

Self-Understanding and Assessment

HOW DO YOU see yourself? Do you have a positive image most of the time, or do you have a negative image most of the time? The image you have of yourself is important in terms of your happiness and success. This unit discusses self-concept and how it can be changed.



Objective:



Analyze self-concept and related factors.

Key Terms:



anxiety
attitude
conceit
desire
doubt

fear
motivation
resilient
self-concept
self-confidence

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

Self-Concept

Self-concept is the knowledge and understanding a person has of his or herself. It involves recognizing both personal strengths and personal weaknesses. Self-concept influences personality. A person with a positive self-concept is pleasant, secure, and content. A person with a poor self-concept is often unpleasant, insecure, and unhappy. When your self-concept improves, your personality and performance improve.

A POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT

A positive self-concept is the most important factor influencing success. Belief in oneself leads to respect from peers. People who have a positive self-concept are readily accepted as leaders.

A positive self-concept has many rewards. People with a positive self-concept tend to be more confident individuals who trust in their ideas, skills, and knowledge. These people eagerly capitalize on opportunities, handle challenges, and learn from mistakes. People with a positive self-concept are more dynamic and interesting. People with a positive self-concept are more emotionally secure, have positive feelings for others, and are able to cope with success. They become more focused on bigger goals and have the ability to control their personal future by creating circumstances instead of following circumstances.

Ingredients of a Positive Self-Concept

The ingredients of a positive self-concept include self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence, self-determination, and self-responsibility.

Self-esteem is a person's overall self-appraisal of his or her worth. It is reflected in a person's behavior.

Self-image is a mental picture a person has of him or herself. It relates to self-acceptance and presenting oneself in a confident manner.

Self-confidence is being secure with one's abilities and the opportunity to face new challenges.

Self-determination involves motivation from within. **Motivation** is the energy that allows a person to meet new challenges. To be self-determined is to be in charge of one's fate.

Self-responsibility is the ability to accept consequences for any effort—good, bad, or other. To be self-responsible, a person must be **resilient**, or have the ability to bounce back.

Conceit

When one's self-esteem is inflated, he or she becomes conceited. **Conceit** is the excessive feeling of one's own worth. Conceited people are boastful and arrogant. A person with a positive self-concept does not brag or voice self-satisfaction of his or her worth.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-CONCEPT

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

Chronological Factors

Chronological development of self-concept can be divided into three segments: childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

The self-concept formed in childhood lays the foundation for 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.

Development during adolescence involves comparing yourself to others as you mature. Typically, you become less happy with who you are. Often, you wish to be like others. The media play a big role in the self-perception of adolescents. Television and movie characters

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

When you reach adulthood, your self-concept has been formed by past experiences. Adults tend to define themselves in terms of things they possess, in terms of what they do for a living, or in terms of an internal value system and emotional makeup.

External Factors

External factors affecting self-concept include family, relationships, school, work, and social activities.

The years from birth to age 18 are considered the formative years. During this time, the family environment is highly influential in a person's development. Family environment provides the basic needs of survival, safety, and security.

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. Friendships sometimes mirror you in feelings, thoughts, likes, or dislikes.

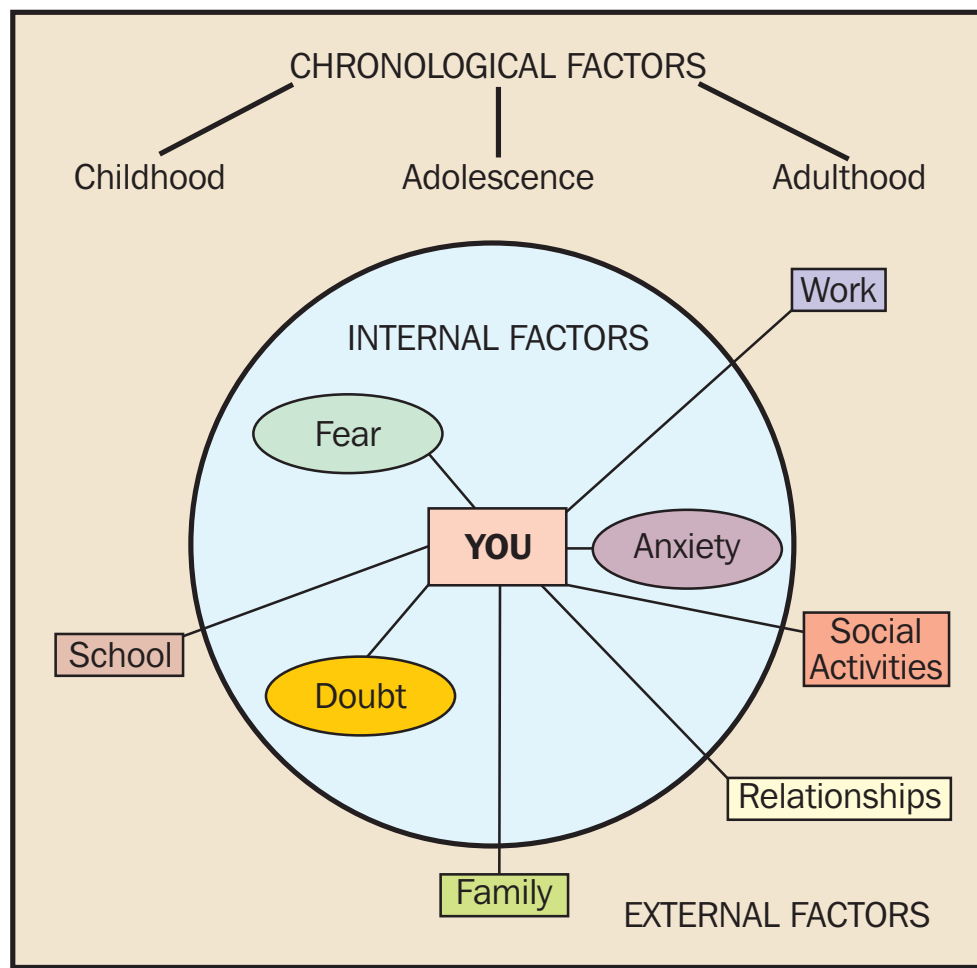


FIGURE 1. Chronological, external, and internal factors influence the development of self-concept.

School is where you spend the majority of your time from age 5 to age 20. Education can play an important role in developing self-concept, offering constant challenges and obstacles to overcome. Peer pressure at school can be demanding and challenging.

The world of work provides you with the opportunity to display self-concept. Companies desire people with a high self-concept because they tend to be more productive than those with a low self-concept.

Social activities offer you the chance to display self-concept as you interact with others who may or may not have similar interests.

Internal Factors

The specific internal factors that affect self-concept are fear, doubt, and anxiety. **Fear** is an overwhelming anticipation or awareness of danger. It is one of the basic emotions. **Doubt** is the state of questioning your ability to learn, think creatively, accomplish, and succeed. **Anxiety** is an uncomfortable feeling or uneasiness about a solution or event. Being anxious is sometimes referred to as “having butterflies.”

HOW TO DEVELOP A POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT

Five steps lead to the development of a positive self-concept: accept yourself, desire change, create an environment for change, set goals, and take action.

Accept Yourself

The first step to developing a positive self-concept is to accept yourself as you are. Recognize that you can control only the future, not the past.

Desire Change

Having a genuine desire to change is the next step in the development of a positive self-concept. **Desire** is a wish or craving for something.

Create an Environment for Change

When the second step is completed, you need to create the proper environment to allow desire to grow. Your attitude will play a major role in this. **Attitude** is a state of mind with respect to feelings, beliefs, or outlook (positive or negative) on an event. Desire can be maintained with a positive attitude. Determine your own attitude. Be aware of attitudes of those with whom you associate.

Set Goals

A direct relationship exists between goals and self-concept. You must develop a purpose or direction through the establishment of goals. Goals are usually categorized into short, medium, and long term.

There are three parts to setting a goal: define the goal, establish a time frame (short, medium, or long term), and make an agenda. List what's involved in reaching the goal and test the possible obstacles.

Be realistic in goal setting. Evaluate the progress toward a goal. After evaluating your progress, make adjustments as needed. Give yourself a reward when the goal is reached.

Take Action

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

CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE WITH A HIGH SELF-CONCEPT

Once self-concept is attained, enhanced, or improved, a person will exhibit positive characteristics. There are six primary characteristics of people with a positive 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 and realize that problems do not have to depress them or make them anxious. Problems are seen as challenges.
3. They are able to deal with emotions. People cannot help the way they feel, but they can control the way they act. They are able to keep emotions from affecting the way they act.
4. They are able to help others and accept help themselves. They are not threatened by helping others succeed, nor are they afraid to admit to a weakness. Secure people in leadership roles surround themselves with good people.
5. They are able to accept people as unique, talented individuals for who they are and what they can do.
6. They are able to exhibit a variety of self-confident behaviors. They accept compliments or gifts graciously. They laugh at mistakes without self-ridicule. They enjoy being by themselves without being lonely.

Other Characteristics

There are many other ways to present a positive self-concept, including smiling, being neat in appearance and dress, being polite and considerate of others, being an active listener, taking pride in work, having independence, making the best of every situation, and making wise decisions.

Some physical characteristics of positive self-concept include bright and alert eyes, relaxed face and natural color, chin held high, relaxed jaw and erect shoulders, relaxed and graceful hand movements, relaxed and balanced posture, a purposeful walk, and a voice controlled with clear pronunciation.

HOW LEADERS CAN INCREASE THE SELF-CONCEPT OF OTHERS

Good leaders bring out the best in other people. This includes a positive self-concept. By raising your own self-esteem, you increase the level in others around you. Following are some ways you as a leader can increase the self-concept of others.

- ◆ 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's human to make mistakes or not know all the answers.
- ◆ Describe undesirable behavior without blaming.
- ◆ If someone does exceptional work or makes an excellent decision, challenge the person to determine how and why it happened.
- ◆ 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 them to do.
- ◆ Find the central inherence of people and, when possible, match tasks and objectives with individual dispositions.
- ◆ Ask people what they need in order to feel more in control of their work, and then try to provide it.
- ◆ “Stretch” 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 individuality.
- ◆ Write letters of commendation and appreciation to high achievers and ask others to do likewise.



FIGURE 2. A positive self-concept is evident in the appearance of these FFA members.

Summary:



Self-concept is the knowledge and understanding a person has of his or herself. The ingredients of a positive self-concept include self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence, self-determination, and self-responsibility.

Three types of factors affect the development of self-concept: chronological, external, and internal. Chronological development of self-concept has three segments: childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. External factors include family, relationships, school, work, and social activities. The specific internal factors that affect self-concept are fear, doubt, and anxiety.

Five steps lead to the development of a positive self-concept: accept yourself, desire change, create an environment for change, set goals, and take action.

Six primary characteristics of people with a positive self-concept are a positive orientation, ability to cope with life's problems, ability to deal with emotions, ability to help others and accept help themselves, ability to accept others, and ability to exhibit a variety of self-confident behaviors.

Leaders can increase the self-concept of others.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What is self-concept?
2. What are the ingredients of a positive self-concept?
3. What factors affect the development of self-concept?
4. What five steps are helpful in developing a positive self-concept?
5. What characteristics do people with a positive self-concept exhibit?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Conduct a self-assessment. Jot down a list of sentences that describe what you think of yourself. Review each statement and indicate whether it is positive or negative. Add to the list each day. Evaluation of your statements will help you better understand yourself and lead to improvements.

Web Links:



Self-Concept

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-concept>

Developing a Positive Self-Concept

<http://72.14.205.104/search?q=cache:FYIsfgRfnwsJ:njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/pdfs/4h/e148/417-420.pdf+positive+self+concept&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us>