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# Journal of School Social Work

A National School Social Work monthly dedicated to networking of parents and teachers

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**Focus: Essentials of Self-confidence**

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### Focus: Essentials of Self-confidence

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## Self-confidence – The Key to Success

Without self-confidence we are babies in the cradle.  
~Virginia Woolf

We are not in peace with ourselves always, leave alone with others. Sometimes we are upset by our own thoughts and attitudes. That's when self-confidence comes in. It makes us think differently and realize that we don't have to worry if the mirror gives an imperfect image of ourselves. After all we are larger and more *real* than the mirror. Self-confidence helps us view problems as opportunities and challenges rather than as disasters.

Self-esteem comes from our ability to see our own strengths. Let us appreciate them and trust ourselves. A low self-esteem results from one's inability to trust oneself. Let us realize that a few things are impossible to achieve in life. Success comes from making an effort based on self-confidence. Probably there is no such thing as complete and all-encompassing self-confidence. Rather it is specific to every given situation. A person who is self-confident about his writing ability may feel diffident about

speaking.

Building up one's own self-confidence depends on both necessary and desirable conditions. What is absolutely essential is to try, try and try again doing something. Success will follow, which will lay the foundation stone. More and more success will complete the edifice. Encouragement from others speed up the process, which is a desirable factor.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the successful people to lend their support to the beginners. Sometimes just a word of appreciation at the right time could help firm up someone's sagging or budding self-confidence. Are self and soul (atman) one and the same? May be. What we call as soul could be another avatar of the self. While soul may be the ultimate reality, self is a psychological phenomenon which is present now. Soul is for the future. 'Self' is what we have right now. Essentially, *self* combined with *confidence* spells success.

## Self-concept of Institutional Children: Living with HIV/AIDS in Delhi

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### Introduction

Children are the weakest and innocent members of the society who are affected by HIV/ AIDS. The multiple stresses (stress of illness, stigma, separation and death) in the child's life are likely to affect his/ her coping abilities and concept of self. Behavioural problems have been consistently documented in the research studies conducted on children living with HIV/ AIDS. Psychological problems are connected with the child's favourable or unfavourable perception of the self and his/ her perception of relationship with the significant others. Positive self-attitudes are important ingredients of mental health and negative self-concepts are among the critical predisposition to maladjustment. Self is an important construct capable of providing a comprehensive understanding of human behaviour. A study was conducted to explore the self-concept

of children living with HIV/ AIDS in residential institutions in Delhi.

### Objectives

1. Study the self-concept of children living with HIV/ AIDS in residential institutions of Delhi.
2. Investigate the influence of gender, age, HIV status, state of orphanhood and the type of institution on the self concept of children living with HIV/ AIDS in residential institutions of Delhi.
3. Suggest policy implications to enhance the self-concept of children living with HIV/ AIDS in residential institutions of Delhi.

### Methodology

In the first phase of the study, all institutions catering to children living with HIV/ AIDS (infected as well as affected children) were mapped. Four residential institutions catering to the needs of children living with HIV/AIDS were selected. The sample comprised of 30 children living with HIV/ AIDS in institutional care in Delhi. They were

in the age group of 07-14 years. Following tools were used in the present study to elicit children's account of themselves and their own lives:

1 The Self-perception Profile for Children- Scale developed by Susan and Harter (1985).

2 Autobiographical narratives of children living with HIV/ AIDS in institutional setups.

#### **The Self-perception Profile for children**

The scale developed by Susan and Harter (1985) contains six separate subscales tapping five specific domains (Scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance and behavioural conduct) and global self-worth. When administered the scale is called, "What I am like."

#### **Autobiographical Narratives**

To understand children's perception of their life experiences, children were asked to narrate the significant events of their lives in the form of sentence completion/ word association/ story formation. All tools were pretested to establish their relevance and applicability to the study and all ethical concerns were taken care of.

#### **Results and discussions**

For the purpose of analysis children living with HIV/AIDS in institutions were divided into low, medium and high groups. Scores of majority of the children living with HIV/ AIDS in domains of athletic competence, physical appearance, behavioural conduct and global self-worth were located in high category. Majority of the scores for 'social competence' were in moderate category while for 'scholastic competence' scores were almost equally distributed in moderate and high category. Although most of the children uniformly indicated positive feelings in all domains but there were wide variations in different subscales. Almost 50% of the sample scored below and above the mean in all domains.

#### **Gender and self-evaluation**

There was not much variation in the mean scores of boys and girls in scholastic competence and social acceptance, but there were variations in the mean scores of physical appearance, global self-worth and behavioural conduct. Girls living with HIV/ AIDS scored better than boys in these areas. One of the reasons for better scores of girls may be the age.

The mean age of girls in the sample was 11.5 years and that of boys was 9.36 years.

#### **Age and self-evaluation**

All the subjects were divided into two groups – 07-10 years and 11-14 years. It was merely an exploratory exercise to ascertain differences in self-evaluations, if any. Those children living with HIV/AIDS (16) who were in the age group of 11-14 years scored higher on all domains of self-evaluation than the children living with HIV/AIDS (14) who were in the age group of 07-10 years. Older children scored higher on global self-worth irrespective of sex. The reason for this variation may be the fact that with the passage of time children get used to their surroundings and circumstances and adjust themselves. Children started looking at the positive side of their surroundings. They also benefited themselves from spiritual activities which were the important part of institutional living.

#### **HIV status and self-evaluation**

HIV affected children (those children who were not infected with HIV but somebody in the family was/is infected with HIV) scored higher on all domains including global self-worth

than infected children (those children who themselves were infected with HIV). The highest variation in the mean scores of affected and infected children was in the domain of physical appearance, followed by athletic competence, scholastic competence, social acceptance, global self-worth and behavioural conduct.

Most infected children were not satisfied with their physical appearance as it was somewhat affected by recurring opportunistic infections like diarrhoea, vomiting, fever, oral cavities and other oral infections, dermatitis, ophthalmic infections and the like. They often wished to gain weight and height, have fairer skin, longer hair and skin devoid of blisters. They often reported that they got exhausted very early and that is why they could not take part in strenuous exercises/ games and missed school due to frequent outburst of opportunistic infections.

#### **Orphanhood and self-evaluation**

The sample had double orphans (children without parents), paternal orphans (children without father), maternal orphans (children without mother), children with parents and a child living with foster mother. The

mean scores of maternal orphans were highest in all domains except in athletic competence and physical appearance. Paternal orphans scored better on all domains of self-evaluation than rest of the three categories. Children with parents scored higher on physical appearance and global self-worth than double orphans. This might be because of the fact that living with parents had made them feel psychosocially happy and emotionally secure.

#### **Institutions and self-evaluation**

From four residential institutions catering to the needs of children living with HIV/AIDS, institutions one and two were for affected children and institutions three and four were for infected children. The mean scores of institution one were the highest followed by children of institution four, two and three. Comparison of children living with HIV/AIDS in institution one and two (for affected children) showed better self-evaluation and global self-worth of children living with HIV/AIDS in institution one. There could be many reasons for this trend. Institution one had affected children who were in the age group of 10-14 years. The

institution also provided better facilities in terms of exploring opportunities, unfolding potentials, co-curricular activities. Children were supposed to enroll themselves in one of the various vocational and hobby courses offered by the institution or its sister concern from sixth standard onwards. They were also taken out to other places to showcase their creative talents. There was also the system of 'peer assisted learning'. Older children were assigned the task of guiding younger children in their curricular and co-curricular activities. There was proper allocation and supervision of responsibilities as per the age of the children. Spirituality also helped older children in dealing with feelings of abandonment and helplessness. Children in this institution were living either for at least three years or were moved from other institution to this institution, so, they had accustomed themselves to living in institutions. Other three institutions had no such activities.

#### **Conclusions**

Self-evaluation of children is affected by age, gender, HIV status, orphanhood and by the physical, psycho-social environment of the

residential institutions. Children living with HIV/AIDS in residential institutions had high global self-worth but low social acceptance. Children of the institution providing opportunities for the talents of the children, peer guided learning, vocational training, lessons in spirituality, meant for affected children of older age group had better self-concept. Girls performed better in physical appearance, global self-worth and behavioural conduct. Older children living with HIV/AIDS had better self-concept than younger children. Self-concept of affected children was better than the infected children. As per the findings of the study, paternal orphans and maternal orphans had better self-concept than double orphans, children with parents or the child with foster mother.

#### **Recommendations**

Institutional care should be thought of as the most effective option for a

particular child/ family. directly linked to the individual circumstances and the needs of the child/family. The institutional care is not custodial care for children. There is an urgent need to formulate standards of care for children living in institutional setup and must be monitored regularly. The child's individual, holistic, age-appropriate development must be fostered. Children should have access to therapeutic and health care services as and when required. Efforts must be made to develop and enhance belongingness needs of the children with institutional staff and families/communities.. Every child in institutional care must be provided with unconditional physical, social and emotional safety and care by sufficiently competent caregivers and professional staff so that (s)he can unfold her/his potentials to the fullest and become a self disciplined, reliant and confident member of the society.

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### Introduction

The adage 'First impression is the best impression' definitely holds good when it comes to 'self-confidence'. Any individual who strides into a room confidently scores points over a person who sneaks in with slumped shoulders and bowed head. Self-confidence is an asset which makes people sit up and notice you, respect you and estimate you to be a potential confidant/ally/opponent.

### Self-confidence boosters

- \* *Success*: Although failure is considered a stepping stone to success, success definitely boosts one's self-confidence.
- \* *Previous experiences*: A given situation is less threatening when the person has been exposed to it earlier and hence adds to one's self-confidence.
- \* *Number of trials*: The more familiar a situation because of frequent exposure, the higher will be one's self-confidence.
- \* *Peer approval*: When a child

embarks on a strange scaring mission or attempts something new, approval and support from the peer group sends his self-confidence soaring high!

- \* *Admiration by adults/significant family members*: When a favourite teacher, parents, etc. praises and appreciates the child's efforts, the child gains new impetus to repeat the behaviour which was noticed.
- \* *Congenial atmosphere in the school and home*: A positive, encouraging, non-threatening and non-competitive atmosphere at school/ home is definitely conducive to increase self-confidence.
- \* *Motivation level*: High levels of motivation will improve confidence in the individual.
- \* *Resilience*: One's inner strength and inner urge to succeed will pep one up and boost one's self-confidence.

### Deterrents to self-confidence

- \* *High criticism*: Repeated negative criticism can lower self-confidence and the child can lose

interest in academics/ extra-curricular activities. The child may recede into a shell and become withdrawn.

- \* *Over-blaming, frequent comparisons*: Frequent fault finding, comparing with other children can make the child doubt his own capabilities and capacities leading to disastrous loss of self-confidence
- \* *Increased/ repeated failures*: Repeated or frequent failures could occur because of poor environmental support, illness, etc. This could lead to loss of motivation and belief in self.
- \* *Disabilities such as mental illness, stammering, dyslexia and learning difficulties*. Disabilities could lead to a loss of self-confidence. On the other hand, the child could take up the challenge, overcome these barriers and surpass his own anticipations. (For example: Abraham Lincoln, Audrey Hepburn, Serena Williams).
- \* *Physical disabilities*: Here too, the child could view the disability in either way. With adequate support, the child could focus on existing talents, nurture and develop these and reach unexpected heights in

life. (For example, Helen Keller)

### Lack of self-confidence

- \* *Frequent failures*: Any child who is plagued by lack of self-confidence may confront failures frequently.
- \* *Low self-esteem*: Low self-confidence leads to poor self-esteem and serious consequences on the child's academic progress, peer relations, extra-curricular activities, and as a consequence his/ her mental health.
- \* *Depression*: Children who suffer from low self-esteem due to poor self-confidence can gradually slip into depression and later develop psychotic features also.
- \* *Self-harm tendencies*: When one's self-esteem suffers a blow, the child may seek attention from significant others through dangerous actions such as self-harm and suicidal attempts.

### Improving self-confidence

- \* *Micro-gains* should be appreciated by the parents and teachers. Praise the child when he succeeds in small activities.
- \* *Ignore failures* – don't keep criticizing. Instead help the child do introspection – where he went wrong and how he could have

prevented this failure.

\*Foster an encouraging and warm atmosphere – be it in the school or house – where the child feels free to 'fall and learn'.

\*Help the child understand that failure is a stepping stone to success, one should learn lessons from failures and not allow failure to destroy one.

\*Talk about the child's success to relatives, friends and neighbours in the presence of the child.

\*Display the child's efforts (it could be a model which the child has made on his own) where all can see – bulletin board in the class-room and show-case at home.

\*Never ever put down or belittle the child especially before the peer group.

\*Let the child know that you are always available when he needs an emotional prop.

The above are only a few of the many ways of building up a child's self-confidence. It is the responsibility of the parents, teachers and all adults who interact with children to foster this virtue. Mental health professionals - psychiatrists,

psychiatric nurses, psychiatric social workers and clinical psychologists see the child only when the deleterious effects of lack of self-confidence start affecting the child's functional capacity and interfere with day to day activities. Prevention is always better than cure. Hence, efforts should be taken during the developmental stages itself by both parents and teachers to instil self-confidence in the young child.

#### Conclusion

Most mentally challenged individuals lack self-confidence with the exception of those with mania. It is heartening to note how his/her self-confidence returns gradually as the individual recovers with support from the mental health team and significant care-givers. It may be success in very small activities – dressing, combing hair or taking part in activities which give pleasure and gradually help the individual to emerge from the illness. This gives an idea of how important it is that self-confidence as an asset should be nurtured and fostered in the young child to ensure a mentally healthy adult in the future!

#### Focus

## Improving Positive Self-Confidence

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#### Introduction

Self-confidence is extremely important in almost every aspect of our lives, yet so many people struggle to develop it. Sadly, this can be a vicious cycle: people who lack self-confidence can find it difficult to become successful. After all, most people are reluctant to back a project that's being pitched by someone who was nervous, fumbling and overly apologetic. On the other hand, you might be persuaded by someone who speaks clearly, who holds his or her head high, who answers questions assuredly, and who readily admits when he or she does not know something.

#### Understanding self-confidence

Two main things contribute to self-confidence: self-efficacy and self-esteem.

We gain self-efficacy when we see

ourselves (and others similar to ourselves), mastering skills and achieving goals that matter in those skill areas. This is the confidence that tells us we will succeed if we learn and work hard in a particular area; and it's this type of confidence that leads people to accept difficult challenges, and persist in the face of setbacks.

This overlaps with the idea of self-esteem, which in a more general sense, what we can cope with goings-on in our lives, and that we have a right to be happy. Partly, this comes from a feeling that people around us approve of us, which we may or may not be able to control. However, it also comes from the sense that we are behaving virtuously, that we're competent at what we do, and that we can compete successfully when we apply



our minds to it. Some people believe that self-confidence can be built with affirmations and positive thinking. Though there's some truth in this, it's just as important to build self-confidence by setting and achieving goals – thereby building competence. Without underlying competence, you don't have self-confidence: you have shallow over-confidence, with all of the issues, upset and failure that this brings. The following tips will help to improve your self-confidence:

#### **Some positive qualities**

- \* You may have some weaknesses, but, also you have some strengths and good qualities.
- \* Lack self-confidence may indicate that you are a sensitive person, who is keenly aware of other people's feelings. Turn this sensitivity into strength; feel that your empathy with other people makes you a better person.
- \* Try to list several good qualities or several positive contributions that you have made and avoid feelings of false modesty.

#### **True professionalism**

- \* To become a professional social worker one has to learn the skills

needed for a social worker and in practice a professional social worker can improve his/her self-confidence in the best way.

#### **Spend time with positive people**

- \* Unfortunately, sometimes when we lack self-confidence we can gravitate towards people who instinctively like to put others down. (this behavior is rooted in their own insecurities – they knock other people to make themselves feel better). However, spending time with negative people is inevitably ruins our self-confidence. Look closely at the people you spend your time with, if they are always criticizing you (either directly or indirectly) try spending more time with people who don't.

#### **Be yourself – don't imitate**

- \* You can only gain self-confidence when you try to be yourself. In some social situations we feel awkward so the temptation is to do what you think other people expect; we try to be somebody we are not. But, when we try to be someone that we are not, inevitably we lack self-confidence because of the element of falseness in being something we are not.

#### **Don't think of failure**

- \* If we constantly worry about things going wrong then a lack of self-confidence is almost inevitable. Don't feel you are a victim to your thoughts, learn to control them.

#### **A chance to succeed.**

- \* If you lack self-confidence, it is a bigger mistake to always hold yourself back. Try inspiring yourself to explore some activities for a change. If you never attempt anything and avoid social activities, it is likely that your self-confidence will never get an opportunity to rebuild.

#### **Be kind to yourself.**

- \* Life is not about being hard on yourself, if you can't be kind to yourself – who is going to be? Being kind to yourself involves several

different aspects. One particular example is – dress smart – give yourself-confidence by wearing clothes you are comfortable with. Wearing the right clothes for the situation makes a big difference to your self-confidence.

#### **Conclusion**

Self-confident people inspire confidence in their audience, peers, team leaders, customers, and friends. Gaining the confidence of others is one of the key ways in which a self-confident person finds success. The good news is that self-confidence really can be learned and built on.

Whether you're working on your own self-confidence or building the confidence of people around you, it's well-worth the effort.

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[www.srichinmoybio.co](http://www.srichinmoybio.co)  
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## Essentials of Self-confidence

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### Introduction

Self-confidence, self-esteem and self-actualization are terms associated with personality development. The theoretical bases for these concepts are Maslow's hierarchy of needs starting from basic needs to self-actualization, Bandura's self-efficacy – a form of situation-specific self-confidence, leaning theories both classical and operant conditioning and social learning.

### Components of self

Self-esteem refers to a general feeling of self-worth and self-value. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's capacity to succeed at tasks. Self-confidence refers to belief in one's personal worth and likelihood of succeeding. Self-concept is the nature and organization of beliefs about one's self.

### Age and self-concept

Younger children's self-concept is

limited to descriptions of themselves, like boy/ girl and tall/ short. Older children can provide much more detailed descriptions about colour of their hair and eye, address and shoe size. Adolescents can explain self-concept vividly in terms of beliefs, likes, dislikes and relationships. Adults tend to explain themselves in terms of quality of life and their personality. Elderly persons may have even more refined self-knowledge and 'wisdom' developed over the years.

### Other influences

Apart from age, culture also influences self-confidence. Culture imposes different customs and different ways of thinking. A family or community may have beliefs and expectations different from other families and communities. These cultural differences affect the way we think. Different cultures have different views of what is normal or

right and wrong and these are our norms. School exerts an influence too. The expectations of teachers, image of the school, importance the community attaches to the course content and what students are expected to do at school influence one's success or failure. Peer relations and friendships boost self-esteem too owing to a sense of belonging.

### The effects of self-esteem

People with high self-esteem possess the following characteristics: they like to meet new people; they courageously express themselves; they are nicer to be around; they don't worry about how others will judge them; their ideas are met with interest because others want to hear what they have to say; they create positive opportunities and they meet new encounters. People with high self-esteem have an 'I can' attitude!

On the other hand people with low self-esteem don't believe in themselves; they see themselves failing before they begin; they have a hard time forgiving their mistakes and make themselves pay the price forever; they believe they can never be as good as they should be or as

others; they are afraid to show their creativity because they fear ridicule; they are dissatisfied with their lives; they spend most of their time alone; they complain and criticize; they worry about everything and do nothing. People with low self-esteem have an 'I can't' attitude.

### Steps to high self-esteem

The following are some of the steps in developing high self esteem:

- \*Forgive self for past mistakes.
- \*Focus on the positive attributes.
- \*Follow successful people.
- \*Have self-talk.
- \*Exhibit a good attitude.
- \*Get plenty of rest.
- \*Learn work skills.
- \*Practice one's talents.
- \*Be physically fit.
- \*Learn new things.
- \*Improve personal relationships.
- \*Dress well.

### Assessing self-confidence

These questions may figure in self-talk to assess one's self-confidence.

- \*When am I overconfident?
- \*Is my confidence consistent throughout an event?
- \*When do I have self-doubts?
- \*How do I recover from my mistakes?

\* Am I indecisive in certain situations?

\*Do I look forward to enjoy games, though, highly competitive?

\*How do I react to adversity?

\*What would happen if I believed in myself 25% more?

On a piece of paper write down the percentage of how much you believe in yourself. That will clearly indicate how much you believe in yourself.

#### **Developing self-confidence**

\*Emphasize your strengths and applaud your own efforts.

\*Take risks and never fear losing.

\*Use encouraging self-talk. It is perfectly acceptable to try your best, but do not shoot yourself down if the outcome is not perfect.

\*Self-evaluate – it is helpful to ask for the opinion of others but learn to evaluate yourself independently. Watch out for undue criticism, especially your own! Relive past times when you feel dampened by present situation.

Temporary fluctuations in our feelings

of self-confidence are fairly common; they happen to most of us. If, however, your self-confidence is low for a prolonged period of time or your mood shifts quite often, it might be time to seek professional help. It may be that you never really developed a good, solid concept of yourself as you were growing up and do not now possess a firm, positive concept of yourself to build upon.

#### **Conclusion**

Judge yourself in terms of your own realistic expectations; bettering oneself should be a lifetime goal. We grow with models who appear to be perfect at everything. Hero's are good to look at but they have their problems too. Accept yourself: stop worrying about the things you can't change. Change what can be changed: some things change fast, others gradual, and a few never. There are things we inherit but we can change our attitude about it. Try everything in your means to bolster up your self-confidence.

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#### **Focus**

## **Self-Confidence to Enhance the Adolescent Potentials**

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#### **Introduction**

The 'innate potential for excellence' distinguishes Aristotle's social animal, 'Man' from other entities, which is manifested and reflected through thoughts and expressed deeds, facilitated by an abstract phenomena called 'self-confidence'. It is instrumental for all human endeavours.

Self-confidence is such a quality or state of quality inherent in individual that automate the realization of one's own potential, and ability, so as to get one up above and reach beyond the zodiac (Henry, 1990). It is a belief system that makes one to have faith in self and reach to a state of being self assumed in one's overall manifestations (Piaget, 1969).

#### **Adolescents and self-confidence**

Conventional wisdom proved beyond doubt that individuals with strong self-confidence are people more highly motivated, higher achievers, more resourceful and that they are resilient (Candles, 1970). The role played by

self-confidence in the self-concept formation of adolescents is well documented (Adams 1973) and widely discussed but rarely practiced and far removed from being included in the material for integral formation of adolescents in Indian context (Choube, 1998).

The colourful period of life span, the adolescence, has to be led in whims and fancies and often linked to problems like lack of self-confidence (Santrock, 1997). As Boyce (1999) says, 'Adolescents face difficulty; through they are having ample potentialities, to express themselves as per the need of the situation, due to the lack of self-confidence.' Many a times it is found that the skills of adolescents and skilled adolescents are being neglected due to the lack of self-confidence in them. Psychologists like Havighurst (1994) are of the opinion that self-confidence is the foundation of self-efficiency and effective performance. The lack of it may generate difficulties in

adolescents, to present themselves, their feelings or ideas either through words, actions, or through artistic or symbolic activities. So also the lack of self-confidence may lead to the loss of their qualities or power of presenting their attitudes, ideas and emotions of one's own, at different situations.

Santrock (1997) observes that self-confidence is the perceptual conclusion which an adolescent drafts out of enhanced aftermaths of reinforcements from his successful accomplishments of tasks and milestones in life, vicarious experiences of life, verbal persuasion of living environment and innate potency for arousal. Only a healthy upbringing and environment can support the efforts to build self-confidence in adolescents.

By nature all beings are confident, self-expressive, uninhibited and above all curious, so also adolescents (Indu Bhakshi, 1997). The lack of positive reinforcements, and assertive nourishment from the environment the adolescents belong to, degenerate the original quality of their confidence level and force them to settle at an inferior state and the

result is poor self-confidence and its after effects. As Choube (1996) opined, this has to be tackled so as to facilitate the overall performance of adolescents based on behaviour manifestations with enhanced attitudes and self-confidence.

#### **Enhanced self-confidence**

Present is both the best of the times and worst also for today's adolescents. Now their world possesses powers and perspectives inconceivable fifty years ago: computers, gadgets, long life expectancy, comforts of life, the ability to reach out anywhere through television, satellites, air travel and the like. Adolescents of the day want to trust, but the world has become unworthy place with tribulations. Many a times factual temptations of adult world descend upon adolescents so early that their ideals become tarnished. So often adolescents with lack of self-confidence, and passive nature become vulnerable to tribulations. The interaction process of adolescents get matured through proper socialization and for that effective expression, abilities facilitated by self-confidence are

inherently needed. In Skinner's behaviourism model presented in John W Santrock's 'Children'(1997), he emphasized on the specific study of observable behaviour responses and their effects on adolescents. He states that 'the adolescent with self-confidence seems to have the qualities of increased productivity, ability to foster team work, ability to tackle the difficulties effectively, improved quality of involvement, capable of making congenial relationships, having reduced amount of stress, possess pleasing personality and will be the contributing member to the society.'

#### **Implications**

Enhanced self-confidence is very much essential for adolescents since it has multiple implications upon them as given below:

- \*Self-confidence and presentation skill are essential for an adolescent to be a productive member in his environment.
- \*For effective socialization to foster team work related with various tasks.
- \*To tackle problems of day to day life and growth.
- \*To foster better relationship.

#### **Impact of poor self-confidence**

Each and every individual is unique and differs in potentials, skills and confidence level. Setting a standard for the ideal level or status of these qualities are difficult because they are qualities quiet relative. But comparative understanding of such individual qualities is possible and is often done. Self-confidence must be enhanced in adolescents to a considerable extent since it is an inherent quality that automates the realization of one's own potentials and abilities so as to facilitate the personality formation apt to the age. As Vas Louise(2001) states 'building self-confidence is very much important for success in life because it is found that adolescents with poor self-confidence develop an introversive nature and generally that was found leading to personality problems in later years of life.' Feltham (2000) points out poor self-confidence will lead to bitterness, resentment, pessimism, and consequently ill health and high stress levels in adolescents. He adds that it may generate adjustment problems in the life situations where adolescents are often involved and

to effectively tackle the problems, an approach based on the recognition of the personality traits of adolescents is essential. If not effectively treated and handled poor self-confidence may lead to deviant behaviour traits (Newman 1995) as listed below:

\*Poor self-confidence supports the progress of introverted nature in adolescents and gradually results in isolation and depression.

\*Leads to the development of the feeling of bitterness, resentment, pessimism and consequently ill health and high stress levels in adolescents.

\* Many adjustment problems among adolescents like strong oppositions to leadership, unhealthy attitudes, negation towards social praise and reprove, unacceptable social behaviour, rivalry, jealousy, baseless quarrels, unhealthy and unproductive competitions.

#### **Enhancing self-confidence**

Since reality has a justification and all effects have a cause, it is logical to rationalise that problems like poor self-confidence may also definitely have causes but that can be addressed. It is not necessary that

there may be an unanimity in view points on ways or quick fix or five minute readymade solutions available but means are there by which poor self-confidence can definitely be treated. Self-confidence is readily achievable (Thompson, 1995). Experts in the field Thompson, Wills and Perry hold this view and propagate five means for building self-confidence in adolescents.

#### *1. Building a reflective mindset:*

Enhance the thinking and reflections of adolescents that generate self-confidence and positive reinforcement (Wellings, 2000). Reflective mind set can enrich reason more than education (Anderson, 1991) if they are applied and synthesized. Reflections, for adolescents, act as a mediator where mind connects the experiences of life with reason and seeks explanation for realities in life to create a base for future action. A well tamed reflective mindset will always help the adolescents to reach at positive perceptual conclusions in situations of need which ultimately foster self-confidence.

#### *2. Building an analytical mind set:*

Analyze means 'let loose'. A rational analysis lets the complicated phenomena loose from its complexity to its organized constituents and comprehension becomes logical (Palmer, 2000). A well trained adolescent analytical mindset perceives the realities and challenges around him/her in an organized logical manner and setbacks will be rationalized positively through analysis than retiring into the shell of comfort zones and complexes (Perry, 1994).

#### *3. Building a realistic mindset:*

The reason unfolds facts as they appear. A rationally trained mindset facilitates the adolescent mind to face the 'blocked life energies' due to the 'checks' or 'halts' generated from unattainable tasks or setbacks of 'life' with reason (Schachter, 1993). A realistic mindset instils the courage in adolescents to face this 'automatic or voluntary halts of life energies' due to various reasons, with courage and end up in finding an acceptable means for ventilation (Avery, 1999) that helps them to settle at higher state of self-esteem and automatically self-confidence

improves.

#### *4. Building a collaborative mindset:*

Confrontation requires courage and it is result of inferences an adolescent reaches at, from varying life experiences, through being with others productively (Avery, 1999). A collaborative mind set enriches an adolescent with 'alternatives' for situations (Carison, 1995), which provide feedbacks of strengths and achievements beyond the threshold of conscious awareness which will condition the confidence level and settle at higher level of self-confidence automatically.

#### *5. Building a setting out (action) mindset:*

An action mindset never settles for anything but setting things out (Brems, 1999). An adolescent mindset trained to 'set out' on need, always seeks the way to act aptly on situations and tries to know the best way to act and tries to act aptly in the best way possible though things are complicated or mild. This trains the adolescent to focus on basics of success and set goals systematically. The resultant achievements will train them to manage the mind with reinforcements and setbacks with

positive thinking. The result is strong mental images of experiences and enhanced self-confidence.

### Conclusion

Self-confidence is thus, the quality or power of presenting one's attitudes; it is a belief system that makes one to have faith in self and reach unto a state of being self-assured in one's overall manifestations. Today's adolescents, though they are blessed

abundantly with potentialities and opportunities, face lot many problems in the field of personality formation due to lack of self-confidence. Adolescents' enhanced self-confidence may enhance capacity level, intellectual capacity, physical contribution, competency and efficiency as well as potentials for effective execution of skills and qualities naturally vested in them.

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## Self-Confidence: A Key to Boost Self-Esteem and Happiness

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### Introduction

Self-confidence is a pivotal tool to enhance and enrich one's self-esteem, happiness and overall wellbeing. Therefore building up an atmosphere to develop confidence has become an important ingredient of worthy living in the society. People are respected, reliable and build a positive image in day-to-day living. Its values and significance are literally to be experienced from childhood. This can be cultivated in different environments like school, family, peer group members, neighbours and relatives.

### Booster of self-esteem

Self-confidence, very simply, is having positive, realistic confidence in one's own judgment, ability and power. It is based around confidence in abilities which are quite separate, although linked with, self-esteem. The self-esteem is how one feels about their abilities in themselves. It can have a drastic effect on

motivations, attitudes and behaviours with those around us. It is built from an early age. Healthy self-esteem is reached when the right balance is attained between the child's ability and the parent's interaction. Self-esteem is the internal knowledge that is capable of handling anything that life throws at us. Self-esteem is a feeling of self-worth and an understanding that we are capable human beings that are strong and resilient.

If one has no self-belief and one has doubts about his capabilities, one will not challenge them and will stick with things which are safe. Therefore people with a high level of self-confidence in their abilities have high self-esteem; handle stress and problems well and are able to hold their heads up high and feel good about them even when they fail occasionally.

People with low self-confidence are completely opposite. They often

sport a negative outlook on life and themselves; tend to fear new experiences because they lack the feeling that they can accomplish or handle anything outside of their normal routine. Finding the right balance is essential to become a well-rounded person who feels good about themselves, their abilities and exudes the power to succeed in every aspect of their lives.

### **The root of all happiness**

Human happiness tends to depend on there being sufficient love, security, freedom and meaning in our lives. This translates into having free choice, having enough of what we want, feeling good enough, perceiving ourselves as lovable and having a sense of purpose. Self-confidence about everything in life enables a feeling happiness. It does not mean you feel superior to others. Happy people do not compare themselves to others. The only people they need to please are themselves. The three elements that compose the basis for happiness include self-image (the picture of yourself, self-esteem (the feeling about yourself), and self-confidence ('thinking' about yourself). Self-

confidence entails to face the situation without stress but with zeal and happiness. It encourages taking risk for the right kind of action. Even in the situation where there is negative outcome, confidence builds up energy to face it with happiness and meet further challenges.

### **Ways to build self-confidence**

It is the duty of the parents, teachers, peer group members and friends to encourage the child to develop confidence. True self-confidence is a longdrawn process and not an overnight achievement. Here are a few tips:

- \* Ask the child to communicate positively to all. Frank and free communication enables the child to become confident.
- \* Inculcate the value of interpersonal skills in children.
- \* Enable the child to set new goals especially short term and long term ones. Success in each step ensures confidence.
- \* Encourage them to learn from defeats and failures. Develop strategies to overcome their future defeats and fears.
- \* Experiential learning in paying the telephone bill, electricity bills, and

other small household activities help them to face the society establish a sense of independence.  
\* Help them to improve general competencies.

\* Continuous evaluation of their activities and proper guidance can instil confidence in them.  
Apart from the above, positive thoughts and positive thinking are most essentials of self-confidence and to keep oneself happy throughout life.

### **Conclusion**

As rightly pointed out by Leo Tolstoy, everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing

himself. The changes should come from within first. Everyone knows that self-confidence is the mighty ingredient that propels one to success. Self-confidence makes one feel comfortable about them, helps them feel secure and able to rely on self and personal resources. Developing this personal resource will have far-reaching effects in manifesting those changes they want, both in their own self and in others they meet in their life. Self-esteem and happiness depend on the level of self-confidence one enjoys. With this mighty weapon one can face any challenge in life!

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### **Focus**

**May 2010 Dr Visvanathan S** (Annamalai University)  
**Acceptance of Differences.** Articles have to be sent before 18th April 2010 to facilitate peer review. Please append references in **APA** style and kindly proofread before sending your articles to avoid elementary mistakes. ~Ed

## Student Counselling - Challenges and Opportunities

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as told to *Visvesvaran P K\*\**

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### Introduction

For about a year now I have provided counselling to students of a girls' school in the suburbs of Chennai city, on an honorary basis. It has been a rewarding and challenging experience. The following details will hopefully give the reader a glimpse of the nature of task I have undertaken and its fascinating intricacies and intriguing variety of issues.

### *Billets-Doux*

For starters, let us consider the case of two girls who have apparently fallen in love with each other. One of them pretends to be a very famous young male, film star and the other is 'his' lady love. They regularly exchange notes of love, while in the class and otherwise. A bundle of such love missives (collected over a period of time) can be seen in each of their handbags. No, this is not lesbianism. They have not indulged in any physical sex and they may actually

feel shocked and disgusted if such an idea is mooted to them. What they are really indulging in is fantasized romance and a very interesting way – to them – of passing time.

Unfortunately the school teacher who has come to know of this girl-to-girl affair has given publicity to it among her colleagues, who have become extremely curious to know who these strange creatures are. They walk into the class-room one by one and inquire: "Who is the 'hero' here and who is 'his' lover?"

Other girls are only too eager to point their fingers at the 'culprits'. The teachers' curiosity satisfied, they leave the scene with a sarcastic grin. This scenario is endlessly repeated, as teacher after teacher walks into the class to have a glimpse of these exotic zoo specimens.

The concerned girls who are good in extra-curricular activities now fight shy of participating in these events just to avoid others' knowing looks

and comments. The counsellor has asked the girls to consider whether they should continue with their love game, however innocuous it may be, in the light of the heavy price they are paying.

### Suicidal Ma

K is the only child of her parents who don't see eye to eye on many domestic issues. Her mother has some grievance with her own parents about some land that was promised to her but was never given. She had repeatedly told her daughter that she (the mother) was going to end her own life. In that fateful morning K felt that the mother was overly upset and might choose the same day for quitting the world. Telling her mother that she was proceeding to school K lingered close to the house after the mother had bolted the door from inside. After some time, K opened the window from outside and peered in, only to find the mother hanging from the roof. Horrified, she raised an alarm and the mother was rescued and revived just in time.

A relative of the mother, a young man who lives elsewhere is proving to be very helpful. I suspect that the parents' unhappy relationship has a

great deal to do with her suicidal threats and attempt. I am currently trying to bring K's mother and her own mother (K's grand-mother) together and engage them in a remunerative, household enterprise.

### Villainous Pa

And then, there was the girl who was sexually abused by her own father, who claimed that this girl was not his and that his first wife begot her illegitimately. The girl's mother had left the husband and was living elsewhere. The step-mother was unsympathetic to the girl's plight. Both parents turned down our repeated requests to visit me at the counseling centre. This girl was haunted by nocturnal fears and I arranged psychiatric help for her.

### Two on the lam

There were two others who belonged to well-to-do families. Unable to cope with their studies, they frequently absented themselves from the school and roamed about, often with boy friends. They spent their own pocket money and for good measure, they also used to steal money from the classmates' wallets. They were on the verge of official dismissal when their cases were referred to me. I



introduced a buddy system whereby their problems in coping with everyday lessons were tackled by some cleverer students of the class after regular hours. The concerned girls were talented in extra-curricular pursuits such as sports, debates and other competitive events. Their classroom attendance started looking up dramatically and so did their co-curricular participation. Their improved academic performance proved the efficacy of the buddy system.

### Conclusion

Social work intervention in cases of problems faced by school youth can provide emotional support to the child, referral to related professions, clarification of the consequences of one's behaviour, planning a 'course correction', making use of the voluntary services of the high-achievers and finally, the hardest part is changing – not the concerned

student's, but the attitude of the general public. For example, exchange of what purported to be love-letters between girls can be viewed as sheer fun and innocuous within limits. The best treatment is to feign indifference to what is going on but keep vigil lest the practice take unexpected turns.

All in all, being a student counsellor is an exciting and rewarding experience. The ground for such practice should be laid by including the teachers for orientation sessions who profit by such techniques and exercises as the Johari Window and Transactional Analysis.

All departments of Social Work can provide counselling service to nearby schools as is being done by MCC, Tambaram. This is the best substitute for a full-time, salaried counsellor for every school as each one of them provides ample opportunities for the practice of School Social Work.

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#### Focus

## Parents and Children's Self-confidence

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### Introduction

A balanced self-esteem will help both children and adults alike throughout their entire lives. It is the foundation for a high level of self-confidence which in turn assures success. It's more than that - it's the key to how a child *feels* about him or herself. Self-confidence and high self-esteem that goes with it, are the keys to wellbeing and for success right from birth. The question for any parent who wishes to see their child succeed whether in material terms, social terms, financial terms, or self-fulfillment is what needs to be done to help the child develop high level of self-confidence.

### Effect of self-image

What does your child see when he or she looks in the mirror? A confident and happy child who believes s/he can get things done or a pessimistic and sad child that lacks confidence and laments that there's no point in trying, because s/he can't achieve anything? Whatever is the answer to this question, the alarming thing is that the parents are mostly

responsible for that. It follows that children will be more popular if their self-esteem is high. And of course, this doesn't mean being arrogant or feeling superior, narcissistic or self-centered. Perhaps the most compelling reason for helping a child develop high levels of confidence is to develop the ability to resist the negative influences of people around.

### Emergence of self-worth

Although it can be difficult for parents to be constantly available to their babies, there's little doubt that when a parent is very responsive to the needs of a baby, the baby develops a sense of self which is important to future development of self-esteem and confidence. The only way the baby can know it is important and worthwhile is when the mother's responses to it are consistent, predictable and regular. Even better if the baby is held in a sling against the mother's body for many hours a day, but it is enough if the child is breast-fed on demand and picked up

and stroked regularly with loving attention. However, not all babies require the same amount of attention, so a degree of sensitivity on the mother's part to the baby's specific needs is important – like when the baby has had enough contact and wishes to turn away from the mother, the mother needs to be attuned enough to respond appropriately. It is the repetition of stimulus by baby and response on the mother's part that leads to the emergence of strong sense of self-esteem. Over time, repeated most of the time, this is the foundation of confidence.

#### **Effect of deprivation**

When a baby is very sensitive, this pattern of stimulus and response is especially important for the baby to develop good feelings about itself. The essence of the message that the child gets is: "I am worthwhile. People pay attention to me. My needs are important." When the parent's response is confused, unpredictable and unstable, the child may come to believe that there is no point asking for things or trying to interact with others: he may lose confidence in his abilities to influence the world around him and conclude that he has no

power through legitimate means and may resort to tantrums and much later violence against self and others, in that order.

#### **A confident parent produces a confident child**

This fact which may be obvious is worth repeating. Raising a child can be therapeutic; it can heal the psychological wounds of the parent, and help the parent to avoid the patterns which were insisted by their own parents. Low confidence does not have to be passed on to the next generation. You can interrupt the cycle by doing things differently for your child. You know what helped you develop more confidence, and you know what damaged it. Therefore you have a base from which to start developing a repertoire of behaviours that will build up your child's self-esteem and ones which will reduce it.

#### **Be happy to raise a happy child**

Because the child clings to the mother in the early years of life, she will somehow interpret the mother's feelings as being her own feelings. So an unhappy mother tends to produce an unhappy child, or the child believes mother's unhappiness

is due to his/ her behaviour. It follows that to emerge from this merged state of being with a healthy level of self-confidence, the baby needs a mother who is not depressed, but who is self-confident and generally happy. What's more, the child is extremely sensitive to the feelings and behaviours of the people around him. The reactions of his parents to his behaviour have a major effect on how he sees himself. Negative and critical attitudes tend to be internalized and become the child's own self-image. So, the sense that it is fun to be with the child, that he pleases you, and that he is a worthwhile person, are messages that convey themselves to the child and become incorporated into his self-esteem and contribute to his self-confidence.

#### **Precious gift is your time**

The most valuable thing one can give to a child is one's own time. Being with a child makes the child feel he has value and that he is worth spending time with. And good play, where parents and children engage together in some activity of mutual interest is the best form of self-confidence building play. And play initiated by the child tends to be more

engaging for the child and more of a confidence booster because it sees that parents like to do things the child likes to do! You can always add a twist to the tale when you're reading the same story for the twentieth time. It's also important to make sure your attention is with the child. If your mind is elsewhere, the child will sense that and respond to it, making conclusions about how much you want to be there, doing what you're doing. The more interest you take in the child's world, the more they will want to be with you later.

#### **Nurture the whole person**

All children have different abilities. But when you nurture a child's special talent you may find that the increase in self-confidence in that aspect spills over into other areas of life. And it is important not to let a child take the easy way out (which means not attempting new and challenging things). Some children will be enthusiastic for many different things and seek out new experiences and sensations: some will not, being more shy or retreating by nature. These children, perhaps, are the ones who need encouragement to stretch themselves, so that they go beyond

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what is comfortable for themselves and learn more about their potential and how to fulfill it.

### Conclusion

Eye contact, positive strokes, hugs, kisses, touching, appreciation and focused attention are what build a child's self-esteem – as well as scoring high in classroom tests and on the playground matches. But not all children can do well in the class

and the field with equal ease, which emphasizes the fact that you need to reinforce the child's self-esteem without reference to the measures of success that society applies to us all. In other words, give your child approval and a sense of wellbeing irrespective of achievements. And of course, don't expect your child to do well at something just because you did or could not!

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## Aims of School Social Work

**School Social Work aims at improving the quality of life and education for children.**

### School Social Workers help students:

- Achieve** maximum benefit from educational opportunities.
- Understand** themselves and others.
- Improve** interpersonal relationships.
- Cope** with stress and develop life skills.

### School Social Workers help parents:

- Participate** effectively in their children's education.
- Understand** and meet their children's socio-emotional needs.
- Organize** programmes suitable to students with special needs.
- Use** school and community resources effectively.

### School Social Workers help schools:

- Understand** factors (cultural, societal, economic, familial and health) that affect students' abilities to make maximum use of their school experience.
- Utilize** their resources in meeting the educational, socio-emotional needs of students.
- Promote** a safe, conducive and inclusive school environment.

### School Social Workers help communities:

- Understand** school policies, programmes, and practices.
- Minimize** those environmental factors which inhibit learning.
- Develop** resources to meet the needs of students and families.