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## Believe in Your Ability to Succeed

Self-image is not the same as conceit or an overinflated ego. It is, instead, a genuine self-respect, a positive mental picture of yourself that grows out of the recognition of your untapped potential. Unless you can develop a strong self-image, you greatly diminish your chances for success in personal leadership. Your self-image sets up an invisible barrier. You set your own ceiling and cannot rise above it nor progress beyond it. Unconsciously, you mark a line and say, "Beyond this point I cannot go."

If your self-image is negative, every decision filters through a network of unconscious fears and doubts. If you think that you are worth very little, that your talents and abilities are limited, you will unconsciously refuse to achieve very much. Ironically, the world is filled with people who have every attribute for personal leadership except self-confidence. They rate themselves so harshly that their low self-image relegates them to the ranks of plodders who venture little and gain less.

Although you cannot rise above it, you can raise your self-image. If you believe, "I can," you are correct. If you believe, "I cannot," you are also absolutely correct. It is a simple psychological fact that you act like the person you believe you are.

If you view yourself as a failure, you will fail no matter how hard you consciously try to succeed. You may accidentally outstrip your self-image for a time, but you will quickly readjust. We see an example of this on the professional golf tour. There are a dozen or more professional golfers who earn a comfortable living, yet never win a tournament. Often they lead by five or six strokes for the first two or three days of play but then manage to adjust to their self-image. You sometimes hear them tell a sports announcer something like this: "I have really been playing over my head," or "I don't believe how far ahead I am." Quite predictably, they adjust to their self-image and shoot enough bogies to lose the lead. They never win first place because their self-image is a fraction too low.

A low self-image produces negative attitudes that hamper development of personal leadership by forcing you forever to grapple with internal fears and doubts. If you cannot respect yourself, you cannot in turn, respect others; and if you cannot respect yourself, neither can others respect you.

One difficulty in maintaining a positive self-image is that most of us have been taught that self-love is wrong. Perhaps this is rooted in a misunderstanding of humility and in the idea that self-love is equal to selfishness. Nothing is further from the truth. We are told to love our neighbors as ourselves – not more than ourselves, nor instead of ourselves, but as ourselves. You must have respect for yourself. You need make no excuse for doing so.

Because the exercise of personal leadership springs directly from a strong self-image, you must learn to appreciate your potential and develop a self-image equal to the importance of the role you play in life. It would be futile, however, to attempt to use the external facade of positive thinking to substitute for a positive self-image.

How then can you go about improving your self-image? You must redirect your thinking and alter your attitude about yourself. Learn to appreciate and respect your own importance. You are the most elaborate machine ever designed. Your potential is unlimited.

You are unique in all creation; nowhere on earth is there another like you. There is never a basis for a comparison of one person with another, but by a process of growth and unfolding, you can make a contribution that no one else can duplicate. Knowledge of your personal strength and worth can help you to

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#### Motivating Yourself

You cannot wait for someone else to head you in the right direction; you must motivate yourself. Motivation is an inner need or drive that impels or incites an individual to action. Motivation is a desire held in expectation with the belief that it will be realized. Belief comes from your self-image, expectation comes from your reserve potential, and any desire supported by belief and expectation becomes a strong motivating force that propels you toward your goals. Self-motivation is neither a mystical power or a gift that descends from the heavens by chance. It grows, blooms, and flowers. It finds expression when you prepare for it, attract it, and reach out to receive it.

Human desires, needs and drives are fairly universal; but goals and behavior are individual. Two people may behave in diametrically opposite ways to reach identical goals. It's important for you to understand the universal drives that influence your actions, and learn to set goals and direct your actions toward achieving them.

LMI JOURNAL, VOLUME IV, NUMBER 1

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