

Self-Efficacy



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Some people will jump into the deep end of the pool without considering whether or not they can swim, apparently with confidence that they will be able to work it out once they are in the water. Some people will jump in only if they believe they already know how to swim. Some people start at the shallow end and work their way down the steps. Some people never get wet. In fact, most of us exhibit all of these tendencies in different situations. The technical term for this phenomenon is *self-efficacy*, and it is one of the most important personality factors that there is.

Self-efficacy is simply the tendency to take action in a particular type of situation. Self-efficacy doesn't say anything about the reasons for this. It doesn't say anything about self-confidence, for example, or about any other personal trait. It doesn't even say anything about competence or effectiveness. Although self-confidence *does* tend to encourage action, it is also possible to take a flying leap without having a clue whether or not it will work. The flying leap makes a lot of sense in many situations where there is little risk or a great deal to be gained, or where there is ample opportunity to try again. Flying leaps are the source of most innovation and discovery. Let's call it exploration and experimentation.

Self-efficacy can be cultivated. The cultivation of self-efficacy in various domains is at the heart of executive training and development, military command and operations, sports and yoga, and personal counseling. Apparently intractable personal dilemmas and situations can generally be resolved through exploration and action, but the tendency to explore and to act must often be cultivated. Self-efficacy in the psychological and interpersonal domains is the essence of personal counseling and psychotherapy, and the consulting room provides a field on which to exercise it. Self-efficacy in the consulting room can leak into other domains as well, where it can determine the quality of your life. Call me.

Relief, Recovery, Resolution

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