

EMBRACING DIFFERENCE

The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Kathy is the supervisor of the accounting department at Midwestern Electronics' Minneapolis Division. Avery has just been transferred to her unit. In reviewing Avery's personnel file, Kathy discovered that Avery has a history of difficulty in communicating with his supervisors. Although prior supervisors commented favorably about his capabilities as an accountant, they also noted his inability to follow specific supervisor directions. Other company employees have also discussed Avery's reputation with Kathy. Kathy is an experienced supervisor who understands that she cannot prejudge Avery, or his pattern of behavior may continue. She knows that Avery is aware of what other supervisors have said about him and is just behaving the way everyone expects.

1. How will Kathy's appreciation of difference strengthen her ability to work with Avery? How might this affect Avery and his communication?
2. Describe how the self-fulfilling prophecy has operated in one of your own relationships.
3. How can Kathy's experience help you understand the importance of embracing difference?

we are dependent on our parents; this relationship is likely to change as we grow older and begin to challenge and question our parents' judgments and values.

In some cases, family influence can be devastating to our self-concept. If we grow up in a home where little warmth and love are demonstrated, we may believe that we are not lovable; if our parents scream and shout to vent their frustrations, we may grow up thinking we are the cause of their problems.

Of course, the opposite also can occur. We may grow up in a family environment that is overprotective, one in which individuals are not given the opportunity to explore and take risks. Parents often want to protect their children from the outside world; hence their love is overly possessive. The children, in turn, may feel guilty when they do not want to return the smothering affection shown by their parents. In both these family environments the feedback received from the parents is likely to have a negative impact on the self-concepts of the children involved.

Under ideal circumstances, our families can represent a highly constructive influence on the development of our self-concept. When our home life is warm and the environment is conducive to expressing and sharing feelings, our self-concept is positive. Furthermore, when problems arise and the necessary time is taken to discuss them openly, this also can have a positive impact on our self-concept.

■ Peers

Peers, another group of significant others, also can profoundly influence our self-concept. Some people go out of their way to gain the acceptance of their peers in order to boost their own self-concept; however, we sometimes let our peers play a