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Self Image SECRETS

The Hidden
Reason Why
You Sabotage
Your Diet and
Exercise
Programs...



Just When The Going Gets Good...
And What You Should Do About It

By Tom Venuto, Fitness Success Coach

Self Image Secrets

The Hidden Reason You Sabotage Your Diet and Fitness Programs... Just When The Going Gets Good... And What You Should Do About It!

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Burn The Fat, Feed The Muscle (BFFM)**
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SELF IMAGE AND SELF SABOTAGE

The most powerful technique in the world for making rapid improvements in your results is self-image modification. Your self-image serves as the operating instructions of your subconscious computer and it controls everything you say, do, think and feel. In the absence of any deliberate change on your part, you will continue doing, thinking, saying and feeling very much the same things indefinitely.

- Brian Tracy, Author of Maximum Achievement

So, you decide you want to improve your body and live a healthier lifestyle. You read all the books, gather all the information, map out a nutritional strategy, design your own workout schedule (or have a trainer do it for you), and you embark on the journey to a leaner, more muscular physique...and it starts working! But the minute you begin getting results, you fall off the wagon: You binge, you skip workouts, you cheat. What's most perplexing and upsetting is that you know what you *should* do... but no matter how hard you try, you can't get yourself to do it! It's as if some unseen force is sabotaging you and controlling your behavior like you were a puppet on a string. Has this ever happened to you?

If this scenario sounds all too familiar, then the answer to your frustrations might lie deep within your subconscious mind in something called your "SELF CONCEPT." Unfortunately, the average person, at the mere mention of self concept, self worth or self image usually cries, "Oh no, not another one of these cheesy self-help articles!"

Whenever I mention self concept to a client who has never been exposed to the idea before, their eyes glaze over and they get a distant look as if they were saying, "okay Tom, I'll be out here in la-la land daydreaming for a while... pinch me when you start talking about the good stuff like thermogenic supplements, split routines, killer ab workouts and high intensity interval training, ok?"

You may not understand or appreciate this "self concept" and "self image" stuff yet. However, if you choose to ignore this information, you would be making a grave error. You can be on the most perfect nutrition program and the best training routine in the world, but you'll always sabotage yourself in the long run if you don't understand what your self image is, how it controls your behavior, and how to change it.

SELF-CONCEPT: YOUR BUNDLE OF BELIEFS

First, let's talk about your SELF-CONCEPT: This is the total bundle of beliefs you have about yourself, including all the names and labels you put on yourself and the way you see yourself. If you really want to know what your true self-concept is, write down the words "I AM _____" and fill in the blanks with everything you can think of. For example:

I am shy
I am not a good salesperson
I am fat
I am uncoordinated
I am sexy

I am unattractive
I am an F student
I am an A student
I am wealthy
I am a failure
I am accident-prone
I am a great conversationalist
I am broke
I earn \$25,000 per year
I could never earn \$250,000 per year
My body will always be shaped like a pear
I'm not very athletic

As you can see from the list, you have a "mini" self-concept for every area of your life including your relationships, your ability to attract wealth, your talent in writing, math, art or music and your body image, just to name a few.

Your self-concept was first formed in early childhood, largely from the influence of your parents and the authority figures in your life. When you were an infant and a small child, the "lid" on your mind was wide open. One hundred percent of the information and suggestions given to you at this young age went straight into your subconscious where they were accepted as true, even if they weren't true. Your mind was like a lump of soft, pliable clay.

When you reached adolescence, it was like the "lid" on your mind slammed shut with all the early childhood programming locked inside. As an adult, your self-concept has solidified, but it slowly continues to be molded and reinforced by your successes, failures, triumphs, humiliations and everything you experience, see, hear, read and think. For example, if you go on a diet or exercise program and you fail, this goes into your subconscious memory bank and reinforces a negative self-concept: "See, I told you I'll never be able to look like those people in the magazines."

HOW YOUR SELF CONCEPT AFFECTS YOUR BEHAVIOR

Although your self-concept is deeply entrenched from years of conditioning, it CAN be changed. Before I explain the four steps to making the change, I want to explain how your self-concept affects your behavior using an analogy everyone can relate to - MONEY! Why money? Well, as I mentioned before, most people not only don't understand the self-concept, they're bored to death at the slightest mention of it.

I'd hate to see you doze off before you get to the really juicy stuff later in this article, and since money is seldom a subject that bores anyone and it's a common denominator between all people, let me explain the relationship between money and self-concept first. Once you see how self-concept affects how much money you earn, you'll easily understand how it affects what kind of shape you're in. You'll then have enough awareness to begin changing your self-concept - and your body - for the better.

Question: If you won a large sum of money, or if your annual income suddenly became your monthly income, how would you feel about it?

"That would be AWESOME!" is what most people blurt out initially. Well, I have news for you: As bizarre as this may sound, I guarantee that if your old self-concept was

still locked in place, you'd do everything possible to get rid of your new-found wealth. You'd make bad business decisions. You'd be unsuccessful in sales. You'd have an uncontrollable urge to go out and spend the money, splurge on things you didn't need, invest in things you knew nothing about, lend to people who wouldn't give it back or even flat out lose it! Just look at what happens to most lottery winners.

Even though everyone SAYS they'd like more money, that's only on the conscious, surface level. The problem is, your behavior is NOT controlled by your conscious mind; your behavior is controlled on a deeper level - from your subconscious mind where your self-concept is located. If having a lot of money isn't consistent with your self-concept, it will sooner or later lead to some form of sabotaging behavior to bring you back down to your comfort level.

Most people stay inside a comfort zone that's consistent with the concept and image they hold of themselves. They rarely rise above it or allow themselves to fall below it. Any time you try to make a change in your life, whether it's losing fat or earning more money, it will stir up resistance inside you because you're attempting to move beyond the safe, familiar and comfortable.

To earn more money, you must see yourself as capable of earning more money and worthy of keeping it. If you see yourself as a \$24,000 per YEAR person, you'll NEVER earn and keep \$24,000 per MONTH unless you see yourself as a \$24,000 per month person.

Are you starting to understand how the same thing could happen when you try to change your body?

To be lean, healthy and fat-free, you must see yourself as being capable of achieving that body and worthy of maintaining it. If you see yourself as a fat, pear-shaped person, you'll NEVER be a lean, fat-free person until you see yourself as a lean, fat-free person.

Just when you start to see results and become happy with how you look... all of a sudden, you'll get the irresistible urge to sleep in and blow off your 6 a.m. workouts. You'll get uncontrollable cravings for Ben and Jerry's Chunky Monkey ice cream at 11:30 p.m. You'll lose your motivation. You won't "feel" like working out. These self-sabotaging behaviors are all symptoms of a self-concept that's inconsistent with your present results.

SELF-IMAGE: THE HIDDEN KEY TO ACHIEVING YOUR PERFECT BODY

The part of the self-concept that affects your physical condition and ability to achieve your perfect weight is called the SELF-IMAGE. Maxwell Maltz, a plastic surgeon and author of the best seller, *Psycho Cybernetics*, stumbled onto the discovery of self-image with his patients. Even though he had corrected physical defects and deformities with surgery, his patients often retained their old self-image and continued to see themselves as "ugly," "scarred," or "deformed" even though they appeared quite beautiful by society's standards. As a result, they continued to behave as they always had; shy, retiring, lacking in confidence.

This led Dr. Maltz to the conclusion that changing the physical image was not the real key to changes in personality and behavior. There was "something else." That

something else is the self-image. When the self-image is "reconstructed," the person changes. If the self-image stays the same, the person's behavior stays the same.

Emerson once wrote, "Of what use to make heroic vows of amendment if the same old lawbreaker is to keep them? Jesus taught that it is folly to put new wine into old bottles or a patch of new material on an old garment. People who don't understand self-image erroneously put all their attention on changing their eating and exercise behaviors, but the problem with this physical-only approach is that it's not addressing the SOURCE or cause of the behavior. The source of your behavior is your mental self-image. You are more than just a body. You are a body, a mind and a spirit. You will always act - and can ONLY act - like the type of person you SEE yourself to be in your mind.

If you see yourself as an overweight person, you will *behave* like an overweight person. If you see yourself as a lean, fit and healthy person, you will *behave* like a lean, fit and healthy person. An overweight person usually doesn't work out faithfully every day, so why is it any surprise that someone with an "overweight person" self-image would skip workouts? Their brain is programmed to skip workouts. Someone with a "overweight person" self-image usually doesn't eat healthy, low fat, low sugar, low calorie meals, so why would it be surprising that they cheat on their diet and binge on junk food? After all, their brain is programmed to eat junk food. Is this starting to make sense?

To make a lasting change, you must work on the physical AND the mental planes. Of course you have to change your lifestyle, exercise and nutrition habits, but the real secret is not trying to force new behaviors, but changing the self-image, which controls the behavior. Put your energy on a new mental picture, and the new picture will create new behaviors. Best of all, the new behaviors that spring from a positive new self-image will come without as much effort or willpower because they're hard-wired into every cell of your body. The "unseen forces" are now working for you instead of against you.

So, lets suppose you have the self-image of an unfit or overweight person... How the heck do you change it if it's so deeply embedded in your mind from years of conditioning? There are four simple steps:

STEP 1: CREATE YOUR NEW SELF IMAGE

The first step is to choose your new self-image. You could say this is goal setting, but your self-image is not as much a "goal" as it is a PICTURE IN YOUR MIND. I was on a conference call with success coach Bob Proctor recently and one of the participants said her goal was to lose weight. Bob said something to her that really struck me. He said, "Have you ever noticed how people are always losing weight and gaining it back? Well, it's because if you lose something, your subconscious mind will immediately begin looking for it. Instead, you have to release it and be at your perfect weight. And your perfect weight is a not just a goal, it's a picture."

So what you have to do first is decide what would you really like to look like if you could have any body you wanted. See the picture in your mind. Make it clear, vivid and dynamic. Dream. Fantasize. You've been endowed with an amazing creative faculty called imagination. Use it - it's the starting point of a new self-image and all lasting changes.

Many people get scared at this step and ask only for what they *think they can get*, not *what they really want*. It's okay if this scares you a little. In fact, if your goal isn't scary and exciting at the same time, then you're not thinking big enough. Don't sell yourself short. Ask for what you really WANT. Ignore anyone who tells you to "be realistic." Take that "lid" off your mind and DREAM!

STEP 2: CREATE A WRITTEN DESCRIPTION OF YOUR NEW IMAGE

Once you've got the picture in mind, the second step is to put a description of your new image in writing. The act of writing what you want on paper is an intermediary step in going from the ethereal, untouchable state of thought (imagination & dreams) to the concrete, tangible state of form. Once on paper (or a "goal card" you carry with you), your image has in essence, begun the transformation from mental to physical. When you write your goal, use the three P's: **POSITIVE** (what you want to achieve, not what you want to avoid or get rid of), **PERSONAL** (use the word "I") and **PRESENT** tense (an already-having-received attitude). Don't worry if it's not perfect. Just sit down and write, write, write. You can always go back and edit, change or update it later. Just start.

STEP 3: ACT OUT THE PART

What you've done in the first two steps is literally to create a new role for yourself. You've written your own script. Now be like George C Scott playing General Patton. He didn't just act. He *became* Patton - he lived the part. So do all great actors. Be an actor or actress and step into your new role.

This will feel awkward at first. Resistance will well up inside you. People will criticize you and say you're a crazy dreamer. It will feel like you're lying to yourself. Continue to play the new role anyway. Fake it until you make it. Someone once said that most people live like they were extras in their own movies. Why settle for less when you can be the writer, producer, director and STAR of your own movie? Create the character and write the script exactly as you'd like to be and then play the part until the part becomes real.

Take actions that are consistent with the new image you've created. Act the part. Do something every day that moves you closer to your goal. Get moving! Ask yourself, "What would a person with the type of body I want do in this situation?" Then do it. Act as though you were already the owner of your ultimate dream body. A very wise person once said, "Act as though I am and I will be."

You must take action. I'm not suggesting a Pollyanna positive thinking only approach. Affirmations are an effective part of realizing your new image, but as motivational speaker Jim Rohn says, "Affirmation without action is the beginning of delusion." In fact, Maltz pointed out in *Psycho Cybernetics* that the reason affirmations and positive thinking don't always work is because they cannot be used as a crutch to the same old self-image. What I'm suggesting to you is positive thinking, positive visualizing, positive action AND the fourth and final step, positive reinforcement, in order to change your old self-image.

STEP 4: REINFORCE THE IMAGE DAILY... EVEN HOURLY

The fourth step is to re-program your mind by replacing the old image with the new image through repetition, repetition, repetition. Repetition is the mother of learning

and the father of a new self-image. It took a long time for your current self-image to develop so you can't expect it to change overnight. It takes at least 21 days of CONSISTENT effort for the roots of a new image to form and sometimes up to 90 days before the roots shoot up through the ground and become visible for all the world to see. Remember, there is a gestation period for everything. Be patient and persistent.

Installing your new self-image is achieved by visualizing, reading, thinking and writing your written description over and over again, day after day, until the new image becomes reality. These four methods of reinforcement and repetition will burn the new image into your subconscious mind like data onto a CD.

Visualizing is especially powerful. Psychologists have known for decades that the human brain and nervous system can't distinguish between an experience that is real and one that is vividly imagined. When you vividly imagine yourself the way you want to be, doing the things you want to do, these mental pictures are not only accepted by your subconscious as real, they are accepted as commands or instructions. Project your image onto the screen of your mind. Remember, it's your movie, so you can project anything you want. Visualizing your perfect body image while you're in a physically relaxed state is even more powerful because your subconscious is more impressionable when you're relaxed.

Thinking constructively also begins to dissolve the old image and solidify the new one. Your self-concept is influenced by outside suggestions, but the greatest influence on your mind is your own thoughts and "self-talk." The conversation you have with yourself in your head every minute of every day maintains your current self-image and performance level, whether that's enjoying high achievement or wallowing in the same old rut. Thoughts, like images, are commands to your subconscious. Once you realize this, you start getting very careful of what you think about. Watch those "I'ms!" Change your thinking patterns to match your new self-image. You become what you think about all day long.

Read your written goal at least twice a day; once in the morning and once again at night. These are the times when your subconscious mind is most impressionable. An incredibly powerful technique is to write your written description on a goal card and carry it with you everywhere you go. Every time you put your hand in your pocket and touch the card, it will make you think about your new image. Every time you get a chance, pull out your card and read it, mentally picturing yourself as if you were already there.

Re-writing your written description is even more effective at impressing your new image into your subconscious than simply reading it. Achievement expert Brian Tracy says that if you write out your goal statement on paper every day, changes will happen so fast, it will almost frighten you.

A FINAL WORD ON THE POWER OF THE MIND

You may have heard of these techniques before in self-help, goal setting or motivational programs. But admit it - you probably ignored them because they sounded too "cheesy" or just too simplistic to be effective. The irony is that the most profound truths in life are the simplest and most obvious ones. Don't underestimate the power of these methods.

There's immense power in mental images. The formula is simple: Decide what you want to look like, project your new image on the screen of your mind (visualize), think about the "new you" constantly, create a written description of your new image and read it at least twice per day, (write it out daily for even more impact), then follow through with actions that are consistent with your goal. Your marvelous and powerful mind will do the rest.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

PSYCHO CYBERNETICS

PSYCHO CYBERNETICS was written by Maxwell Maltz, a plastic surgeon and expert on self image psychology. After you read this book, you will understand self image in great depth and how your subconscious mind controls your behavior. You will understand why diets have failed you in the past and why you've had such a hard time getting yourself to work out on a consistent basis even though you know exactly what you need to do.

I recommend the original 1960 version, which is available in trade paperback for less than seven bucks. By the way, this book has sold 33 million copies, and has never been out of print a single day since its first release in 1960.

<http://www.amazon.com/psycho-cybernetics>

PSYCHO-CYBERNETICS

JOIN THE MILLIONS WHO ARE
ADDING MORE YEARS TO LIFE — AND MORE
LIFE TO THEIR YEARS — WITH THE REMARKABLE
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DOCTOR'S
SIMPLE, SCIENTIFIC,
AND REVOLUTIONARY
PROGRAM FOR
HEALTH AND SUCCESS

THE WINNERS IMAGE

Another resource on self-image modification I recommend is YOUR WINNER'S IMAGE by Bob Proctor, the internationally renowned success coach.

This program is a phenomenal tool that will help you carry out the steps necessary to change your self image. If you do everything Mr. Proctor suggests, your mental picture of yourself will change and you'll see a transformation in 90 days so dramatic, it will challenge the limits of what you once believed was possible.

The mind is a powerful instrument, but it didn't come with an instruction manual. Learn how yours works!

<http://www.3percentclub.com/affshop.asp?bpap&1298&59>



About the Author:

Tom Venuto is a lifetime natural bodybuilder, personal trainer, gym owner, success coach, freelance writer and author of "Burn the Fat, Feed The Muscle" (BFFM): Fat Burning Secrets of the World's Best Bodybuilders and Fitness Models. Tom has written over 160 articles and has been featured in IRONMAN magazine, Natural Bodybuilding, Muscular Development, Muscle-Zine, Olympian's News, Exercise for Men and Men's Exercise. Tom's informative and inspiring articles have been featured in literally dozens of websites and e-zines worldwide. You can visit Tom on the web at www.fitren.com or www.burnthefat.com. You can subscribe to his monthly E-mail newsletter at www.fitren.com/listserv.cfm