

Essay on Managing the Self

Self-management is an important element especially for people who live with chronic conditions or personality issues, for example, low self-esteem. Self management is the kind of support and skill that assists the people with chronic conditions to understand their conditions and become more concerned about the management of their health and well-being (McConnell, 2011 p.3). The objective of educating people with chronic and conditions or personality problems about proper self-management is to make them more aware about their problems. In addition, the education aims at teaching the people the relevant skills and tools that they need to manage their conditions in a better way, teach them to cooperate with the healthcare professionals, and, generally, to take charge about their conditions. Lorig and Holman (2003, p.1) state that self management imparts skills like "Problem solving, decision-making, Resource-utilization, the formation of patient-provider partnership, action-planning, and self-tailoring." The skills are the learning outcomes that self-management education must achieve in the people with chronic conditions.

The objective of the essay is to demonstrate how the student understands the psychological aspects of the self, and discuss the ambiguities and uncertainties around the theoretical perspective about the self. The student also gives a critical reflection in line with the need for proper self-management skills. The position of the student is that teaching people with chronic conditions proper self-management is an important endeavor, and it is important to ensure that the learners achieve the objectives of self-management education.

Understanding the psychological aspects of the self is important to teach people with chronic problems how to manage their conditions. On the psychological aspects that one should understand in relation to self-management is self concept. McLeod (2008 p.1) defines self-concept as "The individual's belief about himself or herself, including the individual's attributes and who and what the self is." McLeod states that self-concept is important for both social psychologists and humanists. They are the people who are concerned with helping those who suffer from chronic illnesses to manage their conditions better. Under self-concept, there are certain aspects of the self that are important to understand. The aspects include the existential self and the categorical self. Other important aspects under self concept are self-image, self-worth, and self-esteem. Bee (1992) explains that the existential self is the basic-most part of self-concept. The existential self is the condition of physical existence of the body as a separate entity within the living environment. Lewis (1990, p.278) states that the development of self-concept depends on the fact that the human being relates with the people and objects in the physical world. The categorical self is the realization that one makes that he or she also exists as an object in the physical world. As a categorical self, it is important for an individual to understand his personal physical and internal attributes. Understanding the attributes enables one to define himself, for example, as tall, short, intelligent, loving, etc. Proper self management depends on how an individual understand himself as the existential self and categorical self.

Self-image refers to what an individual sees in himself. People with self-management problems may, however, lack proper self-image. McLeod (2008, p.1) states that self-image does not reflect the reality about the person. McLeod, for instance, states that, "Indeed, a person with anorexia, who is thin, may have a self-image in which the person believes that he is fat," (McLeod, 2008 p.1). There are factors within the living environment that affect an individual's self-image. Factors such as parenting, the media, and relationships (friends) are influential in the development of self-image. When assisting people with self-management problems, it is, therefore, important to focus on the environmental factors and the influences they have on the individual. It is also important to involve the factors in correcting the individual's chronic condition.

Self-esteem and self-worth are psychological concepts that demonstrate the extent to which an individual values himself or herself. The concepts or their states explain the extent to which an individual approves and accepts himself. People with high self-esteem (self-worth) are confident about their abilities; they accept themselves strongly, and they do not care what other people say or think about who they are. They also possess a lot of optimism. On the contrary, people with low self-esteem lack confidence about themselves, they do not admire who they are and, therefore, want to look like other people, they are always worried about how others perceive them, and they are pessimistic about themselves (McLeod, 2008 p.1).

Four factors are influential on an individual's self-esteem, according to Argyle (2008). The first factor is the individual's reaction to other people's perceptions. People develop strong self-esteem if they believe that they are admired, loved, and listened to attentively, among other supportive issues. Also, how an individual compares himself to others affect his self-image. If the individual believes that other people are better than him and he is inferior, he develops a low self-image. The other two factors are the individual's social roles and identification.

There are social roles that have a lot of prestige, for example, doctors, lawyers, and engineers. The roles come with identification of the individuals who possess them. The prestige factor that comes with social roles is culturally-determined, according to Argyle (2008).

The theoretical perspectives on self-management related issues have ambiguities and uncertainties. Theorists, for example, have posited about the existence and importance of self-motives in self management. The theories have portended that a number of self-motives are important in proper self-management. Some of the motives that the theorists mention include the motive for self-enhancement, the motive for self-appraisal, self-actualization motive, and the motive of self-improvement. However, the limitation of studying the self-aspects of motives has faced the problem of vagueness and inconsistency. It is difficult to measure the presence of the aspects of self-motivation in an individual and how they affect the individual's self-management. The other problem is that the theorists include even the aspects that are not directly linked with the self. Leary (2007, p.319) explains that the aspects of self-actualization and self-improvement cannot be regarded as self-motive factors because, "Although they may involve self-reflection, they are not about the self." Another problem of inconsistency is that the theorists use terms that are similar in meaning yet they do not make clear distinctions about the terms. One would wonder, for example, about the difference self-enhancement and self-improvement. Enhancement and improvement are near synonyms yet the theorists treat them as different words and use them to explain the aspects of self-management.

It is the strong belief of the student that proper self-management requires an in-depth understanding of the concepts of self. In order to correct people who have problems related to self-management, the psychological concepts are important. One must understand, in a precise manner, the relationship between the self and the environment. Self concept defines how the individual understands himself or herself. It defines the attitudes that the individual has towards himself or herself, and how the attitudes (self-perceptions) affect the individual's self image. Assessing the individual with self-management problems is the initial phase of helping the individual overcome the problem. There are behavioral signs that social psychologist (or psychiatrist) can be watchful about to identify the problem in the individual. The individual, for example, may show the behavior of self-seclusion (separation from others). Such an individual has a weak external locus of control, meaning that he believes he cannot control the people and objects in the environment. Assessing the sources of low self-image is also important. An individual may suffer from low self-image because the kind of parenting he receives, the kind of friends he interacts with, or the movies that he watches (McLeod, 2008). It is the opinion of the student; therefore, that self-management is an area that includes a range of activities that are geared towards helping the people with personality disorders that are related to poor self management.

The individual's self-effectiveness is important in how he relates with the work environment including the people in it. People with high self-esteem have positive relationships in their work environments. One of the reasons an individual may demonstrate high self-esteem in the work environment is great competence. The stature of the individual also affects his self-esteem. Managers and bosses may have higher self-esteem than the employees because they are above them on the chain of command. However, among the employees, the ones who are highly competent have stronger self-esteem than the lesser competent ones. Also, the employees' background problems or successes (in his family) affect his self esteem at the workplace. When teaching or correcting self-management problems at the workplace, therefore, it is important to focus on helping the employee to develop strong self-image and high esteem by addressing the root causes of the problem. If the employee has a competence-related problem, retraining the employee can be a source of increasing the employee's self-esteem and strengthening his self-image. However, understanding the psychological concepts of the self, which the student has described in the essay, is fundamental towards helping the people at the workplace.

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