

Founders House of Hope

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The Self-Concept is Important Because it Influences:

Attention
Interpretation and Decision Making
Social Relations
Moral Decision Making
Ability to Cope with Stress

Components of the Self-Concept

Self-concept involves 4 separate but interrelated components:

- 1) physical self-concept
- 2) social self-concept
- 3) emotional self-concept
- 4) intellectual self-concept

They are separate because each is unique on its own

However they are also interrelated because our self-concept in one area can influence our self-concept in another area.

For example-- if your self-concept is shaky in one area it may inhibit the risks I'm willing to take in another area, such as my social life and it may interfere with my ability to express myself emotionally (emotional self-concept).

In contrast-- if I'm feeling positive about my physical self-concept, it may make me feel more confident about my social self.

Goal: we want congruency between the components of the self.

Generally speaking-- the greater the gap between the way we perceive ourselves and the way we really want to be, the more dissatisfied with ourselves we tend to be.

The Self-Concept is an internalized set of perceptions each of us has about ourselves that is relatively stable over time, consistent across situations, resistant to change and of central importance to us (Caproni, 2000)

It is composed of our beliefs, interests, skills, strengths, weaknesses and what makes us similar to others.

It influences our fundamental beliefs about who we are, who we should be and who we can become.

It is socially constructed throughout life and influences how we think:

- * school
- * family
- * workplace
- * social institutions
- * communities
- * religious affiliation

Human Beings Share Four Fundamental Needs:

- 1) The need to feel competent about something important to us such as work, achievements and relationships.
- 1) The need to belong so we're feeling appreciated for who we are; to establish a secure base we can come use for emotional refueling and draw strength; to sustain meaningful, lasting relationships.
- 1) The need for consistency by believing the world is coherent, orderly place where there is predictability so we can organize our lives in meaningful ways and make the right decisions about our lives.
- 1) The need to find meaning in life and make sense of the world; we seek to answer ultimate questions such as Who am I? and What should I be doing with my life?

The self-concept is important because it influences the following:

- 1) **Attention:** the self-concept acts like a filter by allowing and disallowing information to enter our mind; we tend to notice things that are important to our self-concept.
- 2) **Interpretation and Decision Making:** our self-concept provides us with a frame of reference for making sense of what we notice.
- 3) **Social Relations:** our self-concept influences who we see as different or as similar to us, who we trust and the networks of people we create; assumptions we have of others
- 4) **Moral Decision Making:** our self-concept influences our ideas about right and wrong, ethical and unethical.
- 5) **Ability to Cope with Stress:** our self-concept helps us deal with the challenges of daily stress; a healthy self-concept provides us with psychological resources to work through the stress in life, give us confidence during times of change.

The Difference Between Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

A person's self-concept is his knowledge about himself. Similar to how he can know other people, and know facts about how they tend to think, and what they enjoy doing, and what their temperament is like, he can also know these things about himself. Some people have much stronger self-concepts than others, probably because possessing a self-concept in much detail requires reflection on one's own self and behavior.

What is Self-Esteem?

Self-esteem, rather than being something that you know about yourself, is your general attitude toward yourself. It is mostly measured on a scale from positive to negative, and your self-esteem is typically based on whether you think you are successful, a good person, smart, and so on. It can vary depending on the situation and what has been going on lately, and any feedback you have gotten recently from your environment and people around you.

Key Difference between Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

The key difference between self-concept and self-esteem is that the addition of feelings. Self-concept is simply the informational side of things, where you know facts about what you are like. Self-esteem is how you feel about those things you know, like whether you enjoy the fact that you are talkative at parties (high self-esteem) or you think that you are annoying and need to learn to shut up sometimes (low self-esteem). There are a variety of self-esteem effects that can come from the self-concept.

Similarities between Self-Concept and Self-Esteem

Self-concept and self-esteem also have a lot in common though, mostly that they are reflective processes. They can be influenced not only by observing one's own self and behavior objectively, but also by observing the reactions that other people have to you and your behavior, or imagining what other people might think of you, or what you would think of yourself if you saw yourself from outside. In addition, self-concept and self-esteem can be developed through comparing oneself to those around you, and that is a big reason that self-esteem is raised or lowered. When you see that you are better at something than somebody else, then you will probably have higher self-esteem because you see and understand your own value.

Self-concept is the image that we have of ourselves. This image is formed in a number of ways, but is particularly influenced by our interactions with important people in our lives.

Definitions

"Self-concept is our perception or image of our abilities and our uniqueness. At first one's self-concept is very general and changeable... As we grow older, these self-perceptions become much more organized, detailed, and specific." (Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo, 2013)

"A self-concept is a collection of beliefs about one's own nature, unique qualities, and typical behavior. Your self-concept is your mental picture of yourself. It is a collection of self-perceptions. For example, a self-concept might include such beliefs as 'I am easygoing' or 'I am pretty' or 'I am hardworking.'" (Weiten, Dunn, & Hammer, 2012)

"The *individual self* consists of attributes and personality traits that differentiate us from other individuals (for example, 'introverted'). The *relational self* is defined by our relationships with significant others (for example, 'sister'). Finally, the *collective self* reflects our membership in social groups (for example, 'British')." (Crisp, R. J. & Turner, R. N., 2007)

Components of Self-Concept

Like many topics within psychology, a number of theorists have proposed different ways of thinking about self-concept.

According to a theory known as social identity theory, self-concept is composed of two key parts: personal identity and social identity. Our personal identity includes such things as personality traits and other characteristics that make each person unique. Social identity includes the groups we belong to including our community, religion, college, and other groups.

Bracken (1992) suggested that there are six specific domains related to self-concept:

Social - the ability to interact with others

Competance - ability to meet basic needs

Affect - awareness of emotional states

Physical - feelings about looks, health, physical condition, and overall appearance

Academic - success or failure in school

Family - how well one functions within the family unit

Humanist psychologist Carl Rogers believed that there were three different parts of self-concept:

Self-image, or how you see yourself. It is important to realize that self-image does not necessarily coincide with reality. People might have an inflated self-image and believe that they are better at things than they really are. Conversely, people are also prone to having negative self-images and perceive or exaggerate flaws or weaknesses. For example, a teenage boy might believe that he is clumsy and socially awkward when he is really quite charming and likeable. A teenage girl might believe that she is overweight, when she is really quite thin. Each individual's self-image is probably a mix of different aspects including your physical characteristics, personality traits, and social roles.

Self-esteem, or how much you value yourself. A number of different factors can impact self-esteem, including how we compare ourselves to others and how others respond to us. When people respond positively to our behavior, we are more likely to develop positive self-esteem. When we compare ourselves to others and find ourselves lacking, it can have a negative impact on our self-esteem.

Ideal self, or how you wish you could be. In many cases, the way we see ourselves and how we would like to see ourselves do not quite match up.

Congruence and Incongruence

As mentioned earlier, our self-concepts are not always perfectly aligned with reality. Some students might believe that they are great at academics, but their school transcripts might tell a different story. According to Carl Rogers, the degree to which a person's self-concept matches up to reality is known as congruence and incongruence. While we all tend to distort reality to a certain degree, congruence occurs when self-concept is fairly well aligned to reality. Incongruence happens when reality does not match up to our self-concept.

Rogers believed that incongruence has its earliest roots in childhood. When parents place conditions on their affection for their children (only expressing love if children "earn it" through certain behaviors and living up to the parents' expectations), children begin to distort the memories of experiences that leave them feeling unworthy of their parents' love.

Unconditional love, on the other hand, helps to foster congruence. Children who experience such love feel no need to continually distort their memories in order to believe that other people will love and accept them as they are.

◆ BOX 2-2 ◆

Self-Monitoring Assessment

The statements on this page concern your personal reactions to a number of different situations. If a statement is TRUE or MOSTLY TRUE as applied to you, circle "T". If a statement is FALSE or NOT USUALLY TRUE as applied to you, circle "F". Answer honestly.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| T | F | 1. I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people. |
| T | F | 2. At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like. |
| T | F | 3. I can only argue for ideas which I already believe. |
| T | F | 4. I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information. |
| T | F | 5. I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain others. |
| T | F | 6. I would probably make a good actor. |
| T | F | 7. In a group of people, I am rarely the center of attention. |
| T | F | 8. In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons. |
| T | F | 9. I am not particularly good at making other people like me. |
| T | F | 10. I am not always the person I appear to be. |
| T | F | 11. I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone. |
| T | F | 12. I have considered being an entertainer. |
| T | F | 13. I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting. |
| T | F | 14. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations. |
| T | F | 15. At a party, I let others keep the jokes and stories going. |
| T | F | 16. I feel a bit awkward in public and do not show up quite as well as I should. |
| T | F | 17. I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face (if for a right end). |
| T | F | 18. I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them. |

Please see next page for answers.

◆ BOX 2-2 ◆

Self Monitoring: Interpretation of Responses

Circled responses indicate high self-monitoring responses. If you have 11 or higher "correct" matched responses this indicates a high self-monitoring orientation.

- | | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| T | (F) | 1. I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people. |
| T | (F) | 2. At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like. |
| T | (F) | 3. I can only argue for ideas which I already believe. |
| (T) | F | 4. I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information. |
| (T) | F | 5. I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain others. |
| (T) | F | 6. I would probably make a good actor. |
| T | (F) | 7. In a group of people, I am rarely the center of attention. |
| (T) | F | 8. In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons. |
| T | (F) | 9. I am not particularly good at making other people like me. |
| (T) | F | 10. I am not always the person I appear to be. |
| T | (F) | 11. I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone. |
| (T) | F | 12. I have considered being an entertainer. |
| T | (F) | 13. I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting. |
| T | (F) | 14. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations. |
| T | (F) | 15. At a party, I let others keep the jokes and stories going. |
| T | (F) | 16. I feel a bit awkward in public and do not show up quite as well as I should. |
| (T) | F | 17. I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face (if for a right end). |
| (T) | F | 18. I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them. |

◆ BOX 2-3 ◆

Self-Assessment
20 QUESTIONS: "I AM"

Complete the following sentences, all of which begin with "I am . . .," to describe yourself. You do not have to show your answers or discuss your results with anyone. This is for your use only. Do not turn the page until you have completed the sentences.

1. I am _____
2. I am _____
3. I am _____
4. I am _____
5. I am _____
6. I am _____
7. I am _____
8. I am _____
9. I am _____
10. I am _____
11. I am _____
12. I am _____
13. I am _____
14. I am _____
15. I am _____
16. I am _____
17. I am _____
18. I am _____
19. I am _____
20. I am _____

Please turn the page for a discussion of your responses.

◆ BOX 2-3 ◆

"I AM" INTERPRETATION OF RESPONSES: THE PRIVATE, PUBLIC, AND COLLECTIVE SELF-CONCEPT

How you completed these sentences gives you some insights into your self-concept. Your responses reflect your tendencies to emphasize a private, public, or collective self-concept.

- **Private self-concept.** Responses that emphasize your personal traits, states, or behaviors (e.g., I am creative, I am a big thinker, I am introverted, I am kind, I am competitive, I am conscientious) and do not make reference to connections to others or your membership in specific groups. These responses are more aligned with an independent self-concept than with an interdependent self-concept.
- **Public.** Responses that emphasize your relationships with or connection to others (e.g., I am respected by others, I am trusted, I am loved). These are associated with a tendency to emphasize your public self and a concern with how others view and experience their relationship with you. These responses are

more associated with an interdependent self-concept than with an independent self-concept.

- **Collective.** Responses that mention specific social groups or cultural institutions (e.g., I am Asian-American, I am an MBA) or your role in the group (I am a parent, I am a manager). These are associated with a tendency to emphasize group memberships that have value and emotional significance to you. These responses are more associated with an interdependent self-concept than with an independent self-concept.

Analysis: Count your responses for each of the categories. Your responses will probably include private, public, and collective responses, but you may have emphasized some over others. Do your responses suggest that you emphasize a private, public, or collective self? Do you agree? Why or why not? What implications does this have for your effectiveness in different types of situations?

Source: Adapted from Triandis, H. C. "The Self and Social Behavior in Different Cultural Contexts," *Psychological Review* (1989): 96, pp. 506-520. Copyright © 1989 by the American Psychological Association. Reprinted with permission.