

## **Esteem and Ego**

The Law of Esteem recognizes that all humans need and want praise, recognition, and acceptance. Acceptance and praise are two of our deepest cravings; we can never get enough. William James once said, "The deepest principle of human nature is the craving to be appreciated." You can give simple praise to a child and watch them soar to the top of the world. We know how a simple thank you can make our day. Human beings have a psychological need to be respected and accepted. We need affection to satisfy the need to belong, we want praise so we can feel admired, and we want recognition to satisfy our need for personal worth.

In the persuasion process, it is essential to realize that people will act and behave in a certain way in order to validate compliments. If you present your request in a manner that compliments or builds your listener, they will be much more inclined to not only follow through, but to do so eagerly. Compliments have the power to change behavior because they make the recipient feel needed and valued. The individual now has a reputation to live up to or an opportunity to prove the validity of the compliment. Besides that, it's hard to not get along and comply with people who admire you, agree with you, and do nice things for you.

To use the Law of Esteem effectively, you must clearly understand the relationships between self-esteem, pride, and ego.

## **Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem is the elusive aspiration of most people. It is a confidence or self-satisfaction in oneself. Where does self-esteem come from? The people who are truly happy and comfortable with themselves are the ones who are able to live with and achieve what *they* want, not what they think *others* want. When people truly function in this manner, they are more pleasant to be around. They tend to be more generous, upbeat, and open-minded. They fulfill their own needs, but are careful to consider the needs of others. People who possess self-esteem are strong and secure, meaning they can admit when they are wrong. They are not unraveled by criticism. Their self-confidence permeates into all aspects of their lives: their jobs, their education, their relationships, etc. After an in-depth study, The National Institute for Student Motivation even rated self-confidence as more influential in academic achievement than IQ. Other studies have shown that self-esteem even impacts your income levels.

Unfortunately, several studies show that overall Americans do not enjoy high self-esteem. Two out of three Americans suffer from varying levels of low self-esteem. In one survey of the development of children, of those entering third grade, 80% of them said they felt good about themselves. By fifth grade, the number had dropped to 20%. By their senior year of high school, only 5% of kids said that they felt good about themselves. To some degree, we all suffer from low self-esteem in different areas of our lives. It could be in a swimsuit, or in regards to our IQ, our looks, or our education. The short list of symptoms attributable to low self-esteem include: inability to trust others, aggressive behavior, gossiping, resentment of others, criticism of others, inability to take criticism, defensiveness, procrastination, and inability to accept compliments.

There are two reasons why our culture suffers so greatly from low self-worth. First, media and advertising show us how we *should* look, what we *should* drive, what we *should* smell like, etc.. The message is that we are never good enough with what we are. We see images of grooming, fashion, popularity, and attractiveness that we can never measure up to. These images constantly remind us that we need to improve ourselves and that there is always someone better than us. Secondly, we judge and measure ourselves not against our own norm, but against some other individual's norm. But because we think, believe, and assume that we should measure up to some other person's norm, we feel miserable and second rate, concluding that there is something wrong with us.

How does self-esteem affect persuasion? Elaine Walster Hatfield conducted a study that gives us one example. She found that a woman who is introduced to a man is more likely to find him appealing if her self-esteem has been temporarily injured than a woman whose self-esteem has not been impaired. This explains the good old rebound effect whereby a person quickly finds herself engaged in a new relationship right after one ends, usually with someone whom she wouldn't date under "normal circumstances."

Of all the human needs, esteem is definitely among the very top on the list. When you're in a persuasive situation and not sure what to do, helping your prospect feel important is a fail-proof place to start.

### **Pride**

"When nobody around you seems to measure up, it's time to check your yardstick." – Bill Lemley

Pride is the exact opposite of self-esteem. Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, but only out of having more of it than then someone else. It is the comparison that makes you proud, the pleasure of being above the rest. Contradictory to popular opinion, there is no lasting joy or fulfillment in pride. Peace and satisfaction will never come because the looming possibility of something or someone bigger and better coming along will always exist. One relishing their position at the top of the hill can never rest easy for too long. Pride is a false sense of accomplishment because it is not based on true or pure motives. As C.S. Lewis observed, "*Pride is a spiritual cancer; it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense.*"

Pride is having security in external things like possessions, degrees, influence, or position. People who have too much pride constantly compare themselves to others in an attempt to help them feel better about themselves. They love to gossip and pull others down. They are always concerned about *who* is right instead of *what* is right. They have a scarcity mentality that there never is enough for everyone. Stephen R. Covey wrote, "An abundance mentality springs from an internal security, not from external rankings, comparisons, opinions, possessions, or associations."

Self-esteem and pride are actually opposites, even though the terms are commonly thought to be interchangeable. Pride is usually a red flag for *low* self-esteem because people use it to cover their weaknesses and insecurities. People afflicted with pride usually have a low opinion of themselves. They often will bully or berate others to feel and manifest their own self-importance. With esteem, there is an internal security about who you are. You are fine with what you are and what you are doing. You like to help others and are not concerned with what people think. You like to bring others up and enjoy an abundance mentality.

Notice the comparisons between the two attributes below:

Pride

- External security
- Scarcity mentality
- Comparisons to others
- Value in possessions or positions
- Tears others down
- Concerned with who is right

Self-Esteem

- Internal security
- Abundance mentality
- No need to compare
- Value in self
- Lifts others up
- Concerned with what is right