learning objectives

• list several outcomes associated with high and low self-esteem
• using a study by Kamins & Dweck (1999), describe what happens when adults boost the self-esteem of children
• describe “engine model” and “thermometer model” of self-esteem and distinguish which one or ones are supported by evidence
• discuss how attributions and the zone of proximal development promote self-esteem
• explain what happens when the government creates incentives for high achievement in school

self-esteem is linked to positive outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>high self-esteem</th>
<th>outcomes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• believe that school is important</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• willing to try hard</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• liked by peers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• invested in &amp; perform well in sports</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• sociable &amp; conscientious</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>low self-esteem</th>
<th>outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• aggressive, antisocial behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• anxious</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• lack focus</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• depressed</td>
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role-playing exercise

Remember:

• groups of 2
• round 1: one plays child, other plays parent
• child comes home with B+ on a math test... parent discusses test with the child
• round 2: swap roles
• child scores a goal in a soccer game but the team loses 3-2... parent discusses the game with the child
which one do you think is best for children?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>valence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>negative</td>
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<tr>
<td>target</td>
<td>“you’re really smart!”</td>
<td>“you’re not the sharpest tack in the box”</td>
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<tr>
<td>process</td>
<td>“you tried really hard”</td>
<td>“you didn’t put in your best effort”</td>
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Carol Dweck

Kamins & Dweck (1999)

- 5-year-olds role-play through 5 scenarios
- in first 4, they do well and receive praise... random assignment to
  - person condition (self-esteem boost) - “you’re really smart”
  - process condition - “you tried really hard”
- in #5, they get a difficult scenario. The kids don’t quite get the task right.
- Does the condition affect whether and how much self-esteem takes a hit?
  - DV1: measure self-esteem before and after difficult task
- Does the praise affect whether they persist with difficult tasks in the face of failure?
  - DV2: ask children if they want to do easy or difficult tasks

Kamins & Dweck (1999)

5

Kamins & Dweck (1999)

6

Kamins & Dweck (1999)

7

Kamins & Dweck (1999)

8
self-esteem

- self-esteem decreases after failure
- decrease is largest when kids are used to getting self-esteem boosts
- self-esteem boosting makes kids fragile

persistence

- persistence was much higher in the process condition
- conclusions: offering process (rather than person) feedback
- makes self-esteem more durable
- increases persistence on difficult tasks

What is self-esteem like?

A: an engine
   self-esteem drives behavior

B: a thermometer
   self-esteem reacts to behavior

C: both

post hoc fallacy
correlation does not imply causation

when two variable (A, B) are correlated
• A might cause B
• B might cause A
• and/or C might cause A and B

self-esteem

behavior

something else
how to help children

1. attributions
   2. zone of proximal development

e.g., Leary (1999)

1. attributes

- two stable patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>attributions</th>
<th>view of ability</th>
<th>task goals</th>
<th>response to failure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>success = luck</td>
<td>entity</td>
<td>“I am a smart person”</td>
<td>“I want people to think I’m smart”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>failure = ability</td>
<td>judgment</td>
<td>“nothing can be done. I’m no good”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>success = ability</td>
<td>incremental</td>
<td>“I am growing little by little”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>failure = effort</td>
<td>development</td>
<td>“I want to learn”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>success = ability</td>
<td>mastery</td>
<td>“time to try harder”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>failure = effort</td>
<td>try task again</td>
<td>learning continues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>success = luck</td>
<td>helplessness</td>
<td>“nothing can be done. I’m no good”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>failure = ability</td>
<td>quit task</td>
<td>learning stagnates</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

mastery

process

You must have tried really hard!

helplessness

person

You’re such a smart girl!

self-esteem boost

helplessness

person

You’re such a stupid girl!

You must have not tried hard

You must have tried really hard!

You’re such a smart girl!
Zone of Proximal Development

- very low challenge is bad for learning (no stimulation)
- very high challenge is bad for learning (overwhelming, scary)
  - induces learned helplessness
  - impedes future performance
  - lowers self-esteem
- somewhere between high and low challenge is optimal
  - Vygotsky called this the **Zone of Proximal Development**
  - a range of tasks too difficult for the child to do alone but possible with the help of adults and more skilled peers

Vygotsky

**how can society help?**

- No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; 2001)
  - set high performance goals
  - standardized tests

**raising achievement in schools**

*Flink, Boggiano, & Barrett (1990)*

- question: does providing structure and motivation to teachers improve achievement in schools?
- field experiment
- participants
  - 15 grade four teachers with class (267 students)
- method
  - teach tasks (e.g., anagram) to children for 10 mins
    - videotaped
  - randomly assigned (IV)
  - performance goals condition
  - learning goals condition
- student performance evaluated by experimenter (DV #1)
- videotapes coded by blind raters for teacher’s level of interest (DV #2)
experimental conditions
Flink, Boggiano, & Barrett (1990)

instructions for each condition

1. learning condition (~8 teachers & their students)

"Your role will be to facilitate the children's learning how to solve the anagrams problems. Your job is simply to help the students learn how to solve the problems."

2. performance condition (~8 teachers & their students)

"Your role will be to ensure that the children perform well on the problems. It is a teacher's responsibility to make sure that students perform up to standards. If, for example, your students were tested on the problems, they should be able to do well."

results
Flink, Boggiano, & Barrett (1990)

- teacher's interest
- from video tape
- "blind" coders
- ratings of teacher's behavior
- student performance
- test grades

the effect of performance goals
Utman (1997)

- meta-analysis of 24 experimental studies
- learning goals = attempting to attain mastery
- performance goals = attempting to demonstrate that one has high ability
- difference in achievement
- learning > performance, effect size, d = 0.33
- equivalent of class B (learning; M = 70) vs. C (performance; M = 63) in university course

summary

- self-esteem is linked to many important outcomes
- boosting self-esteem by rewarding the child as an person backfires
- can make child fragile
- boosting a child's process by rewarding effort and strategy works well
- giving children tasks that are within their ZPD along with appropriate scaffolding (that you withdraw with time) leads to optimal development
- motivating teachers to increase performance goals backfires
- best strategy is to motivate learning