

## Our Self-Image in 2008

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I've been busy reading various articles and other materials, some great and enlightening and others filled with the usual hate and discord common with tabloids. After reading these materials, I can't help but wonder what makes these diverse individuals tick.

I always have had an interest in human behavior and more specifically, the science of self-image psychology. The basic concept of self-image is that each of us is controlled by a mental picture of ourselves. Self-image is vital to our happiness and essentially to the achievement of our goals in life.

Many years ago, way back in the '70s, a book by Dr. Maxwell Maltz was published which literally changed the way self-image was viewed. This very powerful concept of self-image is a composite of our internal view of what "sort of person" we are. Each of us builds a self-image out of this belief of ourselves, formed unconsciously by past experiences, successes, failures, accomplishments and disappointments. This set of experiences determines the way we interpret other people's reactions to us. Or more importantly, the mental picture we have of ourselves turns out to be a prevailing guide for what we do and how we do it.

Our reactions to life and other people, the way we think, act, respond and even our abilities, often are determined by this subconscious self-image guide. The more Dr. Maltz studied the concept of psycho-cybernetics, the more he understood that our self-image can be changed. Yes, that is a tough concept for many to understand. However, if we develop an image that is too self-limiting to permit achievements in our lives, that image can be changed, enlarged, improved and altered. There are some concepts to keep in mind. One in particular is that we cannot outgrow the limits we impose on ourselves. Our thoughts, habits and abilities must be those of the person we believe ourselves to be. We can set new and different limits, but we cannot surpass the limits of our self-imposed self-image.

The more we understand this very powerful concept, the more we recognize that we can remove our self-imposed limitations by expanding our self-image. Another very powerful concept is that even if our actual experience does not lend itself to create a new experience for us, we can, through the power of self-image psychology, create a virtual experience.

As chiropractors, we know that the human nervous system cannot distinguish between an actual experience and the same experience created by imagery. This entire concept of self-image and internalization are fundamental to the understanding of our own emotions, as well as our patients. The individual who worries excessively about failure or sickness will find the same internal emotional experiences accompanied by the same reactions that are experienced with the actual disorder or feeling. This self-fulfilling prophecy will manifest the same physical and emotional reactions as the actual experience and the individual will develop symptoms identical to a real experience.

I often wonder if there are "forces" out there that foster a negative mindset in our profession. The continual bombardment of negative press creates discontent, distortion and obfuscation by continually

promulgating negative concepts and ad hominum attacks on individuals who disagree with their concepts. Rather than discussing and debating issues, those forces continually distort and perpetuate half-truths and misrepresentations, and seek to make their own case using tactics which always are self-serving and unable to be challenged simply because honest debate is never permitted.

My view of this self-image issue within chiropractic is simply this - we can continue to fuel this negative dynamic within the profession or we can choose to create a new image. I would like to invite all readers of this column to take a simple test.

For the next 30 days, simply decide that you are going to begin 2008 with a new and improved image. Use every spare moment and concentrate on goals and the greater success you desire. Put your imagination to a more positive use and reverse the worry mode, reverse the negative imagery, think about your successes and formulate ways to create positive images.

The mind works best when we feed it only one set of instructions. The mind cannot hold two conflicting images at once. We unknowingly set artificial limits to our growth and success by the influence we knowingly or unknowingly allow to enter our thought process. Each of us is the product of our thoughts, experiences and environment up to this point. Though we can control our experiences to an unbelievable degree, whether we choose to direct our own course through life is entirely up to us. The important thing is that we can do it.

I have learned that no matter what is said, how it is said and when it is said, someone will latch onto the words and distort their meaning to suit their own purposes. This self-image article is a powerful antidote to the negative bombardment we get almost daily from one source or another. Try simply taking those thoughts and flushing them into the porcelain wastebasket and begin the new year with a new self-image that will manifest itself into a more positive 2008 and beyond.

JANUARY 2008