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SELF ESTEEM

Understanding a Complex Phenomenon

A Manual for Mentors

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INTRODUCTION

There is a consensus amongst educators that an essential ingredient in the enhancement of youth self esteem is the quality of the relationship between the child and 'significant others' in his or her life. (*Rogers 1955; Coopersmith 1967; Cotton 1984; Lawrence 1991.*)

The numerous research studies cited by Coopersmith (1975), Yawkey (1980) and Canella (1986) support the claim that 'significant others' can have a positive influence on young people who have unhealthy self esteem.

Most sources indicate that parents, teachers, peers, community role models and sports coaches, both in primary and secondary schools, influence self esteem by the feedback they provide about an individual's physical, emotional, social and functional self. Lack of opportunities for youth to have contact with appropriate 'significant others' leaves them open to whatever influences, chance occasions and contacts that are available. This can lead to inappropriate risk taking which in turn can develop into a variety of inappropriate behaviours.

This manual provides a training programme for 'care givers' - teachers, parents, social workers, sports coaches, etc. who wish to maximize their impact as 'significant others' in the process of enhancing children's self esteem.

The anticipated outcome of this programme is that participating 'care givers' will become effective self esteem mentors.

This manual is to be used in association with *Self Esteem Book 1*, *Self Esteem Book 2*, and *Self Esteem Book 3*, all published by Ready-Ed Publications. Book 1 is aimed at providing enrichment for primary aged children's self esteem by focusing on their thoughts and attitudes about themselves and how they fit into their families and community. Book 2 is directed towards primary aged children seen as 'at risk' in terms of their self esteem, and concentrates on a number of concepts important in a child's development. Book 3 develops the ideas expressed in Book 2 so that they are appropriate to the needs of adolescents.

Throughout this manual reference is made to specific page numbers in the associated Ready-Ed books - it is intended that these books can also provide a practical vehicle for consolidating on some of the principles detailed here.

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** The books referred to are also published by Ready-Ed Publications as outlined in the Introduction on Page 2:*

'Self Esteem Book 1 - Examining Self Esteem in the Young' by Lou Thompson & Tim Lowson
- Introductory book aimed at primary aged children.

'Self Esteem Book 2 - Raising Self Esteem in the Young' by Lou Thompson & Tim Lowson
- Primary aged children.

'Self Esteem Book 3 - Raising Self Esteem in the Adolescent' by Lou Thompson & Tim Lowson
- Adolescents.

Overview

Essential Self Esteem Mentor Competencies

To be an effective 'significant other' self esteem mentors should display as many of the following competencies as possible.

General

1. The self esteem mentor needs to be able to accept the child as a 'person' even though they may not accept the child's behaviour.
 2. The self esteem mentor needs to be spontaneous and natural when relating with the children.
 3. The self esteem mentor needs to be able to reveal his or her own personality to the children without fear.
 4. The self esteem mentor needs to display empathy to the children. This is the ability to display that they know and feel what it is like to be another person.
 5. The self esteem mentor needs to have a healthy self esteem themselves.
 6. The self esteem mentor needs to consistently model basic values and standards.
 7. The self esteem mentor is able to establish a trust relationship with children.
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Specific

1. The self esteem mentor needs to display reflective listening skills.
2. The self esteem mentor needs to display assertive verbal and non-verbal communication skills.
3. The self esteem mentor needs to display the ability to provide appropriate affirmation.
4. The self esteem mentor needs to be able to apply appropriate conflict resolution strategies.
5. The self esteem mentor needs to be able to apply goal setting strategies.
6. The self esteem mentor needs to be able to demonstrate positive self talk strategies.
7. The self esteem mentor needs to be familiar with appropriate relaxation techniques.
8. The self esteem mentor needs to have an awareness and understanding of basic theoretical concepts related to self esteem.
9. The self esteem mentor needs to be familiar with key behaviour indicators of at-risk self esteem.
10. The self esteem mentor needs to be familiar with community resources and services that can supplement their endeavours.

Chapter 1

Understanding A Complex Phenomenon - A Practical Model

SELF ESTEEM

Understanding A Complex Phenomena

A Practical Model

See also:

Self Esteem Bk 1- Examining Self Esteem in the Young: pp 7 - 13

Self Esteem Bk 2 - Raising Self Esteem in the Young: pp 7 - 13

Self Esteem Bk 3 - Raising Self Esteem in the Adolescent: pp 5 - 14

To maximise their role as 'significant others', self esteem mentors need to have a sound, pragmatic understanding of the self esteem phenomenon. In the literature considerable debate, confusion and conjecture abounds. The explanation and working model presented in Self Esteem Books 1, 2, and 3 highlights key considerations and principles and is intended to provide self esteem mentors with a pragmatic framework within which to work at enhancing children's self esteem.

The following information is provided to supplement the explanations provided in Books 1, 2, and 3.

1. Why should we be concerned about youth self esteem?

There is increasing concern being expressed that the current social and economic pressures that permeate across all sectors of western society are taking a toll on the quality of life styles of increasing numbers of youth. Recent studies in Western Australia have revealed that significant numbers of youth are reporting problems with depression, anxiety, controlling temper, stress and personal relationships. (1) (2) (3)

Care givers understand that a healthy self esteem is vital to children's well being. A review of the literature points to two key areas in which healthy self esteem has a positive influence. (Lawrence 1989; Hendrick, J 1988; Cotton 1984; Coopersmith 1967.)

1.1 Performance Behaviour

Children with a healthy self esteem are most likely to utilize their top 10-20% of potential. They freely move out of their performance 'comfort zones' and in doing so are willing to take acceptable risks. By taking these acceptable risks they are prepared to attempt tasks they perceive that they might fail at and, additionally, they are willing to undertake tasks that are entirely new. The performance of a child with healthy self esteem will not be hindered by an underlying 'fear of failure'.

- (1) *Death and hospital admissions from suicide attempts among young people are problems that have grown significantly in the past decade.*
- (2) *Surveys of youth self esteem in Western Australia have revealed that this is an area of concern.*
- (3) *The data available collectively suggests that a priority focus for schools and homes should be the enhancement of quality life style amongst youth, in particular, their self esteem.*

1.2 Social Development

Children with a healthy self esteem are most likely to display confidence in their interpersonal relationships, resolve conflicts positively and communicate assertively. They are able to handle group interactions positively and display appropriate team membership qualities. Above all children with a healthy self esteem are able to maintain respect for their own **individuality** whilst participating in group or team activities.

They conclude that *'It's OK to be different'*.

2. Clarification of terminology

The literature associated with self esteem is characterised by a proliferation of often ambiguous terminology. For self esteem mentors to become effective they need to have a clear understanding of the related terms and concepts. The following definitions and the explanations of terms are offered in the context in which they have been applied to this programme's underlying model and theoretical considerations.

2.1 Self Concept

This is a generic term that ...

- ☆ *... consists of the beliefs, hypotheses and assumptions that the individual has about himself. It is the person's view of himself as conceived and organised from his inner vantage. The self-concept includes the person's ideas of the kind of person he is, the characteristics that he possesses, and his most important and striking traits.*

(Coopersmith and Feldman, 1974, p. 198)

2.2 Self Esteem

This is the evaluative component of the self concept and is formed as a result of receiving feedback from the external environment.

- ☆ *Self esteem pertains to the evaluation of self-worth which depends on how the culture values the attributes one possesses and how well one's behaviour matches personal standards of worthiness.*

(Bandura, 1986, p. 410)

2.3 The Hattie View

Hattie (1992) takes a somewhat unique tack when attempting to differentiate between self concept and self esteem. Hattie's is a cognitive approach which suggests that:

SELF CONCEPT is merely a set of beliefs and relationships between these beliefs, that we have about ourselves.

SELF ESTEEM, on the other hand, has to do not only with rational faculties but with commitment and salience.

Hattie contends that:

- ☆ *It is with respect to our differing perceptions of commitment that we can conceive of self esteem. Our conceptions of our self esteem are relative to what we consider important, not necessarily to our capabilities and/or knowledge.*

(Hattie, 1992, pp. 54, 97)

2.4 The Lawrence View

It is Lawrence's interpretation of the associated terms that have been drawn upon in the model presented in this programme.

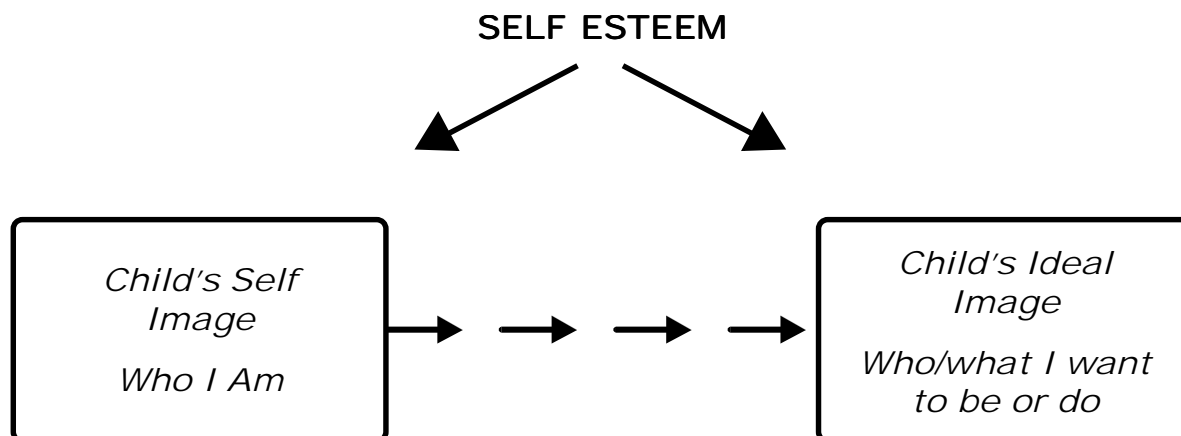
- ☆ ... **SELF CONCEPT** is an umbrella term because subsumed beneath the 'SELF' there are three aspects:
SELF IMAGE (what the person is);
IDEAL SELF (what the person would like to be);
and *SELF ESTEEM* (what the person feels about the discrepancy between what he/she is and what he/she would like to be.)
(Lawrence, 1988, p. 2)

3. Theoretical basis for the self esteem model

The SELF ESTEEM MODEL which provides the framework for this programme's approach has its theoretical origins in the work done by Katz and Zigler (1967) and Katz, Zigler and Zelk (1975). They claim that children not only build up a concept of themselves - what their own personalities are like and how they are seen by others (*self image*), but they also construct a concept of what they would like to be (*ideal image*). Katz, Zigler and Zelk suggest that a gap between the real, current self (*self image*) and the ego ideal (*ideal image*) is a sign of maturity.

4. The self esteem model

For this programme Katz, Zigler and Zelk's theoretical explanations have been translated into the following model.



Explanation of Key Components

1. The Self Image

The **self image** represents the child's collected thoughts, impressions and knowledge of who he or she is. It includes information related to physical appearance, emotionality, personality, intellectual levels, social roles and functional self (*what I can/cannot do*).

- A child's self image is dynamic, ever changing.
New experiences, developmental phenomena and/or changed circumstances will result in the adolescent adding to, modifying or revising their self image. The development of self image begins from birth as the infant watches the movement of its arms and legs and continues to change and develop as new experiences are encountered throughout life.

☆ ... *In its practical form (self image) is personally constructed out of interactions with the environment, in other words, it is learned.*
(J. A. Beane, 1991.)

2. The Ideal Image

The **ideal image** represents children's collected thoughts, perceptions, ideas and knowledge of who or what they want to be or do ... it represents their goals, dreams and expectations.

☆ *Some children's (ideal image) is very similar to their concept of their self image and they do not aspire to be more than what they believe they already are. For other children the (ideal image) is sometimes a distant goal, something to be worked toward. Sometimes the ideal self is realistic, sometimes it is almost pure fantasy.*
(J. A. Beane, 1991.)

In any case it is our claim that there is a relationship between children's perception of their SELF IMAGE and their IDEAL IMAGE. Specifically we would claim that many of children's goals, dreams and expectations are set in place on the basis of their knowledge and perception of who they are.

- In Workbook 3 we illustrate this claim with the following examples.

Self Image:

- ☆ I did okay at primary school.
- ☆ I am successful with my maths and science.
- ☆ I did well in manual arts, home science.
- ☆ I get on well with my friends.
- ☆ I did well with my surfing, cricket, netball, football during primary school.

Ideal Image:

- ☆ I want to do okay at my high school leaving exams.
- ☆ I want to go to university.
- ☆ I want to be able to build, cook, panel-beat, make wine, etc.
- ☆ I would like a boyfriend/girlfriend.
- ☆ I want to represent my school, state at surfing, cricket, netball, etc.
I want to continue being involved with my sport.