

## **TCM Chapter 7 (partial) Promoting a Success Psychology Versus a Failure Psychology in Our Students**

By John Shindler

### **In this Chapter:**

- Exploring what Constitutes a Psychology of Success
- Promoting a Mastery vs. Helpless Orientation
- Promoting Acceptance and Belonging in the Classroom
- Promoting Internal Locus of Control in the Students
- Indicators That We Are Making Progress Fostering a Psychology of Success

### **To begin this chapter, reflect on the following questions:**

- *Why do some students feel confident academically and persist in the face of challenge?*
- *Why do some students experience high self-esteem?*
- *Why do some students love to learn and reflect a high level of motivation without the need for extrinsic reinforcement?*
- *Why do some classes have a sense of movement to them?*

First, there ARE answers to these questions, and second, interestingly the answers are related. At the heart of what creates intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, confidence to take risks, a sense of social responsibility and a love of learning is what could be termed a “psychology of success.” This chapter outlines a theoretical framework and a set of practical guidelines for promoting a psychology of success within the classroom. It also illustrates what teachers, parents, and coaches should avoid doing—behavior which has been shown to promote what could be termed a “psychology of failure.”

At this point, many readers may be thinking to themselves, “Sure, it would be great to promote a better climate and a success psychology in my class(es), but I have a lot to accomplish each day. I really don’t have the time to put much attention into this area.” This is an understandable concern. However, the development of a success or failure psychology is not so much about adding things to class to make students feel better about themselves, it is about understanding the effects of our teaching choices. *Each action on our part is either promoting or undermining our students’ psychology of success.* As we progress in the chapter and further operationalize this concept, why this is and which actions will produce which effects should become more apparent.

### **Comparing Two Cases**

To better understand the practical implications of the conceptual idea of success psychology, it may be useful to examine the two hypothetical classrooms below.

#### **Class A**

In this class, students feel little sense of belonging. They view their class as a place to get their work done, to fill a day or a period. They have friends, but have few if any meaningful bonds with the other students. Students experience some good days and some bad days, but feel they have little control over the events that contribute to each. They try to do what they are told and avoid getting into trouble when they feel a need to break a rule here or there. Some students feel pretty smart and try to maintain that standing, while other students see themselves as not as smart and get relatively

comfortable with getting lower grades and giving up on the more difficult tasks. As the year goes on, these patterns become entrenched with modest variation. By the end of the year, the same subgroup of students show low motivation, the same subgroup are getting in trouble, the same subgroup are getting academic recognition, and the class has settled into well-established social pattern defined by a series of cliques and a well entrenched hierarchy.

### **Class B**

In this class, students feel accepted and as though they are part of community. They feel free to take risks and express themselves. They feel a responsibility for their learning and to the group as a whole and take the other members' needs and feelings into account before they act. Most of the time they are very involved in their work, are seldom bored, and become increasingly confident at persisting in the face of difficult work. The more they learn the more they grow in a sense of personal empowerment. They grow to love learning for its own sake and have little need for prizes, rewards or incentives. Students in this class do not see themselves in competition with other students, or feel a need to be better than others, so they find it easy to be encouraging to one another. They see learning as a journey and encourage their classmates' success along with their own.

**Chapter Reflection 7-a:** Have you observed or been a part of classrooms such as the two described here? Have you thought about what made them so different? In your opinion, does a climate like that described in Class B develop by chance?

As you compare these two class climates, which one would you choose if you were a student? Classes such as Class B do not come about by accident. They require a great deal of intention, awareness, and knowledge of what it takes to get there. As a result they are rare. Classes such Class A can come about by "accident" or more accurately, the unexamined actions of the teacher. Unfortunately these types of classrooms are not at all rare. It may seem obvious, but it is useful to reflect on the fact that in both cases the teacher was *trying* to do something. Moreover it is likely that teachers who produce each of these types of classes have good intentions for what they wanted to accomplish. So given the great disparity between these two classes, what can we conclude?

There is in fact no "real world" when it comes to school. Classrooms are what we make them (Huberman & Middlebrooks, 2000). We, as the teacher, make the weather – and that weather is the psychological climate in the class (Ginott, 1972). For a teacher to succeed in creating a climate that more closely resembles Class B rather than A, you must accept a few principles. First, the climate in the class is manufactured by you, the teacher. Second, not all sources of motivation are going to get the same results. Third, intrinsically motivated students did not get that way by accident. They have been systematically encouraged to become so.

### **SUCCESS PSYCHOLOGY DEFINED BY THREE FACTORS**

As we examine the idea of a success psychology we can see that there are a whole series of ideas that are rooted in a common phenomenon. The concepts of self-esteem, achievement psychology, intrinsic motivation, movement psychology, and success psychology are all characterized by the same fundamental components. A substantial amount of research indicates that all these orientations lead to academic success (Auer,

1992; Benham, 1993; Klein & Keller, 1990; Joseph, 1992; Rennie, 1991; Solley & Stagner, 1956). When we pare the research down to its fundamental components we see that there are three factors that make up a psychological orientation toward success. They are the following:

1. Mastery-orientation versus helpless orientation as related to one's self-efficacy
2. Degree of a sense of belonging and acceptance
3. Internal versus external locus of control

In the following sections, each of these areas is briefly described and is followed by a table of practical teaching strategies. The strategies are categorized as either promoting or undermining these factors in the classroom.

### **PROMOTING A MASTERY-ORIENTATION VERSUS HELPLESS-ORIENTATION AS RELATED TO ONE'S SENSE OF SELF-EFFICACY**

Carol Dweck and her colleagues in their research over the course of 30 years have developed a very useful paradigm with which to examine academic self-concept, achievement, and motivation. They have demonstrated in a series of studies with students (Dweck, 1999) that future success is not as much the result of talent or current level of achievement as it is the result of the orientation/cognitive strategy one uses to approach learning tasks. Research and common sense support the notion that the level of one's sense of competence (or self-efficacy) will relate to the level of self-esteem (Davis, 1992). We of course want our students to experience healthy levels of self esteem. However, the different cognitive strategies that one might choose to use to attain that sense of competence will not accomplish the same result, especially in the long term. Dweck offers a useful lens for distinguishing two contrasting cognitive strategies for feeling competent and how over time they have dramatically different results.

#### **Two Views of Intelligence**

Dweck consistently discovered that as she examined students in various classrooms, they seemed to have one of two perceptions relating to the nature of their ability and intelligence. Most classes were comprised of a balanced portion of students from each orientation. One group of students had what Dweck termed a "fixed-ability" theory of intelligence and ability. These students viewed their ability as something set and stable. They viewed themselves as smart or not smart. They either believed they were good at this or that, or were not. As a result of this view of the nature of their intelligence, these students developed a pattern of behavior defined by trying to look smart and avoid looking dumb. Their highest desire was to accomplish tasks successfully and prove their ability to others. They held the belief that if they were successful, that would demonstrate that they were smart or talented. So they sought tasks that would make them look good to others and maintain their conception of themselves as competent, and they avoided tasks they viewed as difficult.

**Chapter Reflection 7-b:** As you reflect on the cognitive orientation described above, do you recognize this pattern in yourself? Most of us do. Can you think of a situation in which you wanted to succeed so that you would not feel "dumb"? Why did you fear failure in this situation? Why does failure feel so painful?

The other group of students possessed what Dweck referred to as an “incremental progress theory” of intelligence and ability. This group viewed intelligence as something that was developed over time rather than being a fixed quantity. These students perceived learning and the attainment of knowledge or skill as coming from investment in the process of learning. Every opportunity to take part in learning was an opportunity to get better. They approached the task not by asking what the outcome would say about them and their ability, but what they could take away from the venture.

### **Two Corresponding Reactions to Failure**

In one study, Dweck (1999) assessed the reactions of students in two groups to a failure condition. In the study, the students were given seven math problems that were relatively simple and three that were un-solvable. When confronted by failure, students with the fixed ability orientation dealt with it by assuming that there was nothing they could do further. They became frustrated and gave up quickly. Their assumption was that their ability was not enough to overcome the difficulty of the tasks and so they felt helpless. After experiencing this failure, they quickly began to demean their ability/intelligence and reported that they perceived the whole of their effort as unsuccessful, even though this was in fact a disproportionate assessment. Dweck (1999) labeled this conditioned reaction the “Helpless Pattern.”

The group of students who reported an incremental/process orientation when faced with a failure condition immediately began to consider the various ways that they could approach the task differently. They persisted in the task until they were told they had to stop. Throughout the task they used self-instruction and positive self-talk to motivate and guide themselves through the challenging task. When the task was over they did not view any part of it as a failure but felt that they had merely run out of time. Dweck (1999) labeled this conditioned reaction the “Mastery-Oriented Pattern.”

**Chapter Reflection 7-c:** Reflect on a situation in which you experienced failure. How would you characterize your reaction: mastery orientation or helpless orientation? Do you see these patterns in your students, players, children, and friends? In your estimation, what effect would each approach have if employed consistently over a lifetime?

All students need to feel a sense of self-efficacy and confidence, but what can appear to be confidence can often be a fragile belief that in a particular situation one is better than those around them or “good enough” for what they are asked to do. If competence and confidence are 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 failure. Over the course of an academic career this leads to a pattern defined by a *fear of failure* and a great deal of anxiety associated with the adequacy of one’s performance. As we examine the concept of a psychology of success, it will become increasingly evident that there is a strong relationship between a helpless pattern orientation and what we call a psychology of failure.

It is common for many of us to realize that we’ve spent most of our academic life holding a fixed view of ability and as a result have been driven by a fear of failure. Some of us may even glorify the motivation that fear provided, and the high test scores that it appeared to produce. Let me offer a few thoughts. First, students with a fixed ability orientation to ability tended to score increasingly lower than their incremental progress

orientation pattern peers. This was especially true over time. The achievement gap between the two groups was shown to grow over the years. Second, while fear of failure (and its cognitive sibling, “pain-based logic”) may provide some motivation, it cannot lead to a success psychology, and in fact will lead in the opposite direction. The sooner that one lets go of one’s pain-based logic patterns the better. Third, many of us need to accept that our parents and their parents probably reared us to have at least some fear of failure. However, just because we may have turned out fine in the end does not mean it was a strategy that we want to pass on to those we care for. It is wise to learn different, healthier ways to motivate our students.

**Chapter Reflection 7-d:** Did your parents try to motivate you with fear of failure by the use of shame, embarrassment, guilt, or comparison? How do you view the use of these strategies today?

### Promoting Growth in the Classroom

While students come to us with a pattern of either mastery or fixed ability that can be already deeply conditioned, it is important that we recognize that what we do in the classroom will have a profound effect on which is developed. What we choose to do in our classrooms will either promote one orientation or the other. We can foster mastery patterns and help students break helpless patterns, or create a climate where fear of failure is the pervading motivational force. In fact, we can assume that most of the hundreds of teaching choices that we make each day are either contributing to one or the other.

Figure 7.1 offers a list of practical strategies to promote a growth in your students as well as the class as a whole. It is juxtaposed with practices to be avoided that would have the effect of promoting a helpless-pattern.

**Figure 7.1: Teaching Practices that Promote either a Growth-Orientation or Fixed-Ability Orientation in Students**

Promoting a Growth Pattern	Promoting a Fixed Ability Pattern
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give learning goals (i.e., goals related to how much one is going to learn).</li> <li>• Focus on means/processes.</li> <li>• Focus on effort/application.</li> <li>• Challenge stereotypical beliefs about various groups’ typical ability/intelligence.</li> <li>• Give operational feedback and positive recognitions (see Chapter 6) related to process aspects of the task.</li> <li>• Assess <i>what is most important</i>. What you assess on a daily basis defines your classroom concept of “success.” Complete the following sentence, “If I could only assess _____, I would have a better</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give performance goals (i.e., goals related to measuring the ability of the participant).</li> <li>• Focus on ends/products.</li> <li>• Focus on ability/intelligence.</li> <li>• Reinforce stereotypical beliefs about various groups’ typical ability/intelligence.</li> <li>• Give personal praise (see Chapter 6) and feedback related to how good at the task or intelligent one is.</li> <li>• Assess only what you can count. Rely on worksheets and tests, and make sure students understand that the points are what is important.</li> </ul>

class.” Consider a way to assess the idea that you put in the blank (see Chapters 11 & 20)

- Encourage students to make mistakes and take risks. Project trust while challenging students to stretch beyond their comfort zones.
- Encourage students to avoid mistakes. Model mistakes as deserving of self-criticism. Project a lack of trust in their resources.
- Have high expectations for all your students and catch them being good. Do not accept low self-estimations, especially in the areas of effort and process. All students are capable of total effort, and total effort in the process leads to good outcomes.
- Use language in your feedback that implies that some students are just more talented than others. Speak in terms of students being good at this or that. Encourage students to stick to what they currently believe they are good at and avoid that at which they are weak.
- Help the students stay in the moment as they work. Don’t encourage them to interpret their past as failure but only as opportunities to learn and grow, and help them not to define themselves by past failures or successes. Help them focus on what they are doing and enjoy the process and allow the outcomes to work out, reducing stress and promoting creativity.
- Remind students constantly about what and how they have failed in the past and how they need to worry about the future. Speak only about the end result of the work as being important.

**Chapter Reflection 7-e:** Observe a classroom or reflect on one that you have witnessed recently. Would you classify the practices in the class as promoting more of a mastery or helpless pattern? Would you suppose that the teacher was consciously aware and intentional about doing one or the other?

### **PROMOTING A SENSE OF BELONGING AND ACCEPTANCE WITHIN THE CLASS**

This second factor within the framework for a “success psychology” reflects the degree to which any member feels wanted and part of the group, and the degree to which one likes and accepts one’s self as one is. The more one feels accepted and acceptable, the more one will be able to express one’s self, act authentically and be fully present to others (Osterman, 2000). Self-acceptance is in contrast to self-aggrandizement or a compulsion to please. A sense of belonging and acceptance is essential to a young person’s mental health and ability to trust and take risks (Inderbitzen & Clark, 1986). It comes in part from accepting messages from VIPs (including self-talk), practicing a positive approach and attitude, experiencing emotional safety, and feeling a part of a community.

Research has shown a relationship between a sense of belonging with acceptance and self-esteem (Davis & Peck, 1992; Katz, 1993; Osterman, 2000; Washiawotok, 1993). Moreover, building a sense of classroom belonging and the sense of self- and peer-acceptance has been shown to promote higher achievement (Dembrowsky, 1990; Rhoades & McCabe, 1992; Washiawotok, 1993). For those of us who endeavor to employ “referent or attractive power” as a significant means to motivate students and gain

respect, the notion of creating a class with a high level of belonging is immediately appealing. Much of the climate created in any classroom in this area will come from the affect of the teacher. If we project an accepting affect to students and express a value for bonding as a class, the effect is liberating and needs-satisfying. And in our efforts to have a transformational impact on our students, our emotional investment in this area can have a profound result. How we feel about our students will be critical and what our students believe about the degree to which we care about them and the quality of the relationships in the class will define their sense of acceptance and belonging to a great degree (Osterman, 2000). Also, what we do will have an equally profound effect. It may seem counterintuitive at first, but we need to recognize that we can love and care about our students and at the same time do a great deal to undermine their sense of acceptance and belonging. In other words, it is possible to have good intentions and great affection while unconsciously using strategies that create dependence, a sense of competitiveness, and/or mistrust within the class.

**Chapter Reflection 7-f:** Have you observed a class in which the teacher expressed a lot of caring and affection for the students, yet the result was a class in which students never learned to trust one another and gained little self-confidence? Conversely, have you observed a class in which the teacher took a very business-like approach but created a high degree of community and group cohesion? How would you explain what you observed?

Some of us come to this profession by value or personality (i.e., being more introverted or logical minded, or both), not predisposed to being highly emotional, warm, or as some might call it “touchy feely.” The common perception is that while we may be good teachers, and effectively manage our classes by relying on *expert* and *legitimate power*, we will be at a great disadvantage when it comes to creating a climate of acceptance and belonging. This is simply not true. While it is true that if a teacher projects indifference to students, effectiveness will suffer and will meet few students’ needs to feel liked and accepted, it is also true that acceptance and care can be shown subtly and demonstrated in countless ways without being displayed dramatically. It might be more gradual, but it is possible. As we have observed, any teacher’s feelings, values and thinking will come out in their actions eventually. If we like our students they will know it, and if we don’t they will know that as well. However -- just as important for the more reserved teacher -- it is useful to keep in mind that creating a class defined by acceptance and belonging will be more a function of what one chooses to do (combined with what to choose to refrain from doing), rather than of temperament or personality.

### **Promoting a Sense of Acceptance and Belonging in the Class**

Figure 7.2 outlines a set of instructional practices that will either promote or undermine the sense of acceptance and belonging for individual students and/or entire classes.

**Figure 7.2: Instructional Practices that will Either Promote or Undermine the Sense of Acceptance and Belonging for Individuals and Groups of Students**

To Promote a Sense of Acceptance and Belonging	To Undermine a Sense of Acceptance and Belonging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Demonstrate unconditional positive regard</i> for all students. Eliminate any perception that your liking and/or acceptance is related to the students' performance or behavior. Send a clear message "I like and accept you 100% the way you are." That means no matter what grade you get, what level of effort you display, or what kinds of positive or negative consequences that you receive (and likewise, the fact that I like and accept you will not help you to avoid responsibility, or imply that I am not going to be honest or critical).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combine your liking or disliking of students and your treatment of them. Make sure that they know that the students that you like will receive benefits, so it is worthwhile to try to get on your good side. Use praise and disappointment to reinforce this relationship.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Use cooperative structures</i> where interdependence and inter-reliance are unavoidable. Cooperative learning activities are very useful for promoting collaborative skills (see Chapter 12)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolate students by using exclusively independent work. Frown on students working together.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Use assigned roles</i>, assigned grouping, and rotation of grouping in your cooperative work. Students need to work with and rely on each member of the class, not just their friends.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow students to develop cliques and sub-cultures. Let them choose their own groups or partners early and consistently.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not accept "put downs" in any form, especially negative self-talk. Demand and model <i>positive interactions and respect</i> 100% of the time. Create a culture of respect and listening (see Chapter 5)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do nothing or give only lip service to students who put down and disrespect others. Accept that "kids will be kids" and turn the other way when you see acts of oppression and abuse. Assume that the level of attention will never be perfect. Allow students to be inattentive to one another.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep all assessment private. Avoid comparisons of any kind between students at all cost. Help students refrain from putting their performance in a relative context. Help them instead work to their own standards and the standards of excellence as defined by the assignment. Rubrics help here.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make students' grades public and make public comparisons among students' work. Note: Grading on a curve may be the single most destructive practice to the sense of acceptance and belonging in a class. Use student-to-student comparison to "motivate" both high- and low-achieving students.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A limited use of light competition for inconsequential outcomes. (see Chapter 18 for ideas for using competition in a healthier manner).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forcing students to compete for "real" rewards (i.e., your love, grades, status, privileges, or any tangible rewards).</li> </ul>

- *Appreciate differences* and recognize the unique gifts of each of your students. Make a deliberate effort to let students share their stories, their talents, and their work. For younger grades, “who I am” poems can be one of many valuable tools for doing this.
- *Be real*, approachable, caring and a validator of feelings. Take the opportunity to share who you are.
- Find ways to *make the students the teacher* (e.g., peer tutoring, writing partners, leadership of daily activities, jigsaw instruction, etc.). Let the students know it is “their class.” Get out of their way as often as possible and let them own the class.
- Be deliberate about making sure all students are allowed to contribute. Find conspicuous and systematic ways to ensure that students are called on randomly, and all students have an equal opportunity to volunteer.
- Building a sense of tribe and community within the class (see Chapter 15)
- Utilize a sound and collectively developed social contract (see Chapter 8). Create a sense of clear cause-and-effect between actions and consequences. Help students trust you by being consistent, fair and clear.
- Show your preference for a few of your favorite students. Point out the ways that these few students are praiseworthy. Avoid letting students share their outside school life in class.
- Express a disinterested affect, and let students know that you are there because it is simply your job to be. Or pretend to be friendly and present, but never actually make the effort to appreciate your students.
- Keep command of your class and treat the students as though they are too immature and irresponsible to contribute to the class. Make sure they understand that it is “your class” not theirs.
- Call on students who have been reliable responders in the past. Avoid the others unless you feel the need to call on them to shame them for not paying attention or doing their reading.
- Allow the class to become an “accidental culture” defined by cliques, winners and losers, and emotional self-protection.
- Be a 3- or 4-Approach teacher. Allow the class to be defined by a crime-and-punishment or a free-for-all mentality. Use a lot of anger and reactivity to keep the students “on their toes.”

**Chapter Reflection 7-g:** Choose one particular class in which you were a student to examine. As you read each list above, which set of practices better characterized this class? Did you feel the effect on your sense of acceptance and belonging at the time as a result of the practices that were used in the class?

## PROMOTING AN INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL WITHIN OUR STUDENTS

This third factor in the definition of success psychology is defined by one’s sense of internal causality and orientation toward personal responsibility. The more internal locus of control (LOC) we possess, the more we feel that our destiny is in our own hands. It could be contrasted to an external LOC or an orientation that views *cause* as an external

factor and one in which life “happens to us.” An internal locus of control can be defined as the belief that one is the author of his or her own fate. An internal locus of control comes from having a causal understanding of behavior and effect. It is learned from freely making choices and taking responsibility for the consequences of those choices. Through responsible action and accountability for those actions, the young person learns to attribute the cause of success or failure internally. Consequently, he or she feels a sense of power and responsibility and is able learn from his or her life experience. Another term we could use for internal locus of control is “personal empowerment.”

**Chapter Reflection 7-h:** If you had super powers and could guarantee that a young person would grow up with a sense of either high intelligence or high responsibility, but only average at the other, which would you choose? Why? Are you thankful that one does not have to make this choice?

Research has drawn a strong relationship between levels of student self-esteem and sense of an internal locus of control (Fitch, 1970; Hagborg, 1996; Klein & Keller, 1990; Sheridan, 1991). Moreover, studies have shown repeatedly that students with higher degrees of internal locus of control demonstrate higher levels of achievement (Auer, 1992; Bar-Tal & Bar-Zohar, 1977, Tanksley, 1993; Wang & Stiles, 1976). In fact, having high levels of internal LOC have been shown to be an even more significant predictor of achievement than intelligence or socioeconomic status (Haborg, 1996). In addition, higher internal LOC has also been shown to mediate the stress response (Meaney 2001).

### Promoting an Internal Locus of Control in the Classroom

Instructional behaviors that promote an internal locus of control and empowerment are rooted in developing a clear understanding of cause and effect. Students should learn that their achievement is directly related to their behavior, especially their level of effort. A requisite to seeing this relationship is providing students with choices and expecting accountability for those choices. Figure 7.3 outlines instructional practices that can either promote or undermine a student’s internal locus of control.

**Figure 7.3: Instructional Practices that Either Promote or Undermine a Student’s Internal Locus of Control**

Practices that Promote an Internal LOC	Practices that Undermine an Internal LOC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give students choices over that which affects them. Promote the social frame related to freedom and responsibility by being conspicuous and deliberate about giving more choices and freedom to the members and the class as a whole when they demonstrate the ability to use that freedom responsibly. Increase the opportunities for the students to make choices to the extent practically possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a dictator in the class. Avoid giving students choices of any kind. Assume that students are too immature to make choices about that which will affect them. Be unclear and reactive about why freedoms are given or taken away. In general keep the class about “you.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use clear, concrete, and specific</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep your grading criteria vague and</li> </ul>

performance objectives and assessment targets. Make the learning targets “clear and standing still.” Incorporate well-designed, concrete specific rubrics whenever possible.

- Find opportunities to assess the process and other student-owned behaviors when possible. Students do not often have control over their ability, but they do have 100% control over the degree to which they apply themselves. When we assess the process, we manufacture a success psychology (see also Chapters 11 & 20).
  - Give students voice and ownership of the classroom social contract, rules, expectations and consequences. Ensure that consequences are clear and related. If students then violate the social contract or break rules, follow through with consistently applied automatic and related consequences (while avoiding punishments) (see Chapters 8 & 9).
  - Create an environment free of the need for excuses. Begin by never asking for them (see also Chapter 10).
  - Teach problem-solving skills, and cultivate an expectancy that in the class, students take responsibility for working through problems individually or in groups. Teach conflict resolution strategies, and help students see that they do not always need to come to an adult to resolve their conflicts (see also Chapter 13 related to conflict resolution).
  - Use personalized behavioral contracts and reality therapy with students who need an education in cause-and-effect and self-responsibility (see Chapter 14).
  - Promote conscious and responsible thinking and behavior. Help students raise their personal level of awareness of both the consequences of their actions and the kinds of thinking that they are doing that lead them to problems and unhappiness. Begin by raising your own level of
- mysterious. Let the students know that you plan to use subjective criteria in which you “know good work when you see it,” and make them have to suppose what you are looking for.
- Only assess the finished product, never the process. Directly and indirectly find ways to equate grades with innate ability. Rely mostly on tests and worksheets.
  - Autocratically lay down the rules to the class and then be very random and inconsistent in your implementation of them. Use a subjective and arbitrary rationale for when and why you give consequences and punishments. Assume that a pain-based logic will do the trick when you need to shape up the class. Let students know that when they make you upset you will punish them (refer to the 3- and 4-Approach teachers in Chapter 2).
  - Send the message that a good excuse is useful in gaining a desirable outcome. When students come in late or do not have their work ask them publicly something to the effect, “So where is your homework, and this better be good.”
  - Assume that students will get into conflict by nature. When it happens, get angry about it because it is inconvenient to you, and step in to solve the problem by first giving them some shame for the trouble they caused and then take over and act as judge and referee in arriving at a solution. Keep students dependent on you as the decision maker.
  - Spend the whole year punishing and shaming the students in your class who chronically misbehave. Use such phrases as “When are you ever going to learn?”
  - Stay reactive, unconscious and oblivious to your own thinking and that of your students. Use a lot of lectures, guilt, and chronicling of their failure to send a message to students that they need to shape up. React to the students’ dramas and conditioning. Let your unconscious and

awareness of what triggers negative emotions within you.

reactive behavior promote more of the same on the part of the students, ensuring that everyone feels trapped by the various patterns of negativity, problem-based dramas, and pain-cycles that exist in the class.

**Chapter Reflection 7-i:** It has been said that the more control you give up the more that you get in the end. Do you agree with this statement? For those teachers who resist shifting encouraging the internal locus of control of their students, what do you think they feel that they will lose? Do you agree?

### **The Effect of Instruction**

The methods of instruction that we use will have a significant impact on our ability to be successful developing this area of the students' psychology. Providing engaging instructional activities and frequent opportunities for students to synthesize and construct their own knowledge will increase our ability to achieve a success psychology environment in your class. Chapter 11 will offer pedagogical strategies that will complement your efforts to promote a climate of success in your class.

### **The Relationships among the Three Factors**

As you have examined each of the three areas, you will have discovered that efforts made in any one of the three areas will help to encourage the other two. Each of the areas complements the others. In fact, they come from essentially the same source and are all food for our basic human essence. A mastery-orientation will lead to more self-acceptance and the desire for others to succeed as well. And as one becomes more self-accepting and realizes their place within the group the more empowered they will ultimately become. As students become accustomed to a climate that is characterized by these qualities, they recognize that they have no interest in going back to a classroom where they are absent.

Recall our exploration of motivation in the previous chapter. It should become apparent that one's internal psychology and motivational disposition are related. In other words, when we take a closer look, we recognize that the more students possess a psychology of success the more likely they will be to experience intrinsic forms of motivation. And if we seek to promote the ingredients of a success psychology within the class we will inherently be encouraging intrinsic motivation. Contrastingly, if we have created students who have adopted a failure psychology, we will see a corresponding lack of motivation on their part. So when we look out at that class of students who are apathetic and unmotivated by anything except bribes and punishments, we can safely bet that what they have experienced to this point has manufactured this psychology of failure in them. However, when we observe a class in which the students demonstrate self-responsibility, intrinsic motivation, and a feeling of being connected, we know that their past teachers have had a lot to do with this.

### **Indicators that We are Making Progress toward the Creation of a Success Psychology within Our Class**

In the process of making an intentional effort toward promoting a success psychology in class, we will notice some signs that changes are occurring. While it may be somewhat difficult to see a psychological orientation changing directly, we can see evidence of the

transformation in behavioral indicators. Expect most change toward a success psychology to take time, but since these changes are rooted at such a deep cognitive level and provide a fundamental source of needs satisfaction, they tend to have a lasting impact. Some of the most revealing indicators that this change is occurring will include:

- **Increased healthy risk taking.** This is a result of the students' feeling supported by the group and releasing the fear of failure. When students do not fear that making mistakes will lead to ridicule by others or self-condemnation or shame, they feel free to take chances and think and behave more creatively.
- **Increased expressiveness and participation.** Again, expressiveness is the result of the students' feeling encouraged by the group and little if any concern for making mistakes or looking bad. More students will raise their hands and contribute as a result.

**Chapter Reflection 7-j:** Reflect on situations in which you are not afraid to take risks and/or express yourself creatively, and then contrast those in which you feel timid and repressed. Do the ingredients of the psychology of success offer insight into why you feel so different in these situations?

- **Higher levels of effort.** This is a result of the students' internalizing the cause-and-effect relationship between effort and success. Students learn that they get much more out of their learning when they put more into it. They grow in their appreciation of the fruits of their labor as well as the joys of self-discipline.
- **Less blaming and externalizing.** This results from the fact that students develop an increasing sense of personal responsibility and more self-acceptance. They begin to recognize that blaming is antithetical to their growth in self-responsibility and self-awareness.
- **More self-responsibility and self-motivation.** As students realize that school is an opportunity, not simply a chore, and feel a greater sense of empowerment, they begin to pursue learning for its own sake and not as a result of being coerced or bribed.
- **Less use of vocabulary such as "I can't do this" and more positive internal talk.** This comes from a greater sense of personal empowerment and the reduction of the helpless pattern thinking, as well as the modeling and support of other classmates who are growing in the same ways.
- **Little or no indication of boredom.** Boredom comes from minds that are not in the moment. As students learn the joy of investing in the task they allow themselves to be in the moment to a greater degree. Add to that a decrease in the need to use all the mental energy that is required to be self-protective as a result of being in a threatening environment, and you have a more peaceful mind. A peaceful mind does not need to be obsessing about the past, or stressing about the future. It can be present and aware. And a mind in the moment is more productive, creative and less easily bored. Hunter & Csikszentmihalyi (2003) found that students reported being 31% more engaged when they were involved in an activity defined by personally satisfying activities.

- **Intrinsic motivation and a love of learning.** As the students become accustomed to a natural state of learning, free of the fear of failure, free of social repression, and fundamentally empowering, they take on their natural state and feel the satisfaction of their intrinsic drives.
- **A feeling the class is going somewhere.** There will be an increasing sense in the room that the participants feel that the activities possess a natural movement or “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). As we discussed in the previous chapter, this comes from the experience of goal attainment as a result of being part of meaningful and needs satisfying activities.

**Chapter Reflection 7- k:** Recall the question from the previous chapter where you were asked to reflect on a life situation in which you felt that things were going somewhere. Was it characterized by the three factors described in this chapter?

### **Research on the Effects of Applying a Success Psychology Framework**

The pedagogical and motivational protocol for promoting “success psychology” outlined in this chapter was used as a treatment variable in a study by Ayling (2009). Eighty-nine adolescent study participants were given pre- and post-assessments of locus of control (LOC) and self-esteem. Initial rating of LOC and self-esteem were low in the majority of cases. The subjects were taught by teachers in a school that adopted the use of the protocol for creating “success psychology” (Shindler, 2003). Within four months, 90% of the subjects had shown a significant increase in both self-esteem and LOC. The results of this study support the anecdotal evidence that had been gathered previously, indicating that classroom practices can produce significant and long lasting effects in students’ locus of control and self-esteem.

### **CONCLUSION**

Using the lens of success psychology can provide a useful tool for examining the quality of almost any human context. In the classroom, it offers a practical assessment device for checking on the health and functionality of our students. Moreover, it can provide a useful window internally into our own emotional health at any point in time. If we are not feeling that our work and relationships are nurturing a success psychology within us, we will not be as effective or content as we might. So we could make it a regular practice to ask ourselves how we are doing cultivating each of these three areas both in and out of the classroom. When something is not going well, it can usually be traced back to one or more of the areas. If we as teachers do not feel empowered, loved, or as though we are learning, it will be difficult to be as effective as we could be in promoting those things in our students.

At the heart of the “transformative classroom” is a psychology of success. When we empower students to find their true nature and inner sources of inspiration, we encourage within our class the natural condition that exists beneath the dysfunction and fear among any group of students. As we recognize, the transformative path is defined by a countless number of small practical choices. Operationalizing the concept of success psychology provides a set of guiding principles for making those choices. The remaining chapters will offer additional ideas for creating a healthy and productive classroom that contributes to a psychology of success within the class.

### Journal Reflections

1. Observe a classroom for a period of time. Note how many of the teacher's choices you would judge to promote a success psychology and how many would you judge to promote a failure psychology. Note the reaction of the students. What conclusions did you draw from your observations?
2. Reflect on your personal conditioning as it relates to an orientation toward success or failure. What in your past experience do you feel is encouraging a success psychology within you? What is your current inclination to promote such an orientation in your students (or potential students)? What factors or experience do you feel may be limiting you?

### Chapter Group Activity

Divide the class into six groups. Each group will take a separate topic and create a separate list. One group will take the topic "things that teachers do to promote an internal LOC," another group the topic "things that teachers do to undermine a students internal LOC." In the same way, divide into pros and cons the ideas "acceptance and belonging," and "mastery orientation," so that all six groups have one side or other of a topic. Have each group brainstorm as many items as they can and then share them with the whole class. It can be useful to provide each group with an overhead transparency and a pen. Alternately, this could be done in a graffiti cooperative model where each group gets one sheet of paper labeled with one of each of the six topics. Groups move together around the room, adding elements to each list. Using different colored pens is optional. Set a time limit. At the end of the time, groups present on their original topic, incorporating the items that have been added.

### REFERENCES

- Auer, C.J. (1992). A Comparison of the Locus of Control of First and Second Grade Students in Whole Language, Basal Reader, and Eclectic Instructional Approach Classrooms (Doctoral Dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1992). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 53 (11), 3856.
- Ayling, G. (2009, in submission) Report of an adolescent transition, a possible intervention for the stress response and diseases in adult life. *International Journal of Epidemiolog.*
- Bar-Tal, D. B., and Bar-Zohar, Y. (1977). The Relationship between Perception of Locus of Control and Academic Achievement. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 2, 181-99.
- Benham, M.J. (1993). *Fostering Self- Motivated Behavior, Personal Responsibility, and Internal Locus of Control*, Eugene, Oregon.. Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 386 621).
- Csikszentmihalyi, M (1991) *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. Harpers. New York.
- Davis, L.E., and Peck, H.I. (1992). *Outcome Measures--School Climate: Curriculum and Instruction*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 353 335).
- Dembrowsky, C.H. (1990). *Developing Self-Esteem and Internal Motivation in At Risk Youth*. Practicum Paper (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 332 130).

Dweck, C. (2000) *Self-Theories; Their Role in Motivation, Personality and Development*. Lillington, NC: Psychologists Press.

Fitch, G. (1970). Effects of Self-Esteem, Perceived Performance and Choice on Causal Attributions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 44, 419-427.

Ginott, H. (1972) *Teacher and Child*. New York. Avon Books.

Hagborg, W.J. (1996) Self-Concept and Middle School Students with Learning Disabilities: A Comparison of Scholastic Competence Subgroups. *Learning Disability Quarterly*. 19,(2 ) 117-26.

Huberman, M., & Middleton, S. (2000). The dilution of inquiry: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13, 281-304.

Hunter, J., Csikszentmihalyi, M., (2003) Positive Psychology of interested adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 32, 27-35.

Inderbitzen, H. M., and Clark, M. L. (1986). The Relationship between Adolescent Loneliness and Perceptions of Controllability and Stability. *Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association*, Orlando, Fl. April.

Katz, L.G. (1993). Distinctions between Self-Esteem and Narcissism: Implications for Practice. Perspectives from ERIC/EECE, Monograph Series, No 5. ((ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 363 452)

Klein, J. D., and Keller, J. M. (1990). Influence of Student Ability, Locus of Control, and Type of Instructional Control on Performance and Confidence. *Journal of Educational Research*, 83(3) 140-46.

Meaney MJ.(2001) Maternal care, gene expression and the transmission of individual differences in stress reactivity across generations. *Annu Rev Neurosci* 4,1161-1192.

Osterman, K.F. (2000) Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(3), 323-367.

Rhoades, J. and McCabe, M.E. (1992). *The Cooperative Classroom: Social and Academic Activities*. Position Paper (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 363 583).

Rennie, L.J. (1991). The Relationship between Affect and Achievement in Science. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 28 (2) 193-09.

Sharidan, M. K. (1991). Self-Esteem and Competence in Children. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 23, (1) 28-35.

Shindler, J. (2003) *Creating a Psychology of Success in the Classroom: Enhancing Academic Achievement by Systematically Promoting Student Self-Esteem*. Classroom Management Resource Site, CSULA. Retrieved on 10/11/08 from [www.calstatela.edu/faculty/jshindl/cm](http://www.calstatela.edu/faculty/jshindl/cm).

Solley, C.M. and Stagner, R. (1956). Effect of Magnitude of Temporal Barriers, Types of Perception of Self. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 51, 62-70.

Tanksley, M. D. (1994). *Building Good Self-Esteem for Certain Fifth Grade Children through Cooperative Learning, Individualized Learning Techniques, Parental Involvement, and Student Counseling*. Practicum Paper (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 367 095)

Wang, M. and Stiles, B. (1976). An Investigation of Children's Concept of Self-Responsibility for their Learning. *American Educational Research Journal*. 13, 159-79.

Washinawotok, K. (1993). *Teaching Cultural Values and Building Self-Esteem*. Practicum Paper (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 366 470).