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## UNIT 8 SELF AND RELATED CONCEPTS

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### 8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After studying this Unit, you would be able to:

- *Describe the concept of self;*
- *Understand different aspects of self;*
- *Differentiate between real-self and ideal-self;*
- *Explain the concept of self-esteem;*
- *Explain the concept of self-efficacy; and*
- *Learn about strategies for self-regulation of behaviour.*

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### 8.2 INTRODUCTION

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The question “Who am I” is a central point that can arise in each stage of our life, though it is more pertinent during the adolescence stage. Whatever developmental stages you are in by now, you must have formed some notions about yourself, though you may or may not be aware about it. Self is and has always been the intriguing concept to understand. All of us have certain views and beliefs about ourselves - our abilities, skills, interests, likings, dislikings, strengths and weaknesses etc. Thus we know what we are, what are our aims in life, how do we want to live our life, what are our guiding principles and values. These play a significant role in directing us, guiding

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us, and regulating our emotions and actions. So how do we develop this concept of self? Are there different aspects of self? There are various terms related to the self such as self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. One needs to have a good self-concept, high levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy to function effectively and engage in positive behaviour. This will indicate a positive self. So in the present Unit, you will learn about the self and its related concepts such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-regulation.

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### 8.3 CONCEPT OF SELF

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If you ask yourself ‘Who am I?’, ‘What makes me?’ , you might answer with “I am a student,” or, “I am a singer,” or may be, “I am a God fearing person” etc. Or, perhaps you may answer, “I am *good* in studies,” “I am a *trained* dancer,” or “I am a *popular* sportsperson.” Here you may note that you are qualifying your abilities. Further answers might include the type of traits: “I am a *caring* person,” “I am an *introvert*,” or “I am a *disciplined* and *punctual* person”. These answers arise from what you think about yourself, which is developed from your experiences and evaluation from early life, and it keeps adjusting or changing throughout life.

Mostly when people go for interview, the most common question asked is “describe yourself or tell us about yourself”. What you answer is all about how you perceive your ‘self’. You may describe physical features, traits, qualities, goals, motives etc. Thus, your concept of self is made up of varied information about yourself, which you gain from your own experience and also receive from others in your environment.

**Reflective Activity 1:**

Let us try to have some preliminary notion of yourself (i.e. who are you?) by completing the following sentences. You can write more number of points also by taking a separate sheet (it will be a good idea to note down the time you will take to finish this activity of writing about yourself) Starting Time: \_\_\_\_\_

I am .....

I am .....

I am .....

I am .....

I am .....

Ending Time \_\_\_\_\_

**Reflect on the following:**

1. How easy was it for you to complete these sentences?
2. How much time did you take?
3. Different people take different time to answer these questions. Why?

It might have been very easy for you or might have not been as easy as you may have thought of at first. You were describing your ‘self’ when you were answering the above statements. As you are aware of various objects and people around you, similarly you are aware about your ‘self’. When a child is born, they develop their self-concept

gradually in interaction with their parents/caregivers, family members, friends, teachers and other significant people around. Our interaction and experiences with other people and the way we perceive these help us to form the foundation of our self-concept. Further, different social and cultural systems and institutions around us including societal expectations, cultural values, social media usage and technology etc. also affect our perception of ourselves.

If you see the list of yours and your friends/family members in the above Reflective activity 1, you will realise that how different we are because of our different experiences and interpretation we make of these.

When we analyse these various descriptions about ourselves, we can categorize them into various categories such as those describing our abilities and skills, i.e., what can we do (*self-concept*); those describing us in terms of affective value, i.e., how do we value or respect ourselves (*self-esteem*); and those expressing our belief in ourselves that we are capable of doing things, a sense of personal control (*self-efficacy*).

### 8.3.1 Different Aspects of Self

Self can also be described as an **Agent/ Subject** when we say that I play hockey or I sing, here self is described as a doer who is doing something and in control of self. Thus it represents self as “I”. It includes self-awareness, self as consciousness, self as user of coping strategies, self as adapting to environment, and self-regulation. Secondly, self can also be described as an **Object**, when we say that ‘he made me angry’, we are describing self as an object (which gets affected). Thus it represents self as “me”. It includes self-representation, self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy. These two aspects of self, that is, self-as-subject and self-as-object (Robins et.al., 1999) can represent the total self.

Our ‘self’ can also be described in terms of personal, social, cognitive, and behavioural aspects. The **personal self** is mainly concerned with one’s own self related to personal aspects, whereas the **social self** develops in relation with others and is primarily concerned with family and social relationships (socio-cultural context). Therefore, it is also known as **familial** or **relational self**. The self can also be understood in terms of cognitive and behavioural aspects.

If you reflect on your answers in the Reflective activity 1, you will realise that self is made up of your personal and social self. If you identify yourself with your personal information or attributes such as your name, your quality, your abilities or your beliefs/values, you are referring to your personal self, whereas if you say that you belongs to Kerala or Rajasthan, you are a Hindu/Muslim, etc. you are referring to your social or cultural self. Sometimes you may wonder why some feel offensive if something is said about their place or religion or family, now you can understand that it affects their social self or identity that is why they probably feel bad and react in that manner. Thus, the way people describe themselves as a person, defines their ‘self’. Self as a whole is about the person’s thoughts, feelings, experiences, and ideas, with respect to herself or himself which define the person at both, the personal and social levels.

These different aspects of self get shaped up by the result of our interactions with our physical and socio-cultural environments. Therefore, it is multi-faceted. The origins of self may be observed in infancy when the infant is aware that s/he is hungry and cries to be fed by the caregiver. So, this biological need of food and hence crying, later on modifies according to the socio-cultural environmental context. For example, while

you may feel hungry for a pizza, a tribal adult is not. Another example is that fasting is given importance in all the religions. Although you have a biological need of food and you feel hungry everyday normally, but on the day of the fast, you ignore or may not even feel hungry because of the social-cultural conditioning.

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## 8.4 SELF-CONCEPT

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Self-concept is a basic notion about who we are in terms of physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually (Neill, 2005). From the time of our birth, we develop and regulate our self-concept based on the information received from others about ourselves. Thus self is a multi-dimensional concept. It is affected by multiple factors, which in turn influence the individual aspects. For instance, you may think and describe yourself in terms of your physical aspects, and in terms of your relations or emotions. Your perception about yourself in physical aspects, e.g., you are very fat or very thin, may impact your interaction in social situations or your emotions.

A few definitions of self-concept are given below.

- According to Roy Baumeister (1999), self-concept is “the individual’s belief about himself or herself, including the person’s attributes and who and what the self is.”
- The self-concept is defined as “the composite ideas, feelings, and attitudes people have about themselves” (Hilgard, Atkinson, and Atkinson, 1979: p.605).
- According to Purkey (1988), self-concept is “the sum of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence”. Let’s understand the important terms in this definition. According to him, the self-concept is:
  - **Learned:** We are not born with the concept of self (and that is why it is said that the child is like a blank slate), it is learnt steadily, formed and reformed by significant others and events in our life. Basically a child’s self-image is a learnt one which is influenced by the feedback given by significant others such as parents, family, peers and teachers. Here we need to remember that we all have our own way of seeing the things so the feedback given to the child may not essentially be the accurate one. For example, if a parent or teacher constantly tell the child that s/he is obedient, the child starts believing and see her/himself as obedient, or when they tell the child that s/he is mischievous, the child begins to think so. Though, it may not be true, as it is the subjective opinion of parents and teachers. Thus, two children with a similar behaviour pattern would have different self-pictures according to the message relayed by their respective parents. Teachers are considered the second parents and influence children’s life in a very significant way (Lawrence, 1996). Teachers too may have judgements about children like parents. The judgments or assumptions of teachers about the child may be similar to parents or it may be different.
  - **Organized:** Our self-concept is organized which is characterized by orderliness and harmony (Damon and Hart, 1991) that provides consistency to the personality of an individual. That is why personality is defined as the individualistic characteristics which is relatively permanent in nature.

- **Dynamic:** Life is all about ups and downs, success and failure which impacts our self-concept making it dynamic in nature which changes and develop according to our experiences and situations. In order to develop a healthy personality, an individual needs to work constantly on assimilating the new thoughts into old ones throughout life.

### Self Assessment Questions 1

1. If a person says, “I am good in studies”, s/he is referring to her/his social self. True / False
2. When an individual says that s/he belongs to South India, s/he is referring to her/his social self. True / False
3. The self as a whole is made up of individual’s:
  - a) thoughts and feelings
  - b) experiences, and ideas
  - c) only A
  - d) both A and B
4. From the following which is not true about ‘Self’:
  - a) Learned
  - b) Dynamic) Static
  - d) Organised
5. “Self-concept is a basic notion about who we are in terms of physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually” Who said this?
  - a) Hilgard, Atkinson, and Atkinson
  - b) Roy Baumeister
  - c) Purkey
  - d) Neill

All of us have some sense of who we are and how different we are from others. Our perception and ideas about our capabilities and qualities is known as self-concept. This view about our self or our self-concept can be positive or negative, depending upon our experiences and mind set. The way we would respond to the question, “Who am I?” tells about how do we see ourselves, positively or negatively. The positive response to this question makes us feel good or rather we can say that if we feel good about our self then our answer would be positive. It can be that we may like some of our qualities and may not like other. For example, one may feel good about his/her social skills but may not be positive or confident about the academic skills. Although it is not easy to find out an individual’s self-concept, yet you may get a fair idea by the way an individual describes about him/her.

Our positive self helps us to view the world as a safe and positive place to be in. On the other hand, the negative response makes us feel unhappy about who we are and make

us view the world as unsafe and bad place to be in. According to Rogers, self-actualizing tendencies drive all human behaviour to achieve at their fullest level of potentials. A person forms the basic structure of self and related concepts based on the result of his/her interactions with the environment and others. Thus self-concept is an organized, dynamic, conceptual pattern of ideas and values related to the self.

**Reflective Activity 2:**

Think and write about “Who am I?”

- Based on your answer, find out whether you have a negative or a positive self-concept?
- Reflect on your experiences that led you to develop this particular self-concept?
- Can you plan some strategies to modify the negative self-concept or develop further the positive self? Discuss with your friends and/or family members and write.

**8.4.1 Real Self and Ideal Self**

The ‘self’ has two parts: the Ideal self and the Real self. According to Carl Rogers, we all visualise ourselves into our ideal self, which we would like to be; whereas the real self is what we actually are. Our real self can be very different from our ideal self. The more the gap or disparity between what we like to be (ideal self) and what we are (real self), the more the disharmony within our self. That is why Rogers emphasized that we essentially need to work towards attaining the harmony or consistency between these two selves. We achieve harmony or the congruence by making our thoughts and actions of real self, similar to our ideal self. In short, when our self-concept is accurate, we achieve congruence or harmony within self.

It is very important to focus on bringing or maintaining this congruence, as high congruence is essential to have a greater sense of self-esteem and a healthy, fruitful life. On the other hand, if the discrepancy is more between our ideal and actual selves, we experience a state of incongruence, which can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety and maladjustment. So adults especially, the parents and teachers, need to provide unconditional positive regard, or unconditional love to children, which can help our children achieve high congruency in their ideal and real self. Rogers (1980) mentioned that, “as individuals are accepted and valued as they are, they tend to develop a more caring attitude towards themselves” (p. 116).

**Reflective Activity 3:**

*“What would you like to be?”*

- We all must have formed some views about our ideal selves. Think on this and imagine that you have realised or achieved your ideal self. Now with this picture of your ideal self, describe briefly your attitudes towards: (a) school, (b) friends, (c) family, (d) society and (e) money.
- Now identify two of your friends and two family members and ask them to write down briefly about you on these five aspects, as they perceive you. This

will depict your real ideas are or how people in your life perceive your real attitudes towards these categories.

- These four persons will describe your real self as they know you. Compare your ideal descriptions with others' real descriptions in detail. Are they very similar or dissimilar? And why?

## 8.5 SELF-ESTEEM

Another important aspect of our self is **self-esteem**. As a human being, we constantly evaluate our self or make some judgment about our own value or worth which is termed as **self-esteem**. People vary in viewing their self-esteem, some have high self-esteem, whereas others may have low self-esteem. Self-esteem reflects a personal psychological characteristic relating to self-judgment based on one's values about humans (Alesi et. al., 2012). It indicates being aware of one's value system and an emotional evaluation of one's self-worth (Schunk, 1985).

Self-esteem is a multi-dimensional construct. We have a global overall self-esteem based on general judgements of self-worth and various subtypes of self-esteem based on evaluations of self-worth in different contexts such as, within the family, school, work setting, leisure setting, or peer group (Mruk, 1999). Self-esteem is different from self-confidence. Self-confidence indicates that you are confident of your ability to carry out a particular thing. On the other hand, self-esteem refers to how high you hold yourself in your own eyes, how much respect and worth you give to yourself.

There are many self-report measures to assess self-esteem of individuals such as giving a variety of statements and asking a person to indicate whether the statements given are true for her/him or not.

For instance:

- "I am good at sports"
- "I am the one usually chosen for the cultural programmes or competitions"
- "I am highly liked by my teachers"
- "My friends consider me a trustworthy person"

If a child says 'Yes' to the above statements, it shows that s/he has high self-esteem in comparison to the child who says "No". Generally by 6-7 years of age, children's self-esteem is formed at least in four areas: *academic competence*, *social competence*, *physical/athletic competence*, and *physical appearance*, which improve with age and experience. Rosenberg's Self-esteem inventory (Rosenberg, 1965b) is a most commonly used uni-dimensional measure of self-esteem. Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1981, 2002) is a multi-dimensional measure of self-esteem in areas of family, school, peers, and general social activities.

Self-esteem is more or less stable across the life span, though it may vary at lifecycle transition points (Robins et.al., 1999). For instance, teenagers may experience a drop in self-esteem due to the various physical and psychological changes they go through. Self-esteem develops early in life based on the experiences and interactions during the early years. It has a great impact on our everyday behaviour. For instance, individuals

who have high academic self-esteem perform better in studies and are liked by their peers than those with low academic self-esteem. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem may have high levels of anxiety, depression, and antisocial behaviour than those who have high self-esteem. People with high self-esteem are better in their social adjustment (Martin et al., 2014). It also positively affects their psychological well-being and quality of life (Boyd et al., 2014).

Therefore, it is extremely important for parents, families and schools to create a warm and positive environment, which can help in the development of high self-esteem among children. It makes them feel acknowledged, accepted as capable and valuable. Not allowing children to take their decisions and nagging often results in low self-esteem among children. It may be noted that it is important to have a healthy self-esteem than a very high self-esteem which is not realistic or functional.

Here, one needs to be aware of “**defensive self-esteem**” which refers to reporting of a high self-esteem as a defense against negative self-evaluation (Carr, 2004). Such individuals feel insecure and anxious when their competence is challenged. They resort to defense mechanism of overcompensation by bragging about themselves; or they use the defensive displacement of self-directed criticism onto others and display an unhealthy way of criticizing others (Carr, 2004).

### Role of Culture

Culture/environment of an individual plays a critical role in developing his/her self-concept and self-esteem. Some cultures focus on the importance of being together whereas other cultures value the individual beings more than the group. Understanding of ‘self’ in Indian cultural context is distinct from the Western cultural context. One of the differences is the boundary we draw between the self and the others. In Indian culture, this boundary of self is not clearly defined or fixed and gets extended to others like family and friends. For example, whenever an individual takes some decision about self (e.g. study, job, etc.), usually one tends to think his/her decision in relation to others as well. Thus, sometimes our self includes the others and sometimes it withdraws and focuses completely on individual self (e.g., our personal needs or goals). Whereas, if we see the western culture, this boundary of self appears to be relatively fixed and clearly defined where individuals keep their individuality. In the Indian culture, the self is usually attached with one’s own group and both maintain the state of harmonious co-existence. On the other hand, in the Western culture an individual often keep a distance from the others/groups which makes the Western cultures as *individualistic*, and Indian and many Asian cultures as *collectivistic*.

#### Increasing Your Self-Esteem: Some Tips

- Learn a new skill in areas such as academic, cognitive, social, and work-related
- Go beyond your comfort zone
- Question your self-limiting beliefs, challenge your thoughts
- Focus on your strengths
- Engage in affirmative talk, tell yourself positive and kinder words
- Visualize things in a positive way



- Cultivate a positive attitude
- Be clear about your goals and values
- Do not hesitate to talk to others and take their help
- Take self care
- Recognize the ‘hero’ within you, tap onto your inner strengths
- Remember that you are more than your circumstances, the way you respond matters more
- You are unique, so do not compare with others

### Self Assessment Questions 2

1. Who developed the concept of the ideal self and the real self?
2. The more the gap or disparity between what we like to be (ideal self) and what we are (real self), more the harmony within our self. True / False
3. Match the terms of column A with the appropriate description given in the column B.

#### Column A

(a) Self-concept

(b) Self-esteem

(c) Self as a subject

(d) Self as an object

(e) Collectivistic culture

#### Column B

(i) judgment about our own value or worth

(ii) Our perception and ideas about our capabilities and qualities

(iii) do not have clearly defined and fixed boundaries

(iv) described as a doer who is doing something

(v) self gets affected by others

## 8.6 SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy is another important concept of self. The term ‘self-efficacy’ was proposed by psychologist Albert Bandura (1977). He was a Canadian-American psychologist who worked as a professor at Stanford University. According to him, “self-efficacy is a person’s particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations”. We all have different views about our ability to control the life outcomes. People who believe that they are capable and can control what happens to them are having high self-efficacy whereas people who believe that the things and life events are not in their control and they cannot do anything about the life outcomes displays low self-efficacy. For example a child, who thinks that if I study hard I can pass the examination, demonstrates high self-efficacy. On the other hand, a child who thinks if I am lucky, the paper will be easy or I wish the examiner checks the papers leniently, displays low self-efficacy as s/he thinks that the outcome is not in their control and is in control of fate or luck or other situational factors. Hence, an individual who believes that s/he has the capacity or behaviours to deal with a particular situation, shows high self-efficacy. Such a person will accordingly put in the effort required to achieve the desired outcome/ consequence.

The idea of self-efficacy is founded on Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997, 1986). According to this theory, human beings actively engage with their environment to shape their lives. People learn by observing and imitating others. So if a child is exposed to people who demonstrate high self-efficacy, s/he tends to imitate the same behaviour. Also people will engage in behaviours for which they have mastery, high expectations of success and conviction about their own effectiveness, as this will lower the amount of risk they would undertake. High self-efficacy makes people to choose, influence, and even create the circumstances of their own life. Further, they feel more confident and less fearful.

Self-efficacy is different from self-esteem in the sense that self-esteem refers to judgments about self-worth whereas self-efficacy refers to judgments about self-capabilities. However, like we have a general self-esteem and self-esteem related to specific domains (multi-dimensional self-esteem measures), similarly self-efficacy can be general/global self-efficacy as well as we have self-efficacy specific to different domains. There is also collective self-efficacy, which refers to "the extent to which we believe that we can work together effectively to accomplish our shared goals" (Maddux, 2009a, p. 340). For instance, a sports team competing for an Olympic medal pursues shared objectives at a collective level.

Self-efficacy includes the following aspects/components (Carr, 2004):

- a) *Cognitive*: the person with high self-efficacy demonstrates greater cognitive resourcefulness, strategic flexibility, effective problem-solving and future-time perspective.
- b) *Motivational*: they are motivated to perform and persist because they view challenges as surmountable, believe that their effort will result in good consequences, and ascribe failure to controllable factors such as less effort or negative situations rather than uncontrollable factors like lack of ability.
- c) *Emotional*: self-efficacy reduces negative affective states and thinking by using problem-focused coping, and views potential threats as manageable challenges. It also involves the use of self-soothing techniques such as relaxation, humour etc. to reduce the emotional arousal in the face of threatening/difficult situations.
- d) *Physical*: self-efficacy beliefs lead to improved immune system, improved physical functioning and psychological well-being.

Self-efficacy refers to a sense of perceived control. It includes a focus on the goal and planful thinking for achieving the goal, which underlies the person's belief about their capabilities to achieve the goal. This is also called the "efficacy expectancies" (Snyder, Lopez, & Pedrotti, 2011). As we have seen in earlier sections, ideas about our 'self' is formed by our experiences, our mind set and the people around us; this suggests that self-efficacy can be developed. Self-efficacy has been linked to successful coping and improved physical health (Maddux, 1995, 2009a). Children with high self-efficacy perform better in all spheres of life. People with high self-efficacy have been found to have high determination. So it is very important for the society, parents and teachers to create positive experiences and present positive role models for children to develop a strong sense of self-efficacy during their formative years in childhood.

### **Strategies for Enhancing Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is a learned phenomenon. There can be various strategies that can help develop self-efficacy.

- **Self-mastery:** One needs to build success by mastering tasks. The sense of mastery and achievement can help improve belief in our capabilities or effectiveness.
- **Role modelling:** Observing others in similar situations who have achieved success can inspire one to undertake those activities. Observational learning is also used when we make use of role models to imitate their behaviour.
- **Visualization:** One can visualize oneself behaving effectively, thereby generating positive emotions and increasing efficacy expectancies.
- **Verbal persuasion:** Being persuaded by people who are expert in the field, powerful, and trustworthy can build self-efficacy in the individual.
- **Creating positive emotions and regulating arousal:** If we are highly aroused, it may lead to negative emotions and hamper self-efficacious thinking. Hence one needs to lower the arousal by engaging in meditation, biofeedback, relaxation and other techniques. Regulation of negative emotions and creation of positive emotions will help one to develop self-efficacy.

### Activity 1

#### Enter into your stretch zone

There are three personal zones of achievement: comfort zone, stretch zone, and panic zone. One needs to go beyond the comfort zone (where the person does not want to enter into new arenas or put in more efforts), and also the panic zone (where the person does not want to take any risk). Stretch zone is where you are willing to take reasonable risks based on self-awareness and can take failures as learning experiences to move forward. Doing what we like, trying out the unknown, being vulnerable can help us to be flexible and open to new learning experiences. This will increase our self-belief or self-efficacy.

## 8.7 SELF-REGULATION

We all must have faced situations where we were required to control our desires or behaviour. We might have been successful at it or might not have been. For instance, you might have got very angry that your assistant staff at office did not do a task on time which was urgent. How did you control your anger? Or you might have bursted at a passer-by who just suddenly came in front of your car when you were taking a left turn on the road. Or you gave in to the temptation of eating sweets at a dinner party and ate too much. The crucial aspect in all these examples is exercising control over our desires, impulses and actions.

Self-regulation involves regulating our thoughts, emotions and behaviour so that it leads to a desirable or positive outcome. Self control and self-regulation are defined as people's ability to initiate and guide their actions toward the achievement of a desired future goal (Karolyi, 1999). Although self-regulation is used synonymously with the word self-control, there is a difference. **Self-control** is used in a limited sense where you suppress or stop your desires or behaviour. However, **Self-regulation** is a wider term which considers your long-term goals and value system and aims at using appropriate strategies or responses to achieve effective outcomes. There is emotional self-regulation which refers to managing our emotions in a proper way and respond

effectively to the situation. We have behavioural self-regulation also which refers to how we behave in a particular situation keeping in mind our values and goals; whether we respond by thinking about the situation, or we react on an impulse without thinking?

Self-control leads to better adjustment and positive outcome (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The famous Marshmallow experiment by Walter Mischel is an example of self-control (Mischel, 1974). It depicts self-control in the form of the *ability to delay gratification of desires*. In this experiment, small children were given a choice that if they want, they can get one marshmallow now which is in front of them, or if they wait for a period of around 15 minutes, the experimenter would get them two marshmallows. It was found that those children who could wait and displayed the ability to control and delay the gratification of their desires, obtained positive outcomes in their later years in life also (Mischel & Mendoza-Denton, 2003; Goleman, 1998). Self-control and self-regulation abilities helped them adjust effectively, achieve better academically and manage stress successfully.

For example, it is very important to teach a child to delay or defer the immediate satisfaction of certain needs. This will help in learning the ability to regulate oneself and delay gratification of one's needs. We all know how important self-control is in achieving the long-term goals. For example a child is having an examination tomorrow and today his/her favourite movie is coming on television. If s/he has poor self-control and watch movie instead of revising for the exam, s/he may not perform well in his/her exam. You can also think and discuss with your friends or family some other examples where self-control is required in our day-to-day life. Think of the situation at traffic red light. If a person has a poor self-control and difficulty to wait, imagine what could happen to him/her or they can cause accidents to others. There are many good practices in Indian culture which provides us with some effective mechanisms (such as keeping fast (*vrata* or *roza*)) for developing self-control among individuals which can also be very beneficial for physical system to detoxify and rest.

Thus self-regulation involves looking at the future goals and accordingly sacrifice the short-term desires and pleasures, e.g., if one wants to achieve better a particular body weight, a long-term goal, one needs to follow the health routing in a disciplined way and forgo the short-term pleasures of eating sweets or fast food. One needs to stay focused on the goal and take necessary steps, modify one's behaviour, acquire various skills in the way to achieve that long-term goal. So it is a dynamic process of interaction with the environment and changing one's strategies and plans to attain that end goal.

### Aspects of Self-Regulation

There are two parts to self-regulation: the goal or the desired outcome, and the process/path to reach that desired goal. The former is called the “**Goal intentions**”, e.g., your desire to achieve the goal of a particular body weight. The latter is called “**Implementation intentions**” that refers to the specific actions taken and strategies used by the individual to achieve the goal (Gollwitzer, 1999). It refers to actually implementing the plans made for attaining the desired outcome/goal. For example, to achieve the goal of attaining a desired body weight, I will exercise regularly from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. in the morning, have early dinner at 7 p.m. everyday, will not eat refined flour at all and so on. Thus it is not enough to have goals, but planning to achieve the goal is necessary, and further implementing the specific plans and steps is required to achieve the goal. Planning things and implementing the steps/strategies consistently will help bring automaticity in behaviour control (Bargh, 1996; Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). This

makes it easier to engage in self-controlled behaviour and facilitates self-regulation. Thus when you consistently exercise everyday morning, you will find it easier to get up and do it without having to exercise too much self-control to do it.

Let us see now how much regulated you are in your behaviour related to your academic learning. Do you set goals for your study? Are you able to prepare plans for your study? Do you spell out specific strategies regarding achieving your goals and implement them? What do you do when obstacles come up while carrying out the strategies? How do you keep yourself motivated throughout the process of achieving your desired goals?

**Self-regulated learning** (SRL) is a core conceptual framework that involves the cognitive, motivational, and emotional aspects of learning (Panadero, 2017). Various models of self-regulated learning have highlighted the role of metacognitive and motivational processes (Zimmerman & Campillo, 2003; Zimmerman, 2000). When you engage in self-regulation related to your academic behaviour, it is called **academic self-regulation**. It helps you to focus on achieving your academic-related goals despite various distractions in the short-term. Students lacking in academic self-regulation display low self-control.

Academic self-regulation has three important components (Brier, 2010):

- *Planning*: Academically self-regulated learners set goals and prepare plans to achieve it. They prioritize the goals and regulate their behaviour according to the goals. They are motivated to persevere in their efforts to attain the goals.
- *Problem-solving*: Such students implement various strategies to achieve the goals. They are aware of the performance standards they have set and work towards any obstacles related to it. They adjust and readjust the strategies to overcome the barriers in achieving the goals.
- *Self-evaluation*: It involves monitoring the progress towards the set goals. It assesses if their actions are consistent with the goal intentions and their value systems. If it is not consistent, they take steps to modify their behaviour according to the desired goals. A positive evaluation enhances their motivation further to engage in academic behaviour.

### Are You a Self-Regulated Learner?

Answer the following questions with a **Yes** or **No**.

**Do you . . .**

1. Have a plan before you begin to do your schoolwork (what you will do, when you will start, where you will work, in what order you will do your work)?
2. Set a goal before you start working?
3. Visualize your goal and imagine how you might tell whether you are acting in the way that you want to act (that you are keeping to your standards)?
4. Create priorities (put your tasks in an order) and a schedule to do your work?

5. Think out specific strategies or ways to achieve your goals?
6. Expect to do well before you start doing your work?
7. Feel interested in the work?
8. Think the work is important or relevant?
9. Feel motivated to put forth as much effort as you can?
10. Feel able to stay focused while working?
11. Keep track of whether you are paying attention while you work?
12. Notice whether you are making progress toward being as successful at schoolwork as you want to be?
13. Try to figure out what you would do differently to help yourself improve?
14. See a relationship between how hard you work, your strategies, and how you actually do?
15. Self-correct and adjust your effort, revise your strategies, or ask for help if you see you are not doing as well as you want to do?
16. Give yourself a reward (for example, a compliment) or punishment (feel ashamed or self-critical) when you finish your work, depending on how you think you did?

**Source:** *Promoting Academic Self-Regulation in Adolescents* by Norman Brier, 2010, Champaign, IL: Research Press (www.researchpress.com, 800-519-2707)

<https://www.researchpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/6615.pdf>

### Self-Control Failure

There are occasions when we fail to exercise self-control. There is inability to regulate ourselves to follow the planned out steps because of various reasons. These reasons for failure to self-control may relate to personal factors or to external situational factors. These factors can also be under one's control to change or not under one's control. **Excuses** are the explanations that we give for our self-control failure when factors were under our control, but we could not do so. It avoids taking personal responsibility and attributes the failure to external factors. Thus it helps us to preserve our self-esteem and self-image. At other times, of course, uncontrollable factors can hinder the implementation of our plans. **Cultural factors** related to belief system may also affect our ability to self-control or failure of self-control. Individuals internalize the socio-cultural belief systems that influence their own belief of self-control or lack of it. The amount of self-control exercised by people may have less to do with the power of the impulse, and more to do with culturally internalized beliefs about whether they should, or can, exercise self-control (Baumgardner & Crothers, 2015). There are also individual differences in self-control that govern the ability to control oneself. As Carver (2005) points out, personality characteristics such as ego-resilience, ego-control, and hardiness affect one's self-control ability.

Life may not always go according to our needs and desires. We need to adjust according to life situations on many occasions. There may be occasions in life, which involve battles between situational pressures and our self-control. We require will power,

determination and strategic planning to control and regulate our behaviour in accordance to our long-term goals.

There are number of psychological techniques to develop self-control which have been suggested below:

- **Observe your own behaviour.** If you make this a habit, you will notice and gather necessary information about yourself which may help you to alter, adapt, or strengthen certain aspects of your 'self'. You need to be more observant or mindful of your thoughts, feelings and behaviour.
- **Self-instruction** is another essential technique. If you are observant of yourself, you would find that this technique would be more beneficial. Have you noticed the self-talk which is going on in our mind constantly? We all often talk and instruct ourselves to do something and behave the way we want to. Such instructions are quite effective in self-regulation especially when you observe yourself to be thinking or doing something negative or destructive.
- **Self-reinforcement.** This technique involves rewarding behaviours that have positive consequences. For example, you may go to play with friends, if you have finished your assignments. These techniques are quite effective to develop self-regulation and self-control in people. You can try these techniques to make yourself better.

**Reflective Activity 4:** Go back to your childhood and reflect how many times your parents have asked you to wait before giving you something. The wait could be few minutes to few hours to few days or months, even if they could have given you the things which you asked immediately. Have you wondered why?

Write down two-three such instances which you remember.

Now ponder on the questions:

- Why have they delayed or made you wait?
- What important things it must have taught you?
- Discuss with your friends and write a short note on that.

### Self Assessment Questions 3

1. The individual's belief that s/he is capable and can control what happens to her/him is known as \_\_\_\_\_.
2. According to Rogers, \_\_\_\_\_ drive all human behaviour to achieve at their fullest level of potentials.
3. Self-regulation refers to our ability to organise and monitor our own behaviour. True/False
4. Self-regulation focuses on the short-term goals than long-term goals. True/False
5. What are the two parts/aspects in self-regulation.

6. Which of the following is NOT the psychological techniques to develop self-control?
- a) Self-observation
  - b) Self-instruction
  - c) Self-reinforcement
  - d) Self-indulgence

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## 8.8 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, you learned about how self is formed, different forms of self and how different cultures influence our self. All human beings strive for betterment, which creates the concept of ideal self, but reality may be very different. The discrepancy between ideal self and the real self can affect an individual negatively. You also learned about the different concepts related to self, such as self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-regulation and briefly about how to develop these. Self-concept is an important part of our 'being'. Positive self refers to viewing our own self in a positive way, valuing oneself, believing in oneself, and being able to regulate one's emotions and behaviour to achieve positive outcomes and desired goals. Strategies for developing self-esteem and self-efficacy were described. You also learned about the different psychological techniques to develop self-control behaviour and regulate oneself.

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## 8.9 KEY WORDS

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- Collectivistic Perspective** : In collectivistic perspective, the self is usually seen as attached with one's own group and both maintain the state of harmonious co-existence.
- Congruence** : state of being in which our thoughts about our real and ideal selves are very similar.
- Incongruence** : state of being in which there is a great discrepancy between our real and ideal selves.
- Self** : Self as a whole is about the person's thoughts, feelings, experiences, and ideas, with respect to herself or himself which define the person at both, the personal and social levels.
- Real self** : what we actually are.
- Ideal self** : which we would like to be.
- Social Self** : is primarily concerned with family and social relationships.
- Positive-self** : The positive view about our self which helps us to view the world as a safe and positive place to be in.
- Self-concept** : Our perception and ideas about our capabilities and qualities is known as self-concept.
- Self-esteem** : The evaluation or the judgment about our self or our own value or worth is termed as self-esteem.



- Self-efficacy** : The individual's belief that s/he is capable and can control what happens to her/him is known as self-efficacy.
- Self-regulation** : refers to our ability to organise and monitor our own behaviour.
- Self-reinforcement** : Rewarding our self for those behaviours that have positive consequences.

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## 8.10 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

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### Answers to Self Assessment Questions 1

1. False; 2. True; 3. D. both A and B; 4. C. Static; 5. D. Neill

### Answers to Self Assessment Questions 2

1. Carl Rogers, 2. False
3. Match the columns A and B
- (a) (ii), (b) (i), (c) (iv), (d) (v), (e) (iii)

### Answers to Self Assessment Questions 3

1. Self-efficacy; 2. Self-actualizing tendencies; 3. True; 4. False; 5. Goal intentions and Implementation intentions; 6. Self-indulgence

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## 8.11 UNIT END QUESTIONS

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1. Define self-concept. Differentiate between self-as-subject and self-as-object.
2. Differentiate between individualistic perspective of culture from the collectivistic perspective with examples.
3. Explain the importance of congruence between the ideal self and the real self with examples.
4. Explain the concept of self-efficacy and suggest ways to develop it among children.
5. Define self-regulation and describe different techniques to develop self-control.

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