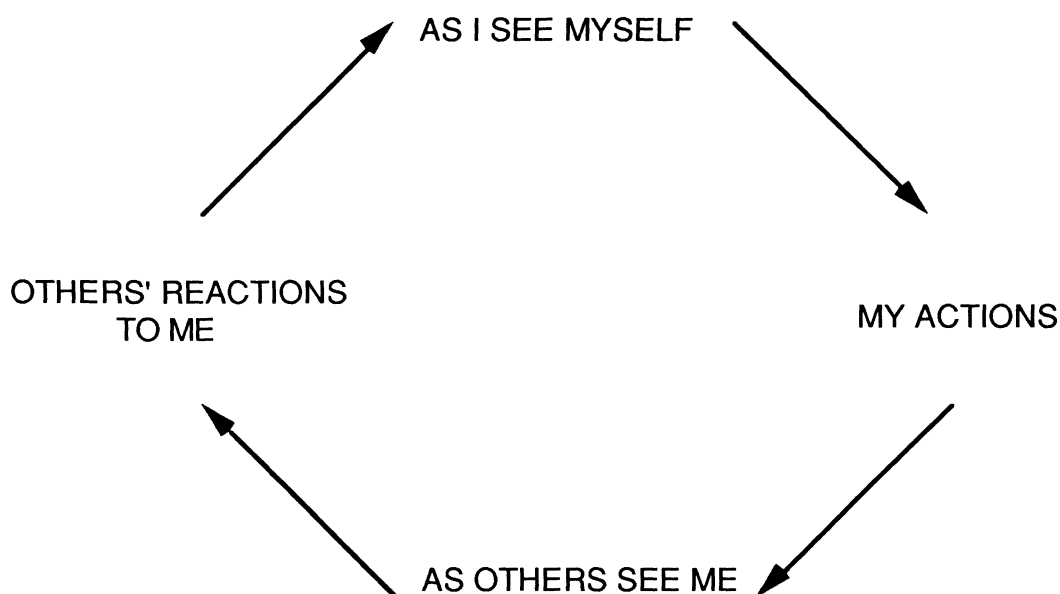


SELF-CONCEPT CYCLE

Self-concept is the total picture a person has of herself/himself. It is a composite of the traits, values, thoughts, and feelings that we have for ourselves.

Therefore, a person who has developed a positive self-concept will enjoy positive self-esteem.

A person's self-concept is developed early in life and affects the way that person functions in his/her environment. Children develop self-concepts through what they believe the important people in their lives feel about them. This is best expressed in the self-concept cycle:



"As I See Myself" is formed largely by our own perception of what others think of us. This influences our actions. Our actions in large part determine how others actually do see us and directly influence their reactions to us in return. Their reactions influence the way we see ourselves. This is a continuous cycle in our lives.

Some people have positive self-concepts, which make them feel capable and competent. Their actions demonstrate those feelings, and others react positively to their actions, which, in turn, validates those feelings.

Other people have negative self-concepts, which cause them to lack confidence in their abilities. These negative feelings affect their actions, and others in turn will react negatively to their actions, this time validating negative self-feelings.

A family can promote a positive self-concept by:

1. Providing successful experiences for the child. This includes not expecting children to do tasks that are beyond their capabilities.
2. Treating children with love and respect. Children's emotions should be accepted and valued.
3. Objecting to the behavior, not the child, when a child's behavior needs to be corrected. Never tell a child that he/she is bad. The behavior may have been bad, but the child is not bad.
4. Praising the child for achievements. Even though the achievement may seem small to the parent, it is important to the child and praise will help a child to feel good about himself/herself.
5. Avoiding competition. There is always a "loser" in competition. Instead, set individual goals for each child.
6. Giving children room to achieve and explore. This includes allowing mistakes to be made and learning from those mistakes.
7. Allowing children to make choices whenever possible. Accept their decisions without question.
8. Helping children to understand their feelings. Talk about the feelings the child is experiencing and give it a name. Encourage them to find acceptable avenues for releasing emotions.
9. Showing a basic feeling of worth and dignity toward children. A visitor in the home would never be told, "Look what a mess you have made. Don't you know how to clean up after yourself?" Children also need respect.
10. Providing for productive and creative work. Children can express themselves and better understand the world around them through art, music, drama, poetry, and role-playing their feelings.
11. Listening to children and talking with them. Use active listening skills. Include eye contact and use techniques that allow them to know that they have been heard and understood.
12. Sending and receiving clear messages. Let the child know exactly what is expected of him/her.
13. Providing guidelines for behavior. Children need to know what their limits are and then be allowed to act for themselves within those limits.
14. Guiding through love instead of fear or guilt. Fear and guilt cause a child to develop a poor self-concept.
15. Encouraging independence. This helps children to develop confidence in themselves and their abilities.
16. Avoiding power struggles. There is always a loser in this situation.
17. Being a good role model. Children learn by imitation. If the caregiver has a positive self-concept guiding good behavior, the child will imitate that. Let them see you make mistakes and learn from them.
18. Thinking about the nicknames and comments you make to children. We become what we think we are (self-fulfilling prophecy).
19. Letting children overhear you making positive comments about them. The subconscious mind puts more emphasis on what it hears than what it is directly told.