

Pillars of Psychological Empowerment

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Interpersonal Relations in Business
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**For: Professor John V. Lesko
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Conclusions:

One's ability to engage in psychological empowerment with another is increased when one has internalized feelings of legitimacy and a sense of adequacy. Internalized feelings of legitimacy help one to develop the personal power and self-worth necessary for psychological empowerment. Likewise, internalized feelings of illegitimacy limit one's ability to effectively accommodate another's needs when one's own needs may not be met. A sense of adequacy helps maintain a person's legitimacy. The childhood rearing process impacts the development of a self-loving or self-hating individual. Factors negatively impacting healthy child/person development include the use of guilt and shame as often seen in occidental religions, parental withholding of approval or love, spanking, and parenting that is authoritarian, indulgent, or disengaged. Regardless of whether a one's personal power level is high or low, or whether one is self-loving or self-hating, the Bolton reader provides listening and assertion communication techniques that allow one to protect themselves, one's space, and to potentially engage in interactions to change another's undesirable behavior. These processes facilitate psychological empowerment through an increased understanding of feeling. The knowledge, acceptance, and administration of feelings allow one to more creatively accommodate another's needs and can potentially increase one's self-worth.

A Sense of Adequacy, Self-Concept, and Legitimacy:

From Anthony Athos and John J. Gabarro's article, "Some Aspects of Self-Concept" we learn that one's basic need is to develop and maintain a sense of adequacy in one's life (Reader, pg 81). The feeling of adequacy described in the article correlates with John Lesko's writings on legitimacy in "Self Love as Psychological Power and Health." Both articles articulate the necessity of a sense adequacy because without this

feeling one has no identity. Athos & Gabarro do not develop how a negative view of self, or feelings of illegitimacy, can impact individual development. However, it can be inferred from their article that behaviors surrounding feelings of illegitimacy would likely support a negative self-image. A legitimate feeling person would be more able to psychologically empower another than an illegitimate feeling person.

Both articles articulate the necessity of generating personal power and self-worth because the lack of this generator in a person would diminish identity and identity is just as crucial to living as the heart. Athos and Gabarro suggest that people develop a wide range of behaviors to maintain identity. Skill development, execution, and expectations enhance internalized feelings of self-worth. One's expectations of one's self, or those placed upon them by a parent, peer, or manager, help drive performance and impact feelings of adequacy. This point helps further explain John Lesko's point that human behavior is a self-fulfilling prophecy (Reader, pg 92). Internalized positive feelings and expectations position one for positive outcome and maintain or increase self-worth, while negative feelings and expectations have the reverse effect. Increased personal power allows a one to facilitate psychological empowerment because that person feels positively about himself or herself. Positive feelings increase curiosity that could be used to focus on another person to understand what they may be feeling and experiencing.

Childhood Foundations of Self-Love:

To develop further the points in Athos and Gabarro's article, we discover that children likely first identify with their parents and strive to survive or succeed based on expectations placed on them by their parents. Expectations become internalized and children eventually learn when they have earned or want approval. John Lesko's article on "Early Childhood Development" states that approval and love should be ongoing and

not used as bartering tool by the parent. Bartering for a parent's love does not teach openness and it could teach a child to focus on internal feelings of inadequacy. If a child focuses negative attention inward, the wheels of self-hate may start to generate feelings of illegitimacy.

Sources of self-hating situations that could result in childhood development include spanking, use of religion by a parent(s) to control undesirable behavior, and creation of low self-esteem by non-authoritative parents. From Barbara Meltz's article, "What Kind of Parent are You?" we learn of different child types to help us better understand how an adult with full reasoning and cognitive abilities may have formed root feelings of self-hate. These feelings, over time, could be the cumulative effect of instilled anger and hatred instead of compliance and love (Reader, pg 103). However, as an adult venturing down the road of psychological empowerment one would likely uncover some of these feelings. This helps to explain some of the in-class lecture notes as to why an illegitimate feeling person can change as their level of internal awareness grows.

From Coffey, Athos, and Raynold's article "The A-B Model" the Johari window can be used to help a curious one understand how the childhood rearing process impacts the development of another's public, private, transparent, and unknowable self. From an interpersonal business relations perspective, a manager may not want to know how an employee was raised but it could help understand how that employee's self construction and resulting public and private self formed. Further discoveries can ensue in the transparent self by objectively breaking down perceptions. Further, a psychologically empowering person needs to understand that how one was raised impacts another's ability to change a self-hating identity.

To succinctly touch on John F. Crosby's article "On the Origin of the Taboo Against Self-Love" we learn the extent to which the Judeo-Christian tradition has indoctrinated and formed internalized feelings of guilt and shame in children and adults. Children reared to fear the 'wrath of God' may become less able to contact their own feelings. Psychological empowerment challenges this tradition by enjoining parents to seek communication mechanisms that do not involve calling a child a 'sinner' when negative behavior is evident. Thus, psychological empowerment extends beyond daily adult interactions and into a means to become a more authoritative parent.

The Effects of Bolton's Listening and Assertion Skills on Psych. Empowerment:

The process of psychological empowerment is greatly facilitated through the listening and assertion skills outlined in Bolton sections two and three. The listening tools of attending, following, and reflecting enable the listener through a mix of verbal and non-verbal behaviors to reflect upon the speaker's meaning. Remaining alert and not faking attention (Reader pg 38) increase the effectiveness of the interaction. Following skills, brief encouragements, and infrequent questions, helps the speaker to derive increased understanding in another's words. Additionally, reflective listening, paraphrasing, and reflecting meaning empowers the speaker to help feel understood.

William James wrote, "Individuality is found in feeling." The Bolton reflective listening techniques help discover feeling and increased psychological empowerment occurs by clarifying feeling in coded messages, word meanings, and how minor issues may mask deeper feelings. The Bolton technique of 'you feel [the emotion], because [the speaker's point]' allows the speaker to hear his or her own words and feelings. The ability to focus listening power and body language on another while verbalizing concreteness and relevance correlates highly with psychological empowerment.

In regards to Bolton's assertion skills a core tool for performing psychological empowerment is discovered. The tool rests in the phrase 'when you [the event], I feel [the emotion], because [the reason].' This non-judgmental description enables one to protect their space, actively engage in need accommodation, and can increase feelings of self-esteem and legitimacy. Bolton writes about the difference of submissive and aggressive people and places assertive people within the midrange of these extremes. Asserting to another describes the undesired behavior accurately and objectively. When a person can do this while not drawing inferences about another's motives (Reader pg 145) then they would possess increased feelings of legitimacy. These positive feelings of self position one to potentially change a previously held opinion.

Assertion skills also help the facilitator develop techniques for dealing with defensive reactions. The use of listening and reflective skills in this situation helps the party asserted on to feel understood. However, the assertion must be made again to draw the situation closer to a resolution point. Other Bolton assertion techniques of self-disclosure, selective inattention, or permanent withdrawal all facilitate more healthy give and take relationships. One learns what relationships provide meaning and potentially disbands those other relationships that are harmful to one's self-esteem.

Summary:

The implementation of Bolton's writings and the process self-diagnosing one's feelings remains a challenging effort. However, the assertion method is a present time action oriented tool that enables a person to communicate more effectively and produce feelings of adequacy. Communicating effectively helps one to understand their needs and position. Armed with this understanding, psychological empowerment in interpersonal relationships can proceed.