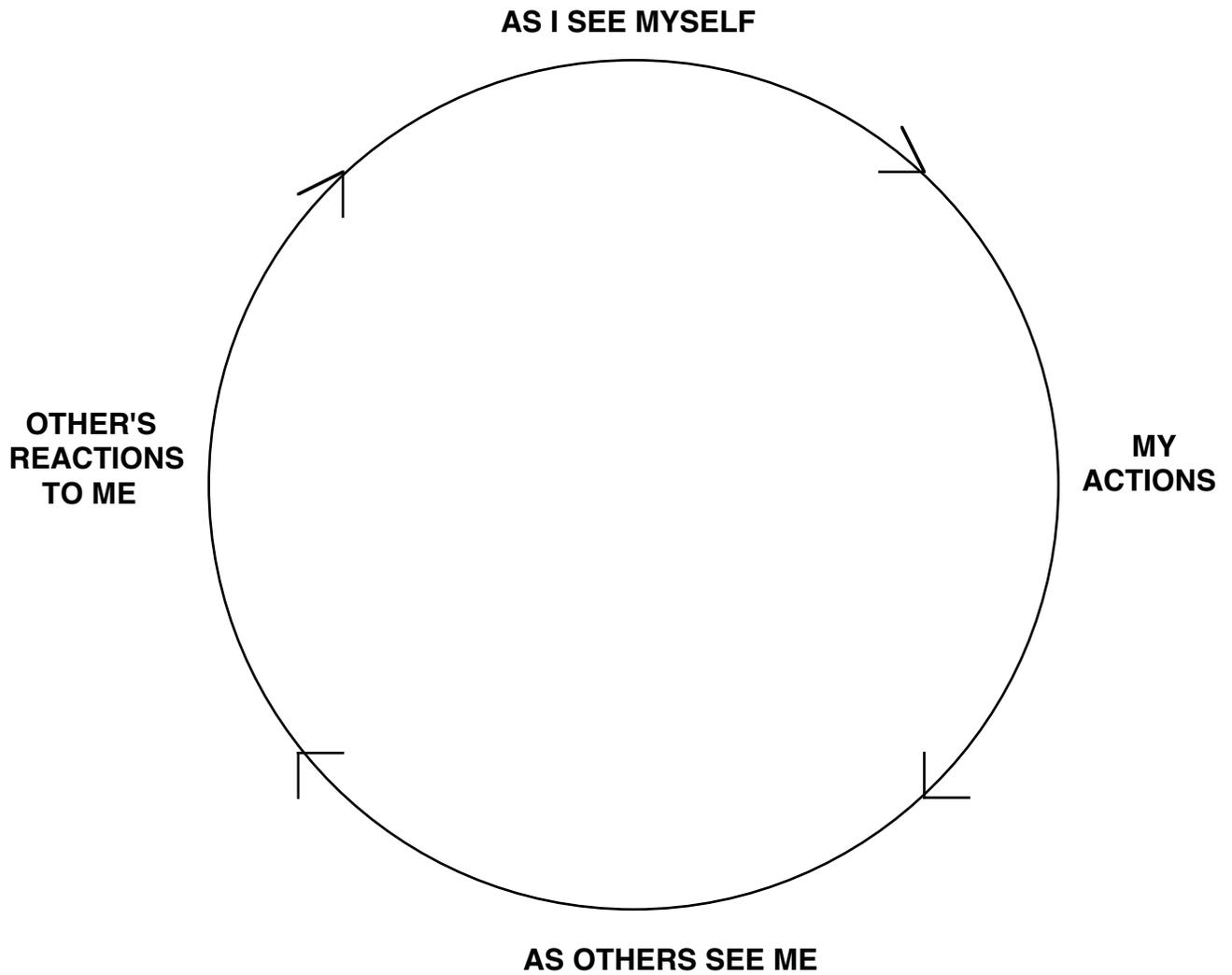


Self-Concept

1. The person I think I am.
2. The person others think I am.
3. The person others think I think I am.



CASE STUDIES FOR SELF-CONCEPT CIRCLE
Use these case studies with the transparency "Self-Concept"

DESCRIPTION OF A MOTHER

One morning a young mother got up and looked in the mirror. She began concentrating on everything that was wrong in her life. As she stared into the mirror, this is what she concentrated upon:

- * She was 35 years old and had just found her first wrinkle.
- * She had already plucked three gray hairs that morning.
- * She had gained 20 pounds after having four children and had not been able to lose any of the weight.
- * She wanted to be a stay-home mom, but had to work to pay the bills.
- * She was once a tidy housekeeper until the four children, ages three months to six years, came along; but now her house looked like disaster.
- * She was frustrated by the commitment she had made to a do a service project which she does not have time to fulfill.

THIS IS THE MOTHER AS SHE SEES HERSELF. Where are we on the circle?

As she goes about fixing breakfast for her family, what do you think her attitude is likely to be? (frustrated, upset, resentful, cross and ornery, easily angered by her children or husband)

THIS IS THE MOTHER AS SHE ACTS. Now where are we on the circle?

How are her children and husband likely to view her? (as being frustrated, upset, resentful, cross and ornery, easily angered)

THIS IS THE MOTHER AS OTHERS SEE HER. Now where are we on the circle?

How are her children and husband likely to treat her? (They will be frustrated, cross and ornery right back. They will be upset and easily angered, following their mother's example.)

THIS IS THE MOTHER AS OTHERS REACT TO HER. Now where are we on the circle?

What effect is this treatment going to have on how the mother views herself? (It will make her feel worse about herself and add to her feelings of frustration, resentment, and anger.)

THEREFORE, THE CIRCLE IS NOT REALLY A CIRCLE AFTER ALL. IT IS, IN THIS CASE, A DOWNWARD SPIRAL THAT CONTINUES IN A DOWNWARD MOTION UNTIL MOTHER DECIDES TO CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF MOVEMENT.

DESCRIPTION OF A FATHER

While driving home from work one day, a middle-aged father thought about his life:

- * Work was miserable. The boss never consulted anyone and had just implemented a new program that was destined to fail.
- * The past ten years had been hard ones. Working overtime to bring home a little extra money gave him no time to do any of the things he wanted. All his co-workers seemed to have time to play racquetball and go golfing. Maybe if he could join them once in a while, he would not be so embarrassed at his obvious lack of skill. The exercise would probably help take off the extra weight he had gained, too. He knew his wife had begun to notice the extra weight around his middle.
- * He wanted to buy a new suit that would cover the newly acquired weight, but between buying prom dresses and paying for music lessons, there was never any money left.
- * He thought about the leaves that needed to be raked and the branches that needed to be trimmed before the first snowfall. Last year the snow beat him to it and he never heard the end of it from his wife and the neighbors. He did not think his children would be around to help with the jobs. They only showed up to ask for the keys to the car or money. In his opinion, he was not much of a father to them, anyway. Getting home every night at 8:00 p.m. and leaving before 7:00 a.m. had not made for the best of relationships. He really should spend more time with them on the weekends, but he was so exhausted by then that all he wanted to do was relax. His wife was always mad at him for never attending the children's soccer games, but he just wanted to sit back and take it easy. He decided he really should make more of an effort.

Follow the same procedure as you did in the first example.

How will the father see himself?

How will the father act toward others?

How will the father think others see him?

How will others act toward the father?

What effect does this have on how he sees himself?

Where is the spiral headed and how can its motion be reversed?

DESCRIPTION OF A TEENAGE GIRL

A teenage girl got up and looked in the mirror one morning. As she stood there, she began pointing out all of her flaws:

- * Her hair looked awful again. Why didn't her haircut look like Jenny's? Jenny's was so cute.
- * She had three brand new blemishes. The cover-up she put on them only made them more noticeable.
- * Her friends did not care about her. They had not even asked her to go with them last Friday night. Why should they care about her? Her clothes were so ugly they probably did not want to be seen with her.
- * She had a test in chemistry that day and she had not even studied for it.

Follow the same procedure as you did the previous examples.

DESCRIPTION OF A TEENAGE GUY

A senior was sitting in his calculus class. The teacher was explaining the homework assignment from the night before. It had not made sense then and it still didn't. His mind began to wander.

- * Why had he let his counselor talk him into taking this class in the first place? The counselor told him he could handle it because he had done so well in his other mathematics classes. How did the counselor know he could handle it? He was not a terrific student like his brother John, who had a straight 4.0 average.
- * His dad wanted him to be an athlete, but he just didn't think he had the potential. Tryouts for the basketball team were next week and they would be tough. If he did not want to be on the team, he wouldn't go through the embarrassment of trying out. There were six other guys who were taller than he. He felt that he played lousy defense; his only strong point was making baskets, which he did not do very well under pressure. Tryouts would bring plenty of pressure. He felt he probably would not even make the team and if he did he would just be a bench warmer.

Follow the same procedure as you did in the above examples.

The direction of the spiral can usually be changed by looking at the positive things in our lives and accentuating them while trying to put the negative items in proper perspective; deal with them one at a time. Some negatives simply cannot be changed and must be dealt with in other ways.

By making the choice to be pleasant, happy, and content, a mother or father can greatly affect the attitude of a spouse and children. The attitude of the teenagers can greatly affect the way others treat them as well.

It is usually well worth our time to stop for a moment and see if the negative ways others are treating us could have anything to do with how we present and treat ourselves.

Who is ultimately responsible for the way we act?
(Each person is responsible for the way he/she acts.)