

Self-Concept and Your Self-Esteem: The Foundation for Personal and Professional Success (1,185 words)

Having a healthy self-concept and a positive self-esteem is critical for professional success and personal satisfaction. You may be thinking, I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and doggone it people like me.

It is important to recognize the responsibility you have to creating an accurate self-concept and a positive self-esteem. The self-concept is malleable, and the self-esteem can be bolstered by reviewing your experiences, by creating a coat of arms, and by writing a past accomplishments reference.

Your Self-Concept is Malleable: Your self-concept is what you believe about yourself. The self-concept is your image of who you are. It's your feelings and thoughts about your strengths and weaknesses. Your self-concept is your thoughts and feelings about your abilities and limitations. It takes in account your physical, mental and emotional makeup. Self-concept includes your personality and your social self. Self-concept is your thinking, daydreaming, studying, creating, listening, responding, and speaking from your self-perspective.

So, your self-concept is your own impression, opinion, attitude, and description regarding yourself. Or is it? We often see our selves in the reflection of others, a mirroring of the judgments of those around us. This is called reflected appraisal. Reflected appraisal refers to how we develop an image of ourselves from the way people respond to us and from the way we think others view us. We need to be careful about who we hang out with. I don't know exactly who said it first, but you are the composition, combination, or compilation, of the books you read and the people with whom you spend time.

You probably have noticed, that you have hundreds of self-concepts. Red light things you think you are not good at. Yellow light things you are cautious about doing. Green light things you believe you are good at. All of us have areas of our lives we could improve, and one way to do that is to give yourself the green light to learn new skills and build new relationships.

Past Experience Can Affect Future Action: One of the sources of self-concept is our experiences. Think about the years you were growing up. What did you read? What did you watch on TV? What were the topics of discussion? What did you talk about? Who were your friends? What are your memories concerning your neighborhood? What do you recall from elementary, middle, or high school? Did you enjoy school? What clubs were you in? Why? What activities did you participate in and with whom? What sports did you play? Did you volunteer? Did you travel?

I grew up on a hog and dairy farm. I read Hot Rod magazine and Boys Life. I watched Captain Kangaroo before I went to country school. I watched regional spotlight and John Deere bandwagon before chores and Mannix and Cannon after chores. My family didn't travel. I was a member of 4-H and the Future Farmers of America. I volunteered. In

high school, I ran cross-country, wrestled, played golf, and ran track. I acted in plays and I actually enjoyed high school. Result: I still own a sports car. I still support youth organizations. I still volunteer. I still have close friends that are farmers and I haven't missed a class reunion. So, our experiences are a source of our self-concept. Consider this: significantly change your experiences and you can significantly change your self-concept.

As you move through your days and through your life, consider your options and choices. See your life as if you were driving a car. You can turn the wheel and head a different direction anytime you would like. Where would you like to go?

Create a Coat of Arms for Daily Battles: At work there are frequent verbal fistfights, battles of wits, and wars for resources. Some of these squabbles seem silly. It's important to strengthen your self-esteem, build resilience, keep your head up, and take on the day.

Starting about a thousand years ago people took on their day with their Coat of Arms. A coat of arms was a unique heraldic design on a shield used by medieval knights to cover, protect, and identify the wearer. A coat of arms or crest has long been a symbol of identity and values. Originally used to identify warriors dressed in armor, each knight chose symbols and colors to represent his heritage, village, or town. This helped to quickly recognize friends and foes in battle. Think of it the same way today.

Create your own crest or coat of arms and you can go into the day with valor and a code of values that clearly promotes your purpose and personal brand. On your shield, describe what you are good at, things you are most against, what you would die for, words you would like to be known by, your greatest achievements to date, and your long-range goals. This shield gives you confidence. You feel like you can take on the world, not just the day.

Someone wise once said, "Know thyself." It is important to know your beliefs, attitudes, and values. Be clear about your intentions and motives. Create your own crest. Create a coat of arms and be your own brand. Take on your day. It will have a positive impact on your self-esteem.

Create a Past Accomplishments Reference: Some of your coworkers may display all of their awards, diplomas, plaques, trophies, and ribbons in their office. It can look like a shrine. It can make us feel like we haven't accomplished much in life.

Give yourself credit for being skilled, educated, and an actively involved. Your self-esteem reflects how positively you feel about yourself. You are probably much more talented than you think you are. I suggest you create a Past Accomplishments Reference. List no less than 25 past accomplishments from when they were a little kid until today. List every award, certificate, plaque, trophy, ribbon, license, talent, ability, skill, acts of kindness, volunteer activities, anything you should have been pat on the back for a job well done. It only takes a few minutes to write, but it is a resource you can use for years. Keep the list close. Don't tape it outside your office door and insist people need to read it

to see how cool you are before you will talk to them. Keep your past accomplishments reference close at hand and the next time you face a challenge or an obstacle, review your past accomplishments reference, and read 25 success stories where you were the hero or heroine in every one of them, and you will be reminded that you have accomplished great things. You will see this current challenge or obstacle as just an opportunity to put something else on the list.

Self-esteem is tender and delicate. Bolster your self-esteem by privately giving yourself the credit you deserve. Human beings are remarkable. You are remarkable. You have done remarkable things. You just need to keep a record and occasionally remind yourself.

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