

INDULGING OUR PSYCHE

Self-esteem, self-respect, and pride in who we are; three overlapping concepts that describe feeling good about our achievements and therefore about ourselves. Each one important to our mental health. As adults, people experience these feelings based upon accomplishments in their careers, their relationships, and in the case of parents, their children. However, we all know things sometimes do not work out as we might like. From dismal failure to falling just short of our dreams sometimes things in these three categories do not work out as we hoped.

The bulk of our waking hours are spent at our jobs, in our relationships and with our families. Each one of these activities is terribly complex and at best a manageable challenge with moments of joy and at worst overwhelming despair. As the years pass we do our best to find satisfaction in our careers and in our relationships but sometimes events that could never have been predicted get in the way. In our jobs, our own actions have to pass through the hands of many others before results happen. Thus self-esteem, pride, and self-respect are removed from our direct control and held hostage to rolls of the dice.

Fortunately, our clever human mind has created an institution that allows us to participate in an activity of our own choosing where we have far more control over the result than in the activities that take up most of our time. It is an institution where we can set our own goals and pretty much guarantee success with all the self-esteem, pride, and self-respect that comes along with it.

How about that rose garden, cabinet you made yourself, vintage car that shines like gold, or the gourmet meal you lovingly prepared? Hobbies are a wonderful way to either

complement your achievements at work or even to replace failure with success. The human intellect, our ego, is a wonderfully inventive thing. In order to save itself from assault it has created the variety of *defense mechanisms* described in the Dictionary and discussed elsewhere in these essays. In addition the *ego* has also invented one of the most enjoyable and rarely self-destructive of defense mechanisms, the activities we call hobbies. We can choose any hobby we want. Therefore we can take part in something for which we know we have the abilities to succeed and that we can afford financially to achieve success. Also important, the result is a direct effect of our efforts. Hobbies are a perfect example of the role of a healthy *neurosis* motivating our behavior. The *neurosis* arises from our failure for a complete *sublimation* of our need to satisfy our *instinctual drive* for dominance within our daily lives.

The world in the twenty-first century is very complex. Vast amounts of information are now coming at us at an increasing rate. Whether your job, relationships, or your children, achieving success is harder than ever. Technology has indeed multiplied the degree of difficulty in finding success with its associated assault upon our *egos* attempt to keep itself feeling good.

We can control our own hobbies. We can even set our own goals with our hobbies. So here is a tool that is very valuable, find a hobby and set aside at least enough money and time to enjoy the activity. Hobbies are better than the bottle of booze or other “recreational” drugs. The sense of pride, self-esteem, and self-respect that you have from your hobby may even make you more productive in your job, relationships, and child rearing. A win-win in more ways than one.