

Introduction to Self-Worth and Responsibility

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Verbal and non-verbal messages we receive on a daily basis contribute to whether we see ourselves as having value or not. The commonly used term is “self-esteem.” I take exception to the use of the term “esteem,” preferring instead the concept of “worth.”

To my ear, “esteem” refers to the ability to “do” things as the basis for value, while “worth” reflects the fact that we have value simply because of Whose image in which we have been created. We are human “beings,” not human “doings,” and our Father sees our worth whether or not we perform well. I hold on to this and His many assurances that He will not forget or abandon me on those days when plans don’t work out as envisioned.

Coaches will inevitably come across ways in which our clients view themselves in less than favorable ways. While in consultation with a client some time ago, I saw the need for a simple chart description dealing with self-worth, assertiveness, aggression and the relationship between beliefs and behaviors. It is presented here for coaches who may see the same inner conflict expressed in outward behavior with their clients. This is part of the deeper listening we offer as coaches.

Many models of behavior present the continuum concept emphasizing only the opposite ends. It has appeared to me that people struggle with the idea that there is a middle ground that is pleasing to our Creator, whether it is the balance in our own internal view of ourselves or the balance of behavior within relationships. In their desire to avoid being taken advantage of, they may well overcorrect toward aggression, as well as the opposite error of overcorrecting aggression too far toward passivity.

It seems many people are familiar with the all-or-nothing, black-or-white construct that is so commonly a cause of stress in intrapersonal and inter-personal relationships. So, the concept of balance and acknowledging the healthy middle ground may be new to many. My recommendation is that people keep both of the following charts in view during the time period in which they are addressing any of these aspects of balance.

General Comments on the Self-Worth Chart:

- Each end represents an extreme self-view that is not consistent with Scriptural teaching.
- Aggression is no better than passivity. Passivity is no better than aggression.

- False pride or arrogance is as serious a problem as false humility, for both represent a flawed understanding of who we are as His people.
- The center column represents one way to describe the healthy balance between recognition of one's personal value, as well as the value of others.

General Comments on the Responsibility Chart:

- The position of “**Responsible For**” seems to represent the God-given role we have as parents to care for our children. Unfortunately, parents must also recognize the changes necessary as their children mature. A wise path is to begin to transfer personal responsibility to each child as they demonstrate the ability to handle it in each area. If a parent tries to retain too much responsibility throughout the teen years, they will experience the negative consequences listed, and the child will not arrive at the adult years fully prepared to be competent. If an adult tries to relate to another adult in this manner, all sorts of difficulty will arise in even more stressful ways.
- The “**Responsible To**” column represents the healthy balance of recognition of one's personal role and the importance of relationship balance. All too often, people who struggle with retaining too much responsibility for others fear that moving in this direction means they no longer really care about the person.
- To address that concern, the third column attempts to represent what it would really look like to give up and turn off concern in a relationship. Seeing it in print often gives people a sort of mental or emotional permission within themselves to move toward the center column without fear that they are being unloving.

[Responsibility Chart](#)

[Self Worth Chart](#)