in reaching your goal. Consider possible obstacles.
- ◆ Be realistic in goal setting.
- ◆ Evaluate or check your progress.
- ◆ Adjust and be flexible after evaluation.
- ◆ Reward yourself when the goal is reached.

Action

Next, it is necessary to take action. Without action, all you have are good intentions. Action is sometimes the hardest step to achieve because it requires physical and mental energy. When you take action, you become vulnerable to external and internal factors that affect self-concept.

Six Characteristics of People with a High Self-Concept

1. They have a positive orientation. They do not waste time worrying about the past. “Falling down doesn’t mean failure; staying down does.”
2. They are able to cope with life’s problems as challenges and realize that problems do not have to depress you or make you anxious.
3. They are able to deal with emotions. People cannot help the way they feel, but they can keep emotions from affecting the way they act.
4. They are able to help others and accept help themselves. They are not threatened by assisting others to succeed, nor are they afraid to admit to weakness. Secure people in leadership roles surround themselves with good people.
5. They are able to accept people because of who they are and what they can do.
6. They are able to exhibit a variety of self-confident behaviors (e.g., accept compliments or gifts graciously, laugh at mistakes without self-ridicule, and enjoy being by themselves without being lonely).

WAYS TO PRESENT A POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT

- ◆ Smile.
- ◆ Have a neat appearance and attire.
- ◆ Be polite and considerate of others.
- ◆ Be an active listener.
- ◆ Take pride in your work.
- ◆ Be independent.
- ◆ Make the best of every situation.
- ◆ Make wise decisions.



FIGURE 3. Having a neat appearance can help present a positive self-concept.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT

- ◆ Bright and alert eyes
- ◆ A relaxed face and natural color
- ◆ Your chin held high
- ◆ A relaxed jaw and erect shoulders
- ◆ Relaxed and graceful hand movements
- ◆ Relaxed and balanced posture
- ◆ A controlled voice with clear pronunciation

Leaders Increasing Self-Concept in Others

Good leaders bring the best out in other people. With your own positive self-concept, you can help others.

- ◆ By raising your own self-esteem, you increase the level of others around you.
- ◆ Give people opportunities to practice self-responsibility.
- ◆ Give reasons for rules and guidelines when they are not self-evident. (Do not dictate directions and instructions.)
- ◆ If you err in dealing with someone, admit it and apologize.
- ◆ Let people see that it is human to make mistakes.
- ◆ Describe undesirable behavior without blaming.

- ◆ If someone does exceptional work or makes an excellent decision, challenge him or her to explore how and why success was achieved.
- ◆ Praise in public, and correct in private.
- ◆ When the behavior of someone creates a problem, ask that person to propose a solution.
- ◆ Give people the resources, information, and authority to do what you have asked.
- ◆ Learn the people's talents. When possible, match tasks and objectives with individual assignments.
- ◆ Ask people what they need to feel more control over their work. Then try to provide it.
- ◆ Challenge people by assigning tasks slightly beyond their known capabilities.
- ◆ Encourage people to view problems as challenges and opportunities.
- ◆ Support the talented non-team player. Even team players benefit from seeing respect for everyone's individuality.
- ◆ Write letters of commendation and appreciation to high achievers, and ask others to do likewise.

Summary:



Self-concept is how you perceive yourself, being aware of your strengths and weaknesses. A person with a positive self-concept makes a good leader and is pleasant, secure, and content. Three types of factors affect the development of self-concept: chronological, external, and internal. Childhood, adolescence, and adulthood are the three chronological stages of self-concept development.

The first step to developing self-concept is to accept yourself as you are. This is called restoring and nurturing a healthy self-concept. People with a high self-concept are able to cope with life's problems as challenges and realize that problems do not have to depress them or make them anxious. You demonstrate your positive self-concept with your smile, your neat appearance and attire, politeness and consideration of others, and the pride you take in your work.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What is the most important factor in achieving success?
2. List three internal negative factors that affect your self-concept.
3. Explain the differences and the importance in self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence, self-determination, motivation, and self-responsibility.
4. What role do parents have in developing their children's self-concepts?
5. Explain the chronological stages of self-concept development.

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Are you interested in being a politician, teacher, medical professional, athlete, social worker, or artistic performer? Compose a chart of professions listed, and determine what self-concept qualities are needed for each profession.

Assign numbers to such traits as setting limitations, making decisions, procrastination, accepting mentors, dress habits, language usage, accepting challenges, choosing friends and associates, learning from mistakes and failures, going the extra mile, finishing every job that is started, believing in oneself, doing good for others, fear, doubt, and anxiety.

Web Links:



Self-Concept

<http://www.simplypsychology.org/self-concept.html>

Self-Concept

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/03/100308132139.htm>

The Child's Self-Concept

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/350/350-661/350-661.html>

Self-Concept & Communication

http://www.ehow.com/how_6447353_improve-self-concept-communication.html