

This is How a Lack of Self-esteem Affects the Quality of Work

Author: Lindah Mavengere . June 2020

In a working environment, some individuals may find themselves plagued with feelings of self-doubt, about their capacity to handle the work environment. They may find themselves opting out of doing work-related tasks, as they feel they may not be as qualified to do the job to the best standard. This may be known as low self-esteem or in scientific terms, an inferiority complex. An inferiority complex can be defined as a pathological state of being overwhelmed by a real or imagined inadequacy, causing an individual to be less confident and overly critical of themselves.

According to Alfred Adler, the Inferiority complex can be categorized into two types; Primary inferiority and secondary inferiority. Primary inferiority arises in childhood, triggered by factors such as parental neglect, inadequate emotional support, and feelings of low self-esteem caused by poor academic performance. Often, it is increased by comparison to siblings, friends, and other successful individuals. Secondary Inferiority begins in adulthood and results from an adult's inability to achieve goals set to compensate for their original childhood feelings of inferiority.

In organizations, the traditional hierarchy system can trigger low self-esteem within an individual. It is a common belief that the authority figure has to be revered, regardless of whether or not they conduct the best practices. Promotions to higher ranks often come with the belief in leaders that their rank now equals more importance, which results in a sense of superiority over colleagues. As a result, one tends to underestimate their abilities and downplay their achievements, as they believe that the individual in the position of authority, is more knowledgeable.

Low self-esteem can interfere with the quality of work produced by an individual. One may be prone to self-doubt and second-guessing themselves at every step. The employees who have the most to share and contribute are usually the least vocal. Resultantly the individual may become depressed and feel inadequate when they fail to meet set targets. An individual with low self-esteem already feels they can't achieve as much as others in a certain task, therefore, if placed in a situation where they have to complete a task, they may feel very apprehensive about the task.

One way to deal with low self-esteem is to create a level playing field within the organization. As outlined in the servant-leadership theory by Robert Greenleaf, The leader should be a servant first, leading from a desire to better serve others and not to attain more power. With this kind of leadership in motion, the subordinate begins to see the leader as more of a team player, than a person in authority. They feel more comfortable and open to express their ideas to the leader. This creates a more healthy workspace where one is more confident in their abilities and able to clearly articulate their ideas. As an individual you can improve your self-esteem by using some of the following methods:

Carrying yourself with confidence

While there are much deeper issues associated with self-esteem, one of the biggest factors involves physical appearance. If you aren't confident in your outward appearance, then you may find yourself hiding, apologizing, or overcompensating. By dealing with appearance issues, you can give yourself an immediate boost of confidence and turn your attention toward the root of your self-esteem problem.

Recognizing your strengths

It is important to know as an individual, the areas you excel most in. By identifying these, you may initially focus on them, in line with improving your confidence. Once you have mastered these and have become an expert, you can go on to explore other new areas. This helps in overcoming that self-doubt and becoming better at what you do. With time, you will no longer feel as inferior, but rather very positive about yourself.

Lindah Mavengere is a Business Consultant at Industrial Psychology Consultants (Pvt) Ltd, a business management and human resources consulting firm.

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lindah-mavengere-552b32b2/>

Phone: +263 242 481946-48/481950

Mobile: +263 717 988 319

Email: lindah@ipcconsultants.com

Main Website: www.ipcconsultants.com.

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