

A Three Factor Operational Definition of SUCCESS PSYCHOLOGY

Our self-concept (and so tangentially our psychology of achievement) is very dependent on factors within our environment. It is formed as a result of our years of experiences (especially the early ones). It could be said that one's eyes and ears record the messages they receive from others, especially those most important to them. Because one's unconscious accepts all words and emotions as facts, no matter how legitimate or based in reality, one's psychological orientation to trying and achieving is being continuously constructed and reconstructed by what is encountered in the mirror of others verbal and non-verbal messages

Research into academic achievement produces three factors that strongly correlate with achievement, a success-orientation and self-esteem. Each of the factors/components outlined below is separate but interrelated. In the attempt to better understand and/or promote success in oneself and others, addressing these three components can help clarify our efforts.

INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL: This factor is defined by one's sense of internal causality and orientation toward personal responsibility. The more internal LOC the more we feel like our destiny is in our own hands. It could be contrasted to seeing life as a series of accidents or "things that happen to us."

It comes from: recognizing that our actions result in consequences, seeing cause and effect relationships related to success and failure, being given freedom, power and control with an expectation of using them responsibly.

SENSE OF BELONGING AND ACCEPTANCE: This factor reflects how much one feels wanted and a part of the group, and how much one likes and accepts themselves as they are. The more one feels accepted and acceptable, the more they are able to express themselves, act authentically and be fully present to others. Self-acceptance could be contrasted to self-aggrandizement or a compulsion to please.

It comes from: accepting messages from VIPs (including self-talk), practicing a positive approach and attitude, experiencing emotional safety, and feeling part of a community.

GROWTH Orientation vs. FIXED ABILITY Orientation: This factor relates to one's thinking related to the root of their competence. Everyone needs to feel competent and confident, but if it is perceived as coming from "how good we are" at a task (related to innate ability), then we tend to give up quickly and protect our egos in the face of possible failure. If our confidence is rooted in our experience in persisting to find solutions, enjoying the learning process, and approaching a task with the desire to overcome challenges, we will tend to grow and achieve more. In this orientation intelligence is something that can be improved not innate. This dynamic is at the root of a person being basically either success-seeking or failure-avoiding.

It comes from: having learning goals vs. performance goals, getting praise or criticism for our efforts and not for our abilities, taking learning risks that pay off, and VIPs communicating an incremental vs. fixed view of intelligence and ability.