**Communication and the Self**

***Looking Out, Looking In***

1. Begin with inventory on page 44.
2. Have students participate in the *inside/outside paper bag* exercise.
3. **Self-concept**: the relatively stable set of perceptions you hold of yourself.

**Notes:**

How does **self-concept** develop?

* Most researchers agree that we are not born with a self-concept.
* Soon after birth, the infant begins to differentiate among the stimulus in the environment: familiar and unfamiliar faces, sounds that mean food,

the noises that frighten, etc.

* During the first year, the baby begins to recognize the “self” as distinct from its surroundings. Ie: babies find their feet and hands.
* When the connection is made, the child then learns the *hand is me, the foot is me.*
* Self-concept at this stage is almost entirely physical.
* Self-concept is extremely subjective, being almost entirely a product of interaction with others.

1. Activity: Ego Boosters vs. Ego Busters page 47.
2. Journal Reflection: Reflect on how your self-concept has been shaped by those around you. This process of shaping occurs in two ways:
3. **reflected appraisal:** the fact that each of us develops a self-concept that matches the way we believe others see us.
4. **social comparison:** evaluating ourselves in terms of how we compare with others.
5. **Reflected Appraisal notes (page 48):**

* We are likely to feel less valuable, less lovable, the more we have received ego-busting messages; likewise, we are more likely to feel good about ourselves to the extent that others seem to feel good about us.
* Many messages are not intentional ones; HOWEVER, whether the message was intentional or not, non-verbal statements play a big role in shaping a youngster’s feelings of being “OK” or “Not OK.”
* Every day a child is bombarded with messages about themselves: “You are so cute!”, “I love you!”, “What is wrong with you?”, “Can’t you do anything right?”
* Evaluations like these are the mirror by which we know ourselves. Children are trusting souls who believe what their apparently all-knowing, all-powerful significant others tell them.
* Although messages from others have a powerful impact on shaping our identity, it is an exaggeration to suggest feedback is *always* responsible for modifying self-concept.
* Actual abilities can play a larger role in shaping both self-evaluations. Ie. Being an outstanding student, athlete, artist, etc will boost self-esteem even if others don’t praise them.
* The influence of significant others becomes less powerful as we grow older. After about age 30, most people don’t drastically alter their self-concept.

1. Read the poem and discuss:

**CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE**

Dorothy Law Nolte

If a child lives with criticism,  
he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility,  
he learns to fight.

If a child lives with fear,  
he learns to be apprehensive.

If a child lives with pity,  
he learns to feel sorry for himself.

If a child lives with ridicule,  
he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with jealousy,  
he learns what envy is.

If a child lives with shame,  
he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with encouragement,  
he learns to be confident.

If a child lives with tolerance,  
he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with praise,  
he learns to be appreciative.

If a child lives with acceptance,  
he learns to love.

If a child lives with approval,  
he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with recognition,  
he learns that it is good to have a goal.

If a child lives with sharing,  
he learns about generosity.

If a child lives with honesty and fairness,  
he learns what truth and justice are.

If a child lives with security,  
he learns to have faith in himself and in those about him.

If a child lives with friendliness,  
he learns that the world is a nice place in which to live.

If you live with serenity,  
your child will live with peace of mind.

With what is your child living?

*Source:* Canfield, J. & Wells, H. C. (1976). *100 ways to enhance self-concept in the classroom: A handbook for teachers and patents. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.*

1. Think-Pair-Share. What do you think? Any examples? OR Have students underline or highlight the lines that apply to them.
2. **Read *Cipher in the Snow*, by Jean Mizer. Pg 53.**
3. **Social Comparison Notes (page 49):**

* Social comparison: evaluating ourselves in terms of how we compare to others; there are two types: *superior/inferior* or *same/different.*
* *Superior/inferior:* Are we attractive or ugly? A success or a failure? In one study, young women’s perceptions of their bodies changed for the worse after watching just 30 minutes of televised images of the “ideal” female form. Distorted self-images can lead to seriousbehavioural disorders such as eating disorders.
* *Same/different:* We make decisions based on our conclusions. For example, a child who loves Ballet but lives in an environment where it is seen as weird will start to accept this label if there is no support from others.
* **Reference groups:** the groups against which we compare ourselves.
* Of course, some things are objective: acne, accents, tall, short, etc. However, they influence our self-concept based on the *significance* we place on them. Many of your features are obvious but may not have played a role in how you see yourself: this is because nobody has regarded them as significant. (This is culturally determined- more on that later!)
* Are you doomed to a poor self-concept if you have always received ego-busting messages? No. You can change your attitudes and behaviours (chicken and the egg phenomenon).

1. **Read, *The Girl Before the Mirror is Me*, by Marie Wilson :**

[**http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/the-girl-before-the-mirror-is-me/article17971209/**](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/the-girl-before-the-mirror-is-me/article17971209/)

**Review: Ego busters and Ego Boosters.**

1. **Homework: You are to stand in front of a mirror and imagine you are meeting the person across from you. Find at least one compliment to give that person. Say it out loud. Try again tomorrow, with two compliments. If you can’t say it out loud, say it in your head. But SAY IT.** We live in a culture that encourages disparaging marks about ourselves, while complimenting others. We might easily say to a friend, “You are so smart and I love your curly hair,” while saying about ourselves, out loud, “I’m going to totally fail that test” or, “I hate my straight hair; it totally sucks.” In reality, maybe you will get a “B” on the test (not exactly a fail) and your curly haired friend is trying to iron his/her hair straight while secretly admiring yours.
2. **Characteristics of Self-Concept**
3. **Self-Concept is subjective:** it can be distorted both positively and negatively. Ie. A bad mood or a good mood can affect how you perceive yourself that day, or perceive how others see you.

How does this happen?

1. Obsolete information: past failures and successes linger long after they have occurred; ie. Old jokes.
2. Distorted feedback: a self-image that is worse or better than the facts warrant; ie. False praise leading to inflated ego, overly critical significant others.
3. Self-verification: Studies show that those with a high self-concept seek out partners who view them favourably, whereas those with low self-concept more inclined to seek out those who view them negatively.
4. Perfection: common in our society. We want to be liked and admired; adults can perpetuate this need to be perfect because they are reluctant to admit mistakes in front of children. If kids think the adult is perfect and knows everything and then compares this to themselves, their self-concept can suffer.
5. Social expectations: We (Canadians) consider those who speak highly of themselves as braggarts or egotists. After a while we begin to believe the statements we repeatedly make.

**Activity, page 57. Recognizing your strengths.**

1. **Self-concept resists change:**
2. **Cognitive conservatism:** the tendency to cling to an existing self-concept, even when evidence shows that it is obsolete.
3. We are reluctant to revise a previously favourable self-concept ie. The famous athlete who can’t admit they are past their prime. Also works in reverse: consider the beautiful woman with straight teeth who still feels ugly as a result of being called “metal mouth” when she was a teen. She thinks those who call her beautiful are just trying to be nice; she knows what she *really* looks like.
4. Some people resist change because they aren’t willing to go through the disorientation that comes with redefining themselves.
5. **Defensiveness:** Those that have a distorted picture of themselves don’t always see the need for necessary change. This delusion becomes more and more difficult to maintain. If information contradicts a person’s self-concept, they have two choices:
6. Accept the new data and change their perception accordingly
7. Keep their original viewpoint and in some way refute the information.

Those with a positive but inaccurate image of themselves will likely be reluctant to downgrade it, and will discount the new information or rationalize it away.

1. Think-Pair-Share on **Defensiveness.**

**Review key terms:**

**Cognitive conservatism reference groups reflected appraisal self-concept significant other social comparison**

**NEXT:** *The Breakfast Club* and Self-Concept!