

# A GUIDE TO BUILDING A POSITIVE STUDENT CULTURE

## PRACTICES FOR A POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT:

The self-concept is made up of three factors:

- The ideal self: The person we would most like to be
- The self-image: The way we see and think about ourselves and
- Our self-esteem: Genuinely liking and accepting ourselves as valuable human beings

Many schools of psychology suggest that the root of personality problems, behavioral problems and difficulties in interactions with other people is low self-esteem. People who genuinely like themselves and accept themselves as valuable persons like and accept other people to the same degree. (Arrogance and conceit are extremes of the spectrum; people who do not consider themselves valuable or worthwhile are at the other extreme.)

Any individual learns whether or not he is lovable or worthwhile or intelligent or talented by the way he is treated first by his parents, then by teachers and others in his environment and by society. Also, in the formative years, we all learn by imitating the habit patterns and characteristics of our parents and those around us; early negative, dysfunctional behavior can create obstacles to success in our adult life.

### **Self Esteem Exercises for Students:**

#### I Can Be My Ideal Self (Act-the-Part Exercise)

Today, become the person you want to be. Carry yourself as if you have the self-confidence, enthusiasm and vitality of the person you want to be. Focus on one positive characteristic that you want to develop.

#### Improving My Self-image (Visualization Exercise)

Visualization is the ability to form in your mind a clear picture of what you want to be, to have and to do. The key is to get a clear mental picture of yourself performing at your best in any situation, and visualize the situation coming out just the way you want it to.

Many Olympic athletes use the following method of mental rehearsal to perform at their best. See the events of the day, and see yourself acting just as you wish to be received. Immediately prior to an event, see yourself completely calm and in control of the situation, and see yourself getting the results you want. Flash a clear mental picture of yourself—confident, completely relaxed and in control. Mentally rehearse and see the situation through in your mind.

Positive Self-talk (Affirmation Exercise)

Repeat positive statements about yourself, in the present, as though they are already coming true. Say these in front of a mirror and psychologically build yourself up. Feed your mind positive material.

Positive Affirmation For The Group:

### **A SAMPLE SCHOOL CREED**

***I will learn from the mistakes of my past and  
press on to the greater achievements in my future.***

***I will think only the best, work only for the best,  
and expect only to do my best.***

***I will be just as enthusiastic about the success of others  
as I am about my own.***

***I will be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear,  
and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.***

*-- Adapted from the Optimist International Creed*

## **“I” AM IN CONTROL OF MY LIFE VS. “THEY” ARE IN CONTROL:**

Information is taken in, throughout life, from a variety of sources. Psychologists say that what you believe with feeling and conviction becomes true for you (becomes your reality). Because of selective perception, self-limiting beliefs become true for us.

Students often feel controlled by other people or “the system.” They have no goals beyond the short term, and they make no plans; they hope that somehow things will get better. They often feel unable to do anything about their circumstances.

Transcenders, without exception, believe that they have the power to change their condition. They seem to say, “If you don’t like the effects (as demonstrated in the life you are currently leading), change the cause (what you think and what you do).”

### Teaching Tale:

Have you heard the story about the boy and his dog?

It seems a little boy tied his dog to a pole,  
but he didn’t tie him well.

And while he was playing with his friends  
the rope came loose and fell.

Now the dog really wanted to play,  
but he howled and he cried,  
and stayed right in that very same spot  
because he thought he was tied.

When the boy returned and saw the dog loose and all,  
he patted his pet on the head  
and said, “You’re a very good dog.”  
But, the boy, being the master,  
he had fun and was satisfied.  
And the dog could have too,  
but he thought he was tied.

As I took at the masters and servants among men,  
I see this same story happening, over and over,

time and again.  
Some people are using their minds.  
They're creating and being satisfied.  
Others are confused and crying  
because they think they're tied.

DRAFT

## **LEARNING TO HAVE POSITIVE EXPECTATIONS:**

Our expectations about how things are going to turn out in our lives have a powerful impact on what we do. Sometimes, especially when we are in unfortunate circumstances, we spend a great deal of time talking about the future turning out poorly. Transcenders, on the other hand, are continually talking to themselves and others as though they expect things to work out well.

Attitudes often come from our expectations about outcome. If we expect things to turn out well, we have a positive attitude. Transcenders make a habit of manufacturing their own positive expectations in advance. The group works on changing beliefs, creating positive attitudes and changing members' expectations about themselves and the world around them.

### Teaching Tale:

A traveler's car blew a tire on a lonely road in the middle of the night. Recalling he had neglected to put his jack and wrench in the trunk, he determined to walk ahead until he found help.

It wasn't long before he saw a light in the distance. "It looks like a house," he observed. "I can borrow what I need and, maybe, get a lift back to my car." He picked up his pace. "But, they're asleep. They probably won't answer the door." With this thought, he came to a halt. But then, what other choice did he have? He resumed his stride. "They certainly won't trust me with their tools. They'll not bring me back to my car, either. Suppose they call the police? In this area, I'm not likely to have a chance to explain." This internal conversation continued as he trudged along towards the light.

Finally, our traveler arrived at the farmhouse. He pounded at the door. A light came on in a second-floor window, and a face looked out. But, before he could respond, the incensed traveler cursed him for refusing to help and, flailing his arms, walked away into the night.

## LETTING GO OF NEGATIVE EMOTIONS:

Many of us still carry around bitterness and anger. The negative emotions of guilt, doubt, fear, anger, resentment, envy, jealousy (I could go on and on) hold us down. Since responsibility looks forward; blame looks backward, "I am responsible," becomes a powerful and liberating affirmation. But no one is to blame.

### Reflection:

What baggage are you dragging around with you? Were you hurt? Were you betrayed? Were you abused? Do you feel unloved, unwanted? Or maybe you caused someone great pain? No matter what it is, don't drag it around with you. Bitterness, guilt and resentment over the past never helps you. Let it go.

Hanging on to painful feelings only weighs you down. It's over. Let it go. Whatever you carry around inside is your responsibility. If you choose to hold anguish and pain, you sabotage your own happiness and development.

Here's how you can let go. (You don't even have to confront anybody. After all, it's not about them; it's about you.) Go to a place where you can be alone. It doesn't matter where. It could be your bedroom, the park, a car; it doesn't matter. Close your eyes. Talk about your pain aloud. Then release it.

Forgive the people who hurt you. Ask the people you hurt to forgive you. Talk about the things that cause you pain. In each instance, affirm that it is all right now, and it is all over. Take as long as you want. Be sure to include all that causes you pain.

Release it. Know that it is all gone. If tears come, that's all right. Release it. Then move on to build the best possible life for yourself. You deserve it.

## **RELATIVES, ASSOCIATES AND FRIENDS:**

Consider yourself fortunate if you have people you can depend on. Transcenders (people who rise against all odds) often do not have family or friends they can depend on. They accept the responsibility for themselves. They keep focused on where they want to go and what they want to accomplish.

We are influenced not only by parents but also by everything that we see, hear, read and, of course, watch on television and listen to in our music. The suggestive influences in the environment around us dramatically affect how we feel and behave. Dr. David McClelland of Harvard confirmed with 25 years of research in achievement that, if people went from a rehabilitation or training program back to hanging out with their old groups, that alone was enough to preclude all possibility of their reaching their goals.

People with whom we habitually associate have a great influence over us. If we are serious about rising above it, we have to make the decision to emotionally, and sometimes physically, distance ourselves from negative, toxic people.

### Reflection:

Some of our friends, and relatives, too, want us to remain the same as we are for the rest of THEIR lives. If you doubt this, go on a diet or quit smoking; some of your friends will bring you food. Share a dream; some friends will give you a dozen reasons why you'll never make it.

It may be that our friends have invested time and energy in getting to know us the way we are. When we change (other than the changes they prescribe, of course), they have to start learning what we are about all over again. So they'd rather that we stay just as we are.

But growth and change provide flavor to life. How else can you explore possible futures and create the best life for yourself? Think about it. How many dreams are never fulfilled? How many jobs are tolerated but not liked? How many relationships are endured in quiet, and sometimes not-so-quiet, desperation,....mostly because we are afraid to change?

Those people who encourage you as you expand your experiences—cherish them. But when you have friends who hold you back, get new friends. And if you have relatives who keep you down, make them distant relatives.

## SETTING AND ACHIEVING GOALS:

When we set goals, we develop direction and focus and accomplish more in a shorter time. There are four major reasons people don't set goals?

- They don't understand the importance, or they don't know why they need to set goals.
- They don't know how (you may not learn this in school and probably didn't learn this at home).
- They fear rejection. Every time they set goals, somebody tells them they can't make it.
- They are afraid they might fail.

Fear probably holds us back more than any other psychological obstacle. It is important to set goals and to resolve to pay the price, or, enjoy the price to reach your goals.

### Teaching Tale:

Long ago and far away, a farmer sat on his porch in the late afternoon, watching the travelers on a road that led into town. As the sun moved over the horizon and the evening shadows fell, he noticed a foreboding figure approaching.

His eyes followed as the figure moved closer. When he realized who it was, he was overcome and was frozen where he stood. The figure slowly passed. Gathering all of his courage, the farmer called out, "Death!" The figure stopped but didn't turn around. "Death," the farmer continued after a respectful pause, "where are you going?" Death answered, "I am going into town." His body was shuddering, but the farmer continued, "And what will you do when you get there?" "I will take five-thousand lives," Death pronounced as he resumed his journey. "No, Death, no!" the farmer cried out to him. But Death would entertain no further interruption and moved on toward town.

The farmer, overcome with grief, kept a vigil at his post. He waited for Death to return from the ill-fated city. It was several months before he again espied the ominous Death. As Death passed his gate, the farmer called to him, "Death! How many people died?" Death replied, "Twenty-thousand people died." "Twenty-thousand!" repeated the astounded farmer. "But you said you would take five-thousand lives." "I took only five-thousand lives." Death hesitated thoughtfully, "Fear killed the rest."

## LOOKING BAD?

Is failure a natural part of the learning process? Generally, people don't understand the importance of failure in achievement. The most outstanding men and women in history have fallen on their faces and have experienced great failures, obstacles, adversities, setbacks, and disappointments. Success was often one step beyond where they have reached their greatest failures.

### *Teaching Tale:*

Maybe you have heard of this man, a whopping failure:

He lost his job in 1832;

... the next year, he ran for the legislature in his state; he was defeated;

... he went into business, failed, and spent 17 years paying off his debts;

he fell in love and became engaged, but his sweetheart died;

... so despondent was he that, the following year, he suffered a nervous breakdown

... after a while, re ran for speaker of the Illinois State Legislature; he was resoundingly defeated;

... he was also defeated for nomination to Congress;

... he finally married, but the woman he chose was quarrelsome and a constant burden to him;

... in 1848, he lost re-nomination to Congress;

... he failed to get appointed to the U.S. Land Office in 1849;

... he was rejected in his bid for the U.S. Senate in 1854;

... he was defeated for nomination for vice president in 1856;

... he was defeated for Senate again in 1858.

But, in 1861, Abraham Lincoln became the sixteenth president of the United States.

## **PRACTICE THE ART OF FAILING GRACEFULLY:**

The natural tendency of the human being is to play it safe and stay with the things they are comfortable with. Transcenders and other high achievers throw off the old ways and move forward into the risk zone. They muster the courage to take the risk even though they have no assurance that they will succeed.

People with low self-esteem, who fear rejection and ridicule, fear failure the most. They fear looking bad in front of people. Every single forward step in history has been taken over the bodies of faultfinders and scoffers....Sure, have a decent regard for public opinion, but never allow yourself to get in the unfortunate condition where what “they” say or may say keeps you from doing what you know to be the positive and right thing to do.

### *Teaching Tale:*

Thomas Edison failed more times and lost more money than any other inventor in modern history. He failed more than 5000 times in his efforts to create the incandescent light bulb. The reviews in the papers said he was out of his mind, he was wasting his time in foolish experiments. Edison responded to his critics, “I have not failed at all; I have successfully identified 5000 ways that will not work. It puts me 5000 ways closer to the answer.” People who have achieved the most have also failed the most. Failure is very important in the process of achievement.

## MORE ON FAILURE

If you would develop that spark that sets you off and makes you different from any other living creature, you must do it regardless of what people say, as this man did:

Teaching Tale:

In the middle of a river, an inventor struggled to start his machine. From the crowd standing on the shore came the murmur, "He'll never start the thing." After a while, the engine did begin to spout, but the crowd said, "Look at him, the fool, it'll never move." The steamboat eventually inched its way down the river. The crowd pointed and jeered. (Maybe that's why the crowd didn't notice that the boat was picking up speed until one woman brought this to their attention.)

"They" were silent, but only momentarily. Then "they," the little people of the world, declared, "He'll never stop the thing." And they turned and left.

But the big people of the world were still there on the banks of the river that day as the inventor, Robert Fulton, made his way down the Hudson in his steamboat. THEY cheered him on!

**SETTING GOALS:** Each student focuses on their own education and career goals.

Change is inevitable in life. It is the natural course of things, but many people are afraid of change. We fear the unknown, and we fear that, after change, we will somehow be worse off than before. Goals enable us to better control the direction of change in our lives.

We plan realistic paths, changing our goals as we develop short-and long-term plans. But for a balanced life and any hope of progress towards our goals, two other important areas are also addressed. The group discusses family and personal goals (things we want to accomplish for ourselves and our loved ones) and self-improvement goals (goals that help us become better, smarter and more capable).

Psychologists say we must hear the same information at least 16 times if it is going to change our behavior and we must keep up our actions for 21 days for this new behavior to become a habit.

- We make for ourselves only one or two goals in each area.
- We make our goals specific and measurable. (For example, not simply “I will get a high school diploma,” but “I will get to bed by 10 a.m. each school night. I will get up at 6 am to attend school each day.”)
- We write our goals on a single sheet of paper.
- We read our goals twice a day, preferably first thing in the morning and just before bed.
- Each day, we question our activities; we learn to do things that will help us achieve our goals.

#### Teaching Tale:

A woman watched three boys having fun in a snow-covered park. She approached them and said, “Would you like to have a race? I’ll give the winner a prize.” The boys quickly agreed. She told them that this race would be one that required skill. They followed her to a clear path of snow. She instructed them, “I will go to the other end of the field and when I give the signal, you start to run. The one whose footsteps in the snow are the straightest will be the winner.”

The race began. The first boy looked at his feet to see that his steps were straight. The second boy looked at his companions to see what they were doing. The third boy just ran on with his eyes firmly on the woman at the other end of the field. The third boy,

won the race. His footsteps were straight in the snow, because he kept his eyes fixed on the goal.

## **EVERYONE IS SELF-EMPLOYED, REALLY**

Every one of us has something valuable and special to contribute. If you become outstanding in what you do, you can always progress. The sad truth is, when you work just hard enough to keep from being fired, you generally get paid just enough to keep you from quitting.

### Teaching Tale:

Dr. Wayne Dyer, noted psychologist and author, makes the point by using the analogy of the “bag boys.” He observes that, among the employees who bag groceries, there are “one baggers and two baggers.” Now the one bagger, according to Dr. Dyer, has the attitude that there is no one cashier in the store that he can’t make stop and help him bag an order. He may put the tomatoes in the bottom and the orange juice on top. He doesn’t care how he does his job. The double bagger, on the other hand, has the philosophy that there are not two cashiers in the world that he can’t keep up with. “They’ll never have to touch a bag,” he says.

Then there’s the “triple bagger.” Now this is the rare breed, these triple baggers. The triple bagger will see if he can get three cashiers and bag for all three of them. He’ll place the orders in the bag with care. The customers will all want to come to his lines. The time goes quickly, as he jokes and has fun doing what could be a boring job.

It is obvious to you, which one will advance in the organization and could end up managing, or even owning, the place some day? People in a given position don’t have that winning attitude because they have a position. They have the position because they have the right attitude.

## GETTING ALONG WITH PEOPLE:

In a recent survey, respondents told the researchers that they derive 85 percent of their personal pleasure from positive relationships and interactions with other people. Psychologists say that individuals who can get along with the greatest variety of people have the healthiest personalities. Relationships, both casual and intimate, go awry for sometimes inconsequential reasons.

### Teaching Tales:

Take, for example, the fight that broke out in the Land of Bog:

A certain hunter was in the woods, stalking wild game, when he happened upon a hollow tree full honey. So he wrapped the comb in some skins and, throwing it over his shoulder, carried it into town. His hunting dog followed behind.

He stopped at the shop of a blacksmith and offered him the honey for sale. Then he emptied out the skins, that the blacksmith might see the comb and, in the act, a drop of honey fell to the ground, whereupon the flies flocked to it and a bird swooped down upon the flies. Now the blacksmith had a cat, which pounced upon the bird, and the hunter's dog, seeing the cat, leapt upon it and killed it. Because of this, the blacksmith sprang upon the dog and slew him.

Now the blacksmith was from one area, and the hunter was from another; and, when the people of the two places heard what had come to pass, they took up weapons and rose one on the other. When the two sides met, the conflict continued in a heated battle until many people died.—Non knoweth their number.

## **WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CREATING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS:**

The healthier our self-esteem becomes, the healthier the relationships we create. The following tips for getting along better with almost anyone.

1. Make others feel important. Never do anything to make them not important. (We like it when people make us feel important. Why not give it out first?)
2. Accept, without judgment or condemnation, people who are different from you—teenagers, older people, people of a different race, religion, etc.
3. Jealousy is a result of low self-esteem. Get busy on your own plan.
4. Give praise and credit immediately following a praiseworthy action.
5. Express gratitude; use the words please and thank you. Be patient and polite.
6. Admire traits and possessions.
7. Never criticize others.
8. Never argue. (A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.) If you must argue, try, “How would you answer the person who says...?”

## **CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS:**

1. Problems occur when one person tries to change the other. Unless a person sincerely desires to change, there is nothing you can do.
2. When feeling self-pity or feeling sorry for yourself for something the other person has done to you, get busy working on your goals, accept yourself as a valuable person and stop feeling sorry for yourself.
3. Sometimes as time passes, people may find that they have less and less in common and more characteristics, attitudes and values that are incompatible. If they can't change the relationship and improve it, if there is not enough love, happiness and excitement, the best thing they can do is realize that nobody is to blame, move on and get on with their lives.
4. Opposites attract, but only in temperament—the outgoing person with another person who is less outgoing. In other aspects, nature requires similarities in values, attitudes toward children, money, living standards and all other aspects of life.
5. Liking and respecting a person is more important and enduring than loving that person (which is often a hormonal effect).

## **TIPS ON HOW TO MANAGE YOUR TIME:**

All high achievers use their time well. Low achievers waste their time.

1. Have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish (your goals).
2. Develop a detailed plan for each day. Plan your week on Saturday or Sunday for the following week.
3. Make a list of what you have to do every single day.
4. Set priorities on your list. Number each item, and work on the most important first. Because there is never enough to do everything, ask yourself, "What is the most valuable use of my time right now?"
5. Concentrate on one thing at a time.
6. Do it now. Don't procrastinate.

## **TWELVE STEPS TO ACHIEVING SUCCESS:**

- Step 1: **DESIRE** is the great motivator: the force impels me toward my goals.  
I must:
- Step 2: have the **BELIEF** that I have the ability to reach my goals.
- Step 3: **WRITE** down my goals in complete detail, exactly as I wish to have them.
- Step 4: write down all the **ADVANTAGES** I will enjoy by reaching my goals.
- Step 5: **ANALYZE** my current status. Where am I right now?
- Step 6: set a **DEADLINE**—decide/determine when I will accomplish my goals.
- Step 7: identify the **OBSTACLES** and write them down on paper; list five obstacles I must overcome.
- Step 8: identify the **KNOWLEDGE** I will acquire to accomplish my goals.
- Step 9: identify the people, groups and organizations whose cooperation and **ASSISTANCE** would be helpful; go the extra mile; determine how I can compensate and reward others for their help.
- Step 10: make a **PLAN** with all of the activities I must engage in and in what order to accomplish my goal; revise my plan when I get new information or encounter setbacks or obstacles.
- Step 11: get a clear **MENTAL IMAGE** of my goals as already attained.
- Step 12: back my plan with determination and **PERSISTENCE**.

**AND FINALLY,**

**DON'T QUIT**

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,  
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,  
When the funds are low and the debts are high,  
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,  
When care is pressing you down a bit,  
Rest, if you must—but don't you quit.

Life is queer with its twists and turns,  
As everyone of us sometimes learns  
And many a failure turns about  
When he might have won had he stuck it out;  
Don't give up, though the pace seems slow—  
You might succeed with another blow.

Often the goal is nearer than  
It seems to a faint and faltering man,  
Often the struggler has given up  
When he might have captured the winner's cup.  
And, he learned too late, when the night slipped down,  
How close he was to the victor's crown.

Success is failure turned inside out—  
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt—  
And you never can tell how close you are,  
It may be near when it seems afar;  
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit—  
It's when things seem worst that you mustn't quit.

Anonymous

**Prepared with great love and respect,  
Your School Family**