

SELF-IMAGE

Long Version

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

- ✓ *It is a fact that most of us suffer of a poor “self-image” with a host of harmful consequences, such as: self-rejection, depression, shyness, resentments, anger, hurts, self-accusation, guilt, withdrawal, touchiness, insecurity and the like.*
- ✓ *These notes are intended for all audiences, - young and old - without distinction of education, social status and religion.*
- ✓ *These jottings may help you personally and also those to whom you may address them.*
 - *To become aware of our poor “self-image”*
 - *How to improve it*
 - *How counteract its disastrous consequences. .*
 - *To discover our personal potential and richness.*
 - *To enhance our “ self-esteem”*
- ✓ *These jottings can be used:*
 - *For personal reflection and examination.*
 - *For talks on Self-Image*
 - *For discussion groups.*
 - *For workshops and seminars on self-image.*
 - *Leadership and training sessions*
 - *Growth groups*
 - *Encounter session, s etc.*

Contents of these Exercises:

Part 1. Meaning and Importance of the Self-Image

Part 2. How the Self-image is “formed, deformed, reinforced and stabilized”

Part 3. How to improve one’s self-image

1ST PART

Meaning and Importance of Self - image

THE BEGGING BOWL

Narrator:

Chandrakant was a wretched beggar.
Lonely, homeless, hungry, dirty, despised.
He spent his days begging for alms from passers-by.
With a begging bowl in his hand, he dragged himself

From door to door, from shop to shop,
 From street to street.
 The only thing Chandrakant could call his own was his big,
 dirty, begging bowl!
 He used his begging bowl not only to ask for alms
 But also, to eat, bath and sleep.
 After all, his begging bowl was the only possession
 he had in this world
 Chandrakant **thought of himself** to be a very poor
 and destitute man.
He felt himself to be abject, vile and for nothing.
 He thought and felt himself to be inferior
 to the rest of men.
 Often he muttered to himself:

Chandrakant: What a wretched man I am!
 I am useless, good for nothing.
 I am a parasite. Nobody likes me.
 No one will ever like me!
 I am poor and destitute!
 There is nothing I can give to others.
 I only am fit for begging.

Narrator: **In his relations with others,**
 Chandrakant was shy, withdrawn, and insecure.
 Some other times, he was mean and behaved, nasty and spiteful.
 Whenever he saw others better than himself
 he felt sad, depressed, jealous and resentful. .
 He hated others for being rich and what's worse,
 he hated himself for being poor!
 One day, in one of his begging rounds,
 Chandrakant stopped at the door of a curio shop.
 He stretched his arms and put forward his begging bowl
 and cried out:

Chandrakant: For God's sake, A little "bashis" Bhai!
 Just for a morsel of bread.
 I am hungry. Be kind to me!

Narrator: The shop-keeper looked at Chandrakant with
 contempt'
 Then he looked at his big, dirty, heavy begging bowl.
 He kept staring at it, and finally with a touch of
 curiosity said:

Shop-keeper: " Show me this dirty, stinking bowl of yours!"

Narrator: The shop-keeper took the bowl in his hand and
 examined it closely.

Chandrakant was watching him intently and impatiently.
The shopkeeper kept examining the bowl.
He scratched it. And in surprise, he exclaimed:

Shop-keeper: “ What a funny beggar you are!
You need not ask for alms.
You can give alms to others!

Chandrakant: What? Do not talk like this, Bhai!
Do not taunt me, Sir! Do not make fun of me,
a poor wretched man!

Shop-keeper: Wretched? Poor?
No man! You are rich!
You are richer than I!
Stop begging!
**This big dirty, heavy begging bowl of yours
Is made of pure gold!**

Reflection Questionnaire:

Reflect on the following questions. Take some jottings.

1. What were the consequences the ignorance of his treasure had on Chandrakant?
 - a. **In his thinking:** On the way he saw himself.
 - b. **In his feeling and emotions :** On the way he felt about himself.
 - c. **In his behavior** On the way he dealt with people
2. What is meant by self-image? How does it influence us in our thinking, feeling and behaving?
3. How do we come to have, how do we build our self-image?
4. Can we discover our true self - our real value, our treasures? How?
5. What's the difference between “self-image” and “true self”
6. Why did Chandrakant despise himself and why others despised him also?
7. How is it that others do not respect us as we deserve and that we do not respect others as they deserve?
8. Can we make ourselves respected and valued by others? How?
9. In what way can we help others to improve their self-image?
10. In the light of Chandrakant's story, can you account for any feelings of insecurity, touchiness, lack of respect for others, resentments anxieties, discouragements, unsatisfactory personal relationships, aggressiveness etc, you may feel within yourself?
11. Any other insights or lessons you learnt from the story?

NOTE; If you use these jotting in a Group Event, you may ask the group members to share their replies to the questionnaire with the group.

Thoughts for Personal Consideration

Meaning and Importance of ‘SELF-IMAGE’

1) **Real self v/s imaginary self:**

My real self is what in reality, objectively I AM. The bowl in reality was made of gold.

- My real self is the sum total of all the qualities, talents, abilities and strengths, I really have.
- Whether I am aware of them or not, it does not make any difference. They are there

My imaginary self, or the image I have of myself. It's not what I am and I have, but what I perceive – rightly or wrongly- of myself.

- My perception of self makes or builds my Self-image.
- Chandrakant saw and perceived his begging bowl as an ordinary cheap bowl.
- He saw himself as a poor beggar. He was not aware of the treasure he actually had.

2) It's not the real self, but our imaginary self (the image we have of ourselves) that conditions and controls our thoughts, feelings, actions, reactions and behavior.

For instance, if at night there is a coiled rope on the ground, but I perceive (I see) a snake:

One: I'll **think** that there is a snake.

Two: I'll **feel** frightened as if it was a real snake.

Three: I'll **act** or behave, as the snake was real.

* **I may run away**, (We call it ' flight reaction ') or

* **I may hit it and kill it** (we call it ' fight reaction ")

3) Expressing this in a sketchy way – applying it to ourselves - we may affirm:

What I perceive of myself -

Conditions: MY SELF – IMAGE

What I think of myself -

In turn, my thoughts

Condition: MY THOUGHTS ABOUT MYSELF.

What I feel of myself -

In turn, my feelings.

Condition. MY FEELINGS ABOUT MYSELF.

What I do -

In turn, my actions and reactions.

Condition. MY ACTIONS AND REACTIONS

Finally

My actions and reactions

**Condition MY BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS.
MY PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER.**

4) Applying this process to Chandrakant's story:

- He perceived himself as a poor person,
- He thought himself to be poor.
- He felt wretched and despicable like a beggar.
- He acted like a beggar, asking for alms. Behaving nastily.
- His whole character and personality was that of a disgruntle beggar.

5) Giving Illustrations and Examples of Daily Life: For instance:

1. A brainy boy who never had a chance of a good education may think himself useless and dull.

2. A girl who is not a good singer but whom jokingly everybody says she is a good singer, may think herself to be a good singer.
3. An outcaste, judging by the way he is regarded and treated in society by all, may take it for granted that he is inferior to others.

Conclusion: It is a fact that we shall always think, feel and act according, to our self-perceptions, that is, according to the image we have of ourselves.

6) Experience tells us that most of us have poor and defective Self-Images, some more, some less:

- It is practically impossible for anyone to perceive all his potential, talents and abilities. Most of us are aware only of a minute part of them. The larger part of our inner wealth remains forever unknown to us. What we know of our strengths and wealth is only the tip of an iceberg.
- This will explain why our “self-image” is inferior to our “real self.”
- That’s why most of us think and feel poorly of ourselves, and consequently our behavior is unsatisfactory.
- On the contrary, all of us are very conscious of our negative points, failures and shortcomings.
- We brood over them, and magnify them. The net and sad result of it all is that our self-image is further diminished and spoilt
- Any real and lasting change in our behavior, character and personality has to take place in the area of our self-perception.
- Any attempt to change in our character and behavior without changing our self-perception will not last; it will be only cause apparent and ephemeral results.
- Any enforced improvements from outside whatever will not touch the core of our personality. That will be sort of patchwork, rescue operations, not real transformation.
- It will be like giving alms to Chandrakant. Alms will not change his behavior and character; alms will farther confirm him of his beggarly condition.

Conclusion: Without discovering our true worth, our wealth and qualities, nothing will ever change us for the better

7) Any lasting and real change in our character and behavior demands the following process:

| | | |
|----------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| First: | Better Perception..... | Self discovery |
| Second: | Better Thinking | Better “Self-Image” |
| Third: | Better Feeling | Improved emotional life |
| Fourth: | Better Behavior | Improved Character |

The Final Outcome will be: ...Better Personality and Happier Life.

2ND PART

How Our Self-image is Formed, Deformed

and Reinforced

THE PRINCESS UGLY. (A Fairy tale - First part)

Once upon time, there was a beautiful princess. Actually, she was the most beautiful girl the world had ever seen. Jealous of her beauty, her stepmother, hated her from her heart,

Right from her girlhood her stepmother kept telling her: **“You are ugly! Very ugly! Very ugly!** Even more, she gave orders to all the attendants in the Royal Palace to remind her how ugly she was. Day in, day out, she was bombarded with the same words: **“Ugly, ugly, very ugly!”**

At the end, though the Princess was the most beautiful lady in the realm, she kept saying to herself: **“I am ugly, ugly, and very ugly.**

No one ever will ever like me;

No one will ever love me.

No one ever will marry me!

I am ugly, ugly, very ugly!”

In her grief, she did not want to meet anyone; she refused to be seen by anyone. In despair, to hid her ugliness from one and all, she confined herself to a dark and lonely dungeon at the basement of the palace. There, night and day, she cried over her misfortune:: **“I am ugly, ugly, very ugly!”**

Reflection questionnaire

(Ideally, put your reflections in writing.)

Part one:

1. Why did her Stepmother keep telling the Princess: “You are ugly, Ugly Very ugly” when in fact, she was beautiful?
2. What were the effects of her stepmother and everybody in the Palace calling her ugly and treating her as an ugly person?
3. What was the self-mage the Princes, finally, had?
4. How her poor self-image was made or created?
5. What were the consequences of her poor self-image?
 - In her thoughts?
 - in her feelings?
 - and in her actions?
6. Why did she keep telling herself that she was ugly?
7. Why did she kept telling herself “no one ever will love me, no one will marry me”?
8. Why did she avoid everybody’s sight and hide herself in that dungeon??

Part two:

Keeping in mind the story of The Princess Ugly, explain:

1. Why most of us have poor self-images?
2. What do we mean by ‘**self-talk**’?
3. What was the Princess “self-talk”?
4. How much does “self-talk” reinforce our poor self-image?
5. Can our self-talk reveal to us the image we have of ourselves? How?
6. Have you ever heard of “**self-fulfilling prophecies**”?

7. Mention some of the Princess' "self-fulfilling prophecies"?
8. How much "self-fulfilling prophecies" do further reinforce our poor self- image?

Thoughts for Personal Consideration

1. Formation of Our Self-image:

No one can come to know himself through himself. e.g. No one will ever know the color of his eyes unless he is told by others, or he sees his image reflected in a smooth surface like a mirror.

We come only to know ourselves, our strengths and our weaknesses, our goodness or badness through the perceptions of others. People around us act like mirrors that reflect to us the images – the perceptions - they have of us. **They do not necessarily reflect to us images of what we really are, but only of how they see us.**

Slowly, on the communicated perceptions of others about us, we build our self image; for instance, if a child sees and feels himself loved and accepted by others, he will build a self-image that he is lovable and acceptable. He will believe in his worth, he will develop 'self esteem'.

Actually speaking, our original "self-image" was unconsciously shaped in our childhood days, without our being aware of it, by what we call 'significant people', namely, parents, close family members, teachers, neighbors and peer group members. They were, so to say, the first mirrors that reflected to us what they thought we were, how we were and our worth. Unfortunately, in our childhood days, we were not able to examine how accurate or how faulty their perceptions were. Uncritically, we introjected them.

2. Deformation of Our ' Self-image' - Distortions:

Just a word about material mirrors. There are true mirrors and false mirrors. True mirrors give us an objective, impartial and accurate images of our physical selves. False mirrors change our images and reflect untrue distorted and inaccurate ones.

For instance, the images reflected by mirrors displayed in some stalls at fetes and fairs are distorted. Concave mirrors flatten our images, convex mirrors elongate them, still others, with rough and irregular surfaces, completely disfigure our images.

Among the people that acted as mirrors in the process of building our self-images there might have been many convex, concave and irregular mirrors, indeed! Very few of them, if any at all, gave us an accurate image of ourselves. They offered us shortened, elongated, distorted or even monstrous self-images.

No human being can be 100% objective and accurate in judging and evaluating others, in reflecting true and unbiased perceptions of people! All of us, unconsciously, are subject to prejudices, fads, assumptions, social conditioning and cultural biases, unexamined beliefs passed on to us and which we accepted for true without any critical examination. **In fact, any judgment we make of people inevitably implies an element of misjudgment**

Experience teaches us that any character trait or quality in a person may be considered good or bad, acceptable or not acceptable, beautiful or ugly, moral or immoral within different cultures, social groups and even families. e.g. short and tall, fair and dark, fat and slim, intellectual and practical abilities, wealth and nobility, submissiveness and independence, introversion and extroversion, etc. **Consequently, if we were born in families of different cultural backgrounds and value systems, we would surely have different self images - better or worse ones, - depending on the family and society's tastes, mores and values.**

3 Reinforcement of Our Self-images

The reinforcement of our self-image is a process that goes on and on within, without our being conscious of it.

There are two factors working on the reinforcement of our self-image:

Factor one are **external influences** acting on us from without.

Factor two are **internal influences acting** on us from within..

Factor One: External Influences.

As we pointed it above, willy-nilly, right from our childhood days, we imbibe from the world outside us - parents, family members, elders, teachers, cultural and social groups, religious affiliations, educational systems, peer groups, environment etc, - values, assumptions, prejudices, tastes opinions, moral judgments, habits, behavioral patterns, distorted views, etc, about ourselves and reality,

=,

When in our perception of reality, such external influences converge in one and the same direction, their harmful effects are compounded so that our already impoverished and distorted self-image is being confirmed and reinforced, in other words, crystallizes.

Remember Chandrakant's case. Everything and everyone around him reinforced his beggarly self-image; i.e., The passers-by, the shopkeeper, people on the road, his clothes, his very begging bowl, his environment, everything kept on telling him: 'you are a beggar'. 'You are poor and despicable'.

Everything around him converged into one focal point: 'You are a despicable poor man'. In this way, Chandrakant's poor self-image, so to say, day-by-day, moment-by-moment, was reinforced and confirmed.

The same principle can be applied to the story of the Princess Ugly. Day in, day, day out, she was looked upon by one and all as being ugly and treated as an ugly person. As time went on, she saw herself not only as ugly but uglier and ugliest! Her poor self- image was continuously reinforced and confirmed.

The same thing may happen to any one of us. Imagine that I have the self-image that I am a dull person. Surely, I'll shall feel and act like a dull person. Consequently, people around me will treat me like as a dull person. No one ever will ask me for my advice, nobody will respect my opinion. Necessarily these external factors will confirm me more and more in my poor self-image.

Factor Two: Internal Influences Three Self-defeating Mechanisms

First Mechanism. Self- talk.

We understand by “self-talk” what we, consciously or unconsciously, tell ourselves. Without our realizing it, we speak to ourselves all day long. We tell to ourselves what to do and what not to do and how to do it, how we feel, etc.

If our self-image is poor, we shall tell ourselves f.i: “I can’t do this or that” “I am useless”. “No one likes me”. etc . It is like the Princess Ugly saying to herself. “I am ugly, ugly, and very ugly”., or Chandrakant telling himself: “I am a poor man” “No one will like me” Etc.

Self-talk confirms us in our poor self- image and, day by day, reinforces it. It’s very important to become aware of our self-talk. If it is bad and disparaging, we have to change it forcefully and make it positive – even if do not believe in it. It is through sheer repetition of **positive self-talk** about ourselves to ourselves that we may slowly improve our self-image. This is what is meant by:; **“The Power of Positive thinking”**

Second Mechanism. Self-fulfilling prophecies

We mean by a “self-fulfilling prophecy” when under the influence of our poor self-image, we already prophecy before hand, that we shall fail in future in anything whatever. For instance: We may say to ourselves: “I’ll fail in my exams” ” “I’ll never secure a job” “No one will ever marry me!” Etc Though, consciously, we say that we want to succeed, unconsciously, our poor self-image forces us to fail! This defeating mechanism works like this:

- ✓ **First, consciously**, I say that I want to succeed in my interview in my quest for a job.
- ✓ **Next**, even before the interview, **I prophesy and say** “I’ll fail in my interview”. This prophecy is based on my poor self-image, that deep down in me, makes me feel inadequate for the job.
- ✓ **Next, unconsciously, I’ll, use or rather misuse the opportunities given to me to make that prophecy come true.** For instance, I may act shy at the interview. I may fumble for words while speaking to the Boss. I may behave clumsily” and the like.
- ✓ **Finally, I lose the job..**
- ✓ **Then I’ll say: “I knew I would fail. I am useless!**

The real reason for failing at the interview was that I felt inadequate for that job. Not necessarily that I was inadequate. My self-image told me: “You are not fit for this job”; “You will never get it..”.

Finally my losing the job confirms me more and more of my inadequacy and of my poor self-image. Another instance could be for instance; Though I may be capable of speaking in public, since I have a poor self-image of my abilities, I say that I’ll goof if I speak in public. Finally, I do goof. The fact is that since I saw myself as a poor speaker, unconsciously I make myself forget all I wanted to say, I perform badly and fail! Finally, I say to myself: “Really, I am a poor speaker. This is why I failed. I should have not dared to ”

Third Mechanism. Self –destructive Scripts and Programming.

Due to decisions based on faulty perceptions, taken in the early years of our life and already forgotten, but still alive and active in our unconscious or subconscious self, we are programmed to act in a way that may lead us to failure and create in us a sense of inadequacy and helplessness! It is like having been programmed or computerized to act the ‘script’ of a tragic ‘play’ already written beforehand.

For example, if I program a computer to give wrong answers, it’s obvious that it will give them. But, if I reprogram it, henceforth it will give right answers. I can reprogram – my life script - by changing my self-image!

E.g. it's possible that many years ago, I said to myself once for all: "I cannot speak in public. If I do, I'll fail". It's but obvious, that if I don't change that programming or decision, every time I speak in public, I'll fail! Or another example If I said: "I'll never succeed in making deep and personal friendships", I'll never be able to enjoy intimacy with anyone.

Conclusion:

- **These three self-defeating mechanisms "self-talk", "self-fulfilling prophecies" and "self-destructive Scripts" are so harmful because they function like "vicious circles".** We are caught in the circle of a wheel. We are dragged into the vortex of a whirlpool! Sucking us in, deeper and deeper into self –defeat and failure!
- **The Wheel of Our Poor Self-image spins on and on.**
 - I saw, I perceived myself as not able
 - I foresaw I would fail, because I thought and felt that I would.
 - Unconsciously, I forced myself to fail, and so, I do.
 - Finally, my failure confirms me even more of my inability and of my uselessness!
 - And thus, the wheel spins on and on.
- For how long our wheels of self destruction will go on and on spinning?
- Cannot we not reverse gears?

3RD PART How to Improve One's Self-image:

THE PRINCESS UGLY. (A Fairy tale - Second part)

After the Queen's death some kindhearted people in the palace spoke to the Princess Ugly and told her the true story of her life. "Your stepmother hated your beauty. That's why she, not only kept telling you that you were ugly, but she also commanded us to tell you the same. Do not believe what she told you. Do not believe what we told you. You are not ugly. You are beautiful, beautiful, and very beautiful. Come out of the dungeon. Show yourself to the people. They will like you. They will love you. They will admire your beauty."

But the Princess could not believe them. She kept saying: "No, I am ugly, ugly, and very ugly" No! No! Nobody will ever like me, no one will ever love me, and no one will ever marry me!"

In the neighboring kingdom there lived a charming Prince. He made his mind to marry the most beautiful princess in the world. For a long time, he searched and searched in vain for the beauty queen of his dreams. In his search one day, Prince Charming happened to visit the Palace of the Princess Ugly. One of the Palace Guards whispered to him the story of the Princess Ugly now hiding in the Palace Dungeon.

In his crazy search, the Prince daringly stormed into the dungeon of the castle. When he saw Princess Ugly in her splendorous beauty, he was enthralled. He took her in his arms and whispered to her the magic words: "Beautiful, very beautiful, most beautiful" and whisked her off to his own Castle.

As she reached the Prince's Palace, every one there was enchanted and fascinated by her beauty. From now on, praises and admiration were poured on her by one and all, especially by The Prince. He adored her with fascination. At the start, she refused to believe anyone, even the Prince, complimenting her beauty.

Slowly, after many days, she began taking in the wonderment and loving acceptance she received from one and all. Still, for many days she questioned whether what she was told in former days was true. She wasn't quite sure of her beauty.

Finally, one day, when she intently looked at herself in the mirror whilst the enchanted Prince was standing behind her admiring her splendid beauty, all of sudden with amazement and surprise she cried out with delight; **Yes, I am beautiful, very beautiful, most beautiful!** And burst out laughing and crying with joy.

Reflection questionnaire

(Ideally, put your reflections in writing.)

1. How did the Prince and the Palace People help her to discover her beauty and accept it?
2. Mention the main things that made it possible for her to change her self-image?
3. Why it took so long to Princess Ugly to change her self-image?
4. Is it possible for us to discover our treasures, our goodness and beauty and accept them? How?
5. What are the main attitudes or dispositions we need to work out the miracle of an enhanced self-image?
6. What hints would you give to people with poor self-images in order to improve them?

APPENDIX ONE

Thoughts for Personal Consideration and Action

1) Have the courage to Challenge your Past Perceptions, Views and Assuptions

- We have to have the courage to challenge all the perceptions, assumptions, opinions, judgments, feedback and views of others about ourselves
- We have to have the will and the valor to examine and re-examine with an objective and critical mind the former values, the tastes, teachings, beliefs, life-styles, traditions and criteria of our parents, superiors, teachers, religious authorities, counselors, and friends we imbibed in our past life

Our constant attitude towards them should be a question mark (?) Was it so? Is it so?

- **Do not take things for granted**
- **Do not assume that others were 'true mirrors'.**
- **Do not easily believe in the accuracy of others' perceptions.**
- **Find out and discover things by yourself.**

2) Implicit faith in Yourself

- You have to have an implicit faith in yourself even if you cannot see now much worth in you, have to **blind believe** that there is plenty of good in you!
- Keep telling yourself: "I have untold treasures within. There is an untapped mine of gold in my depths. I am a "golden bowl" "I am not Ugly. I am beautiful, beautiful very beautiful"

3) Believe People who Give you Positive Feed-back

- Believe well-spoken people. People who tell good things about you. Believe them. They are not out to cheat you!
- Drink in every good thing they say about you. Don't do like The Princess Ugly that after the death of her stepmother refused to believe the people of the Palace who complimented her about her beauty. She even refused to believe Prince Charming who was telling her she was beautiful.. She was a prisoner of her poor self-image.
- Be ready to give good and kind people a chance to help you to discover your treasures and beautify.

4) Suspend your perceptions for a time. Act as if... and Start Liking Yourself

- Do not try to improve your self-image though rational arguments and intellectual reasoning. Close your eyes, and act as if you were gifted and capable. Finally you will discover your treasures and beauty!
- The problem of poor self-image, basically, is an emotional problem! It boils down to this! I do not like myself.
- Remember that there are no intellectual solutions for emotional problems. You will never find a rational escape-hatch to get free from your poor self-image.
- Only a blind belief and an implicit' faith in yourself will break through that 'irrational' vicious circle of self-devaluation. Close the eyes of your mind, blindly, jump out of that vicious circle, jump out of that fatal wheel.
- Begin working with your heart love yourself as you are, as God made you, as God loves you.

5) Practical Means to Improve Your Self-image,

I. Be aware of your negative self-talk and react promptly against it.

- Listen very carefully to what you tell to yourself. E.g. "What a useless fellow I am"..." I am good for nothing"... "Again, I blundered!" "I'll never do things right!" etc...
- Speak well to you about self No sooner you catch yourself being negative in your self-talk; namely, accusing yourself, disparaging yourself, comparing yourself to others etc, stop the process, change immediately, make it positive, force yourself to reverse gears.

II. Ascertain which are the 'principles' that consciously or unconsciously, rule your life.

- The maxims or principles you adopted from your younger days still guide and direct your behavior. I do not mean 'moral principles', but practical norms or rules of behavior. For instance: "I have to succeed in all things!" "All people should love me!" "I cannot waste time!" "I will not take a no for an answer," and the like.
- Whenever you discover any such norms or principles guiding, rather misguiding you, ask yourself: "Are they reasonable?" Are they **feasible**? Are they **practical**?"
- If you ever try to live up to impossible or impractical expectations and principles, you will condemn yourself to failure! Why should you, then, blame yourself for not being able to achieve something unachievable?
- If you find that some of your 'principles' and ideals are irrational, absurd or impossible, disown them immediately, change them into some others more practical and realistic.

III Find out whose orders and commands unconsciously, you try to follow, in your life.

- In your actions and behavior whom do you try to please? Under whose orders are you? Do you try to please yourself, God or someone else? Find out?
- Many a time, unconsciously, we still try to please our parents, superiors and former 'significant people' who are no more among us. Their ideals, norms, values, beliefs and expectations were so

deeply imbedded in us, that still, we try to measure up to them to the point of feeling guilty if we fail to do so.

- We should ask ourselves: “Are those norms and commands any more binding on us? Are they practical, reachable and in keeping with our abilities?”
- Have the courage to break away from them without guilt. Be Free from them.
- Follow your conscience. To yourself be true!
- Do not force yourself to be what others wanted or want you to be. Be what God wants you to be.

IV. Be aware of your fears:

- What are your fears about? Are you afraid of people? Afraid of God? Why? Afraid of failure? In what way? Afraid of yourself? How? Make a list of your fears. Look at them eye to eye. Ask yourself: What’s there to be so fearful? How come I am afraid of all these things?
- In a final analysis you will realize that the real reason is because you do not trust yourself... because you ‘devaluated’ yourself. It all boils down to the fact that you are afraid of yourself, afraid of your own fears!

6) Simple Hints Helpful to Change Our Self-image

I) Rejoice exceedingly and gloat over the good qualities you discover in yourself, however microscopic they may seem to you! They are yours.

II) Accept any signs of love and appreciation given to you. Take them in. Treasure them. Do not close yourself to love and then say: “I am not lovable”. Do not assume that you are not lovable. On the contrary, assume you are lovable and you will find that people love you! If you don’t love yourself how can you expect others to love you?

III) Time and again try to relive peak experiences of your life. From time to time remember some of the most loving, comforting and exhilarating experiences of your past life. Relive them with ‘gusto’. Keep ruminating them

V) Discover and accept your ‘uniqueness’: There is no other “you”! Love it! Love yourself. The self you have is the only one you have! Learn how to love it! Either you love it and be happy or reject it and feel miserable. You are irreplaceable. No one can ever fill the gap you will leave behind. You are not interchangeable. Be glad being who and what you are. Not even God can make another you!

VI) Be yourself: Do not be afraid or ashamed of being yourself!. Of being you! Do not try to be someone else. Do not allow others to force you to be some else.. If others do not like you for what you are, it is bad for them. It’s not bad for you. You remain what you are.

VII) Do not compare yourself to others: If you make yourself greater than others, you are not fair to them. It’s bad for them. If you make yourself smaller than others, you are not fair to yourself. It’s bad for you. Persons cannot be compared! Each one is incomparable! Each one is unique!

IX) Do not grade yourself: Things that are unique cannot be graded. You cannot grade the beauty of a sunrise or of a sunset. Grading is degrading. You are you. You are your own grade. Being yourself, you will get 100 marks, trying to be like others or trying to be different, you will get 0 marks.

X) Do not force expectations on yourself: Blot out from your vocabulary the following words:

“ I should”, “ I must”, “ I ought”, “ I have ...” If you wish to use these words, there is only way of doing that – namely, **Say I should, I must, I ought, I have to be myself!**

APPENDIX TWO

A check on your vision of self

SELF- IMAGE & SELF-ESTEEM

Each of the statements below can be rated with the words Never, Sometimes, Frequently or always. Make your choice and then write in the number (1,2,3 or 4) that corresponds to the word you have chosen. When you finished, total up your answers. The ratings go from 0 to 100.

1. Never 2. Sometimes 3. Frequently 4. Always

1. When my feelings are hurt, I express them.
2. Others value my opinions.
3. I feel intellectually capable.
4. I feel worthy of the compliments and gifts given to me.
5. I enjoy meeting and talking with new people.
6. I am happy to be me and wouldn't want to be anyone else.
7. I have been happy in all my life situations
8. I am happy with the way I live my life.
9. I enjoy positive strokes though I do not crave for them..
10. I enjoy my work/studies.
11. People admire me.
12. I am considerate of others.
13. I am self-reliant.
14. I make a positive contribution to the lives of others.
15. I enjoy attending to my own needs; in eating, exercise, general care of myself.
16. I enjoy spending some time alone by myself. .
17. I like myself.
18. I respect and value myself.
19. I do not keep grudges and resentments.
20. I see myself as a good looking person.
21. I see myself as attractive to the opposite sex.
22. I think of myself as a loving person.
23. I think of myself as a generous person.
24. I think of myself as a confident person.
25. I see myself as a successful person.

