

Self Improvement & Self Promotion

By Todd Saxton, Core Excellence, Inc.

In the 2007 *Career Chronicle* article “Seize Your Potential,” I emphasized that a “Key Motivator” for achieving your potential was to solidify your purpose. This included a core belief that we must focus on self and listen to our self-talk as a factor involved in motivation.

I also asserted that living as best you can to reflect your values, morals, and beliefs was key to achieving personal and professional success. These fundamental qualities establish the parameters that govern your daily behavior and have a large influence on your self-image and motivation.

In this article, we will focus on the driving forces which influence our self-talk and also provide momentum in achieving a solid purpose.

Many years ago, while facilitating a seminar in a rural town, I was presented with a quote by a participant at the end of the three-day session. It was an excerpt from the book *Creative Visualization* by Shakti Gawain (recent edition 2002) entitled “Your life is your greatest work of art.” It reads as follows:

“I like to think of myself as an artist, and my life is my greatest work of art. Every moment is a moment of creation, and each

moment of creation contains infinite possibilities. I can do things the way I’ve always done them, or I can look at all the different alternatives, and try something new and different and potentially more rewarding. Every moment presents a new opportunity and a new decision. What a wonderful game we are all playing, and what a magnificent art form.”

From this quote, we may be inclined to ask ourselves several things: “My life is a work of art? I can look at different alternatives related to my interactions and life circumstances? I have the option of being my typical self or trying something new and different? My life is a wonderful game?” All of these are big questions when considering how to pursue self improvement and facilitate self promotion.

Take Self-charge

We each have moments in life when another individual chooses to take action and deposit something into our own being which, in turn, makes an impact upon our “self.” The tipping point is whether or not we accept this transaction.

By accepting such a transaction, we can assume personal accountability to pursue, perhaps, a new direction. This choice

is easy to understand, yet hard to adhere to. This means we have to remove excuses and constantly focus on our next goal.

Relying on anyone else to motivate us or having a reason outside our own desire may fall through or provide an excuse for not following through. Therefore, whatever changes we make have to be based on our intrinsic motivation which is fueled by thought-driven behavioral processes.

When we allow and accept what happens to us as though we have no choice, we are taking a passive role in our lives. We think and feel that we are victims of circumstances, that we have no choice but to accept our lot in life. The result is often feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and depression. These negative emotions can cause our mental and physical self to fall down on its job of taking care of itself and, in turn, influence our personal ability for professional success. In fact, our overall wellness is affected.

Albert Bandura, a renowned psychologist and past president (1974) of the American Psychological Association, has written on a number of topics focused upon social cognitive theory. He presents a concept known as “self-efficacy.”

He suggests a behavior known as “reciprocal determinism.” This notion asserts that behavior can affect environment. A person with strong self-efficacy

will view challenges as something to overcome rather than be avoided, and is, therefore, more likely to perform well under stress.

Self Focus

In considering how we encounter stress and challenges in life, two things consistently influence success, or even disappointments: 1) how we present ourselves, and 2) how we interact with others. These are key factors related to personal promotion. In fact, the latter is determined by how I present myself, which influences my “life as a work of art.”

For example: If I arrive late to work, this is how I present myself, which in turn influences how others in the office interact with me. Likewise, if I see challenges in the workplace as things to overcome, then this also influences my interactions with others.

We must ask ourselves how we truly “frame” ourselves to the world around us. We each know we present daily our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual selves during countless interactions. Putting ourselves in the picture and being on top of our “game” is of utmost importance. Our self presentation has a reciprocal influence on our environment.

Our life and interactions with our environment and those who occupy it is actually comparable to a work of art.

How we present ourselves influences relationships not only with others, but, more importantly, with ourselves.

These concepts and facts, along with our overall understanding of what and who we are multi-dimensionally, are central to our influence upon career and life pursuits. We have opportunities to address and take care of our over-all well-being on a daily basis.

There are four areas of focus:

- 1. Physical**—this includes all areas of physical health including diet, fitness, and cardiovascular and other systems. The mirror we gaze into each day reflects the person others see as well. Are you taking care of yourself physically?
- 2. Emotional**—this involves how our perceptions affect our wellness and sense of being, and how the health of our relationships can affect other areas of our lives. Without a solid emotional foundation, it is difficult to promote what we strive to become.
- 3. Mental**—this area of health covers our thinking processes.



How we think about things affects our physical and emotional state.

How we frame self talk (our mental cheerleader) determines not only our

outlook of self, but also our efforts for improvement.

- 4. Spiritual**—this area of health involves our relationship with the world around us and how we relate to it, whether it is through religion or a set of moral principles we follow. Have you solidified your purpose?

Your Self Portrait

Self-improvement and wellness is a continual process. Reading articles, self-improvement guides, or even trying the most recent diet craze may be starters for improved self promotion. The most important motivator, however, still relies upon your motivation and desire for change.

I have often asked professionals two simple questions related to success: Are you happy with how you present yourself? And, if so, do you see reward in your interactions with others? If not, what is holding you back? Consistently, the answers are: “nothing is holding me back but me.”

Learning to improve self and promote your career pursuits may not happen overnight. Yet, the more you focus and understand how you react to various people and events will influence future responses. These are all influenced by physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health. Core understanding of self and a heightened sense of awareness, coupled with power of choice will help you establish new behaviors and create personal improvement/promotion.

What picture are you painting of your self? The accompanying self-tests may help you see your self more clearly.

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Check each question you can answer "Yes."

- Do you wake up with enthusiasm for the day ahead?
- Do you have the high energy you need to do what you want?
- Do you laugh easily and often, especially at yourself?
- Do you confidently find solutions to challenges in your life?
- Do you feel valued and appreciated?
- Do you appreciate others and let them know it?
- Do you have a circle of warm and caring friends?
- Do the choices you make every day get you what you want?
- Do you take ownership and responsibility for your actions and their consequences?

Write down how well you handle the following—and why or why not.

1. Look for the positive in every situation
2. Be aware of my thoughts and feelings
3. Eat a healthy diet
4. Exercise regularly
5. Express emotions appropriately
6. Get adequate rest
7. Make decisions based on what I think is best
8. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
9. Willingly accept change
10. Respect myself and others
11. Stay open to new ideas

for a variety of organizations in fields such as oil & gas/energy services, aerospace, manufacturing, inbound/ outbound call centers, management development, leadership development, organizational systems development, customer service, human relations, education, recruiting, staffing, community/ social services and health care.



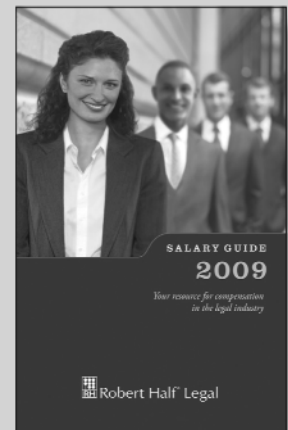
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