

Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition

15 The Self

- 1 01:00:16:23 >> ZIMBARDO: Why is a shy person often treated as if she or he is inadequate?
- 2 01:00:23:03 >> I messed up again.
- 3 01:00:25:17 >> Hello.
- 4 01:00:27:10 >> ZIMBARDO: What behavior can raise or lower our status with other people?
- 5 01:00:32:20 >> Ages.
- 6 01:00:34:08 >> ZIMBARDO: Does getting a reward make us more or less creative?
- 7 01:00:37:10 >> You look fabulous.
- 8 01:00:40:16 >> ZIMBARDO: "The Self," this time on *Discovering Psychology* .
- 9 01:01:17:18 >> ZIMBARDO: In this program, we're going to turn our attention to ourselves, or more precisely, to the psychological concept of self -- the individual's consciousness of his or her own identity.
- 10 01:01:30:12 What does the mind's eye see when it looks into the self -- into that special mirror that reveals one's innermost thoughts and feelings, our own private world we so often hide from others?
- 11 01:01:45:26 Ancient Greeks who traveled to the oracle at Delphi for answers to their problems found this message inscribed on the shrine: "Know thyself."
- 12 01:01:56:15 Centuries later, it was William James who in 1890 set the stage for the modern resurgence of psychology's interest in the self.
- 13 01:02:05:08 In studying what he called "the mind from within," James distinguished three aspects of the self: the material, the spiritual, and the social.
- 14 01:02:16:08 The material self is our awareness of the physical world- -

our body and the people and things around us.

- 15 01:02:24:19 The spiritual self is the part that thinks of ourselves as thinkers -- the inner witness to events.
- 16 01:02:32:01 And the part of the self that focuses on the images we create in the minds of others is called the social self.
- 17 01:02:40:02 While it was William James who pioneered the scientific concept of self, many earlier philosophers and writers had also recognized this dimension of human nature.
- 18 01:02:53:04 Some psychologists believe that the gradual separation of a young child from its mother, a process called individuation, is essential for developing a unique sense of self and a healthy personality.
- 19 01:03:06:00 >> Here's the Mommy.
- 20 01:03:07:09 >> Mommy.
- 21 01:03:09:09 >> ZIMBARDO: Failure to acquire an independent self-identity can lead to psychological problems.
- 22 01:03:14:15 Today, many psychologists are keenly interested in studying the self, but there was a time when psychology focused almost exclusively on behavior.
- 23 01:03:24:03 There was no place for anything as fuzzy as the concept of self.
- 24 01:03:29:21 Even to Freud, the conscious self was little more than a weak, passive link in his triad of id, ego, and superego.
- 25 01:03:39:00 Freud defined the id as the primitive, unconscious part of the personality where drives and passions originate.
- 26 01:03:48:27 The superego restrains the id.
- 27 01:03:52:01 For Freud, the superego is a combination of the conscience and the ideal self.
- 28 01:03:59:23 The ego, our conscious sense of self-identity, moderates between the id and superego -- between our primitive impulses and our sense of moral obligation.
- 29 01:04:11:10 Freud was much more interested in the dramatic confrontations between the unconscious id and the superego

than he was in conscious processes of the ego.

- 30 01:04:20:18 But other psychologists, such as Carl Rogers, seen here in the 1960s, put a much greater emphasis on aspects of the conscious self.
- 31 01:04:31:25 Rogers led the humanistic movement, which was most responsible for psychology's return to the self.
- 32 01:04:40:01 Instead of Freud's pessimistic view of a conflicted, impulse-driven creature, Rogers offered an optimistic vision of psychological growth and health.
- 33 01:04:50:02 >> There is within the individual a capacity for self-understanding, for self-direction, for guiding behavior in self-directed ways, which can be tapped if we can provide the right conditions.
- 34 01:05:10:29 In other words, the individual does have a capacity and a potentiality for development and change and integration.
- 35 01:05:18:26 It doesn't need to be supplied from the outside.
- 36 01:05:23:22 >> ZIMBARDO: And so we see in the humanistic view a self that is striving toward personal fulfillment -- an inner guiding force that moves us toward positive actions and enhancement.
- 37 01:05:35:29 It is a self imbued with a kind of virtue that gives humans kinship with the angels.
- 38 01:05:44:07 For psychologists, the next step after describing the properties of the self has been to explore just how this dynamic mental structure works in controlling behavior.
- 39 01:05:56:03 Researchers who study the self talk of the self-concept: the individual's awareness of his or her continuing identity as a person.
- 40 01:06:06:01 This self-concept is viewed as an internal regulator of thoughts, feelings, and behavior.
- 41 01:06:12:23 It interprets and organizes our ongoing experiences.
- 42 01:06:16:03 It reflects on how our present actions compare with our standards and expectations.
- 43 01:06:20:23 And it affects our performance by providing plans, scripts,

- goals, and incentives.
- 44 01:06:28:00 We organize our beliefs and information about ourselves in terms of schemas, or knowledge clusters.
- 45 01:06:34:04 For some people, gender schemas are all-important -- masculinity and femininity dominates their thinking.
- 46 01:06:42:16 Other people are "weight schematic" -- always trying to lose weight and perceiving others primarily in terms of being fat -- out of control -- or being thin -- having it all together.
- 47 01:06:54:27 Our self-schema or self-image can have a powerful impact on our behavior.
- 48 01:07:00:04 If our self-image is good, we try to live up to this standard.
- 49 01:07:03:13 We try harder and succeed more often.
- 50 01:07:06:29 If our self-image is bad, we tend to adjust downward, and end up failing more often.
- 51 01:07:12:13 So self-image can work for or against us.
- 52 01:07:16:05 Along this line, Albert Bandura of Stanford has developed what he calls the theory of self- efficacy, a new theory of how the self works which can help us understand how some people translate promise and passion into optimal performance.
- 53 01:07:31:12 >> Well, self-efficacy is concerned with people's beliefs in their capabilities to exercise control over situations that affect their lives.
- 54 01:07:42:10 People who have a high sense of efficacy tend to take on challenges that they believe they can master, whereas those who are plagued by self-doubts tend to shy away from activities and situations that they feel exceed their coping capabilities.
- 55 01:08:00:28 And these kind of choices can affect the kind of career paths and the life paths that they pursue.
- 56 01:08:09:11 >> ZIMBARDO: Bandura and his colleagues conduct experiments, manipulating factors that affect self-efficacy and demonstrating how self-efficacy influences performance.
- 57 01:08:20:06 In this experiment, researcher Delia Cioffi gives the subject

- the task of improving production at a model furniture factory.
- 58 01:08:28:09 She tells him that his ability to make good decisions for the factory is based on innate intelligence and ability.
- 59 01:08:35:14 >> The higher one's basic capacities in these skills, the better one will perform.
- 60 01:08:40:05 Now, the computer program pretty much paces you through it.
- 61 01:08:43:16 >> ZIMBARDO: The next subject is told that complex decision making is an acquirable skill -- that his performance can improve through his own efforts.
- 62 01:08:53:15 >> In any new skill, one doesn't begin with faultless performance, but the more one practices formulating and testing decisions, the better one gets at it.
- 63 01:09:03:08 >> ZIMBARDO: The first subject, who thinks decision making ability is a measure of his intelligence, proceeds cautiously.
- 64 01:09:11:09 He sets lower goals for himself, and is frustrated by an increasing number of incorrect decisions.
- 65 01:09:17:22 His confidence, measured by the number on the lower left of the screen, keeps falling, as does his sense of efficacy.
- 66 01:09:33:20 The second subject, however, sees early mistakes as a necessary part of learning.
- 67 01:09:39:09 He profits by them, and his performance improves.
- 68 01:09:43:09 He sets higher goals for himself, and his response to questions about confidence demonstrate an increasing sense of his own efficacy.
- 69 01:09:52:09 >> The issue is not what you have, but how you use what you have.
- 70 01:09:57:07 And from this point of view, you see, you can have the same competencies and subskills and use them poorly, adequately, or extraordinarily, depending on your self-belief.
- 71 01:10:10:03 So for this reason, you can often predict people's accomplishments better from the self-belief rather than from their just past attainments.

- 72 01:10:19:18 >> ZIMBARDO: Up until now, we've been concentrating on that part of the self which focuses inward to assess its capabilities.
- 73 01:10:27:24 But there's another aspect of the self that focuses outward to get a fix on the impression being created in others.
- 74 01:10:35:06 This outward focus, the awareness of the social self, asks the questions "How am I coming across?"
- 75 01:10:42:10 What impression am I creating?
- 76 01:10:44:08 Do you see me the way I see myself?
- 77 01:10:47:29 Do you see me the way I'd like you to see me?" Here at Stanford University's Theater Department, Patricia Ryan teaches drama, and the nuances of self-presentation in American culture.
- 78 01:11:03:04 Hi, Patricia.
- 79 01:11:04:29 >> Hello, Phil.
- 80 01:11:06:11 >> ZIMBARDO: As a drama teacher, you train actors in self-presentational skills to help them convey an impression to an audience.
- 81 01:11:14:25 How does that work?
- 82 01:11:16:02 >> Well, there's a concept we use called status, which has to do with how we manipulate the affect of our self to one another.
- 83 01:11:25:24 The content in a given circumstance can be the same, but the way in which I speak to you, the way that I use nonverbal cues, will affect my relationship to you.
- 84 01:11:37:04 There are four aspects that we can manipulate in terms of status transactions.
- 85 01:11:42:07 The first of these would be eye contact.
- 86 01:11:46:07 And it's commonly known that eye contact is a useful device in asserting oneself.
- 87 01:11:51:16 As I'm continuing to talk about this subject, start averting your gaze from time to time.
- 88 01:11:56:28 Fail to make eye contact with me, but you know, stay in the

- scene and continue to listen, but just change the way in which you relate.
- 89 01:12:06:13 Something has shifted in the way... nothing else has shifted except that you're not really looking at me.
- 90 01:12:12:03 How does it make you feel when you do that?
- 91 01:12:14:09 >> ZIMBARDO: Disengaged.
- 92 01:12:15:15 I mean, we're not in synchrony the way we were before.
- 93 01:12:17:27 >> Another variable, of course, is whether or not the body is moving in a sustained way or whether it has sort of jerky movements.
- 94 01:12:25:25 As soon as I begin to kind of move my body in jerky ways, it also affects my speech, you notice.
- 95 01:12:33:24 It's hard to sustain sentences when I'm moving and my head's moving up and down.
- 96 01:12:38:19 Now, a lot of people kind of...
- 97 01:12:39:25 but at the cost of their status, in some cases.
- 98 01:12:45:15 So that the prototype for high status would be someone who is basically calm, who speaks in complete sentences, breathes deeply, makes eye contact, and doesn't have any particular jerky mannerisms.
- 99 01:13:02:09 >> ZIMBARDO: Can we demonstrate some of these?
- 100 01:13:04:23 >> Yes, we could.
- 101 01:13:05:23 There's a short scene in which we'll play ourselves in a...
- 102 01:13:08:09 just coming to meet one another.
- 103 01:13:09:13 The scene begins.
- 104 01:13:10:13 You say, "Hello."
- 105 01:13:11:08 >> ZIMBARDO: Hello.
- 106 01:13:12:12 >> And I say, "Hello."
- 107 01:13:13:15 And you say, "Been waiting long?" >> ZIMBARDO: Been waiting long?

- 108 01:13:16:25 >> And I say, "Ages."
- 109 01:13:17:26 >> ZIMBARDO: That's going to be constant in all the scenes.
- 110 01:13:20:02 >> Right.
- 111 01:13:21:06 Now the first time we play it, why don't you come in maintaining high-status kinds of postures with the eyes and face and body, and I'll play low- status behavior, and see what the result is.
- 112 01:13:29:22 >> ZIMBARDO: All right.
- 113 01:13:30:21 Let's do it.
- 114 01:13:31:19 >> Okay.
- 115 01:13:35:02 >> ZIMBARDO: Hello.
- 116 01:13:36:09 >> Hello.
- 117 01:13:37:17 >> ZIMBARDO: Been waiting long?
- 118 01:13:39:03 >> Ages.
- 119 01:13:41:05 Okay.
- 120 01:13:43:07 Good.
- 121 01:13:44:21 Why don't you try... let's switch who is high status.
- 122 01:13:48:04 And I'll be high status staying here, and you enter the scene in a low-status mode.
- 123 01:13:56:14 >> Hello.
- 124 01:13:58:02 >> Hello.
- 125 01:13:59:11 >> ZIMBARDO: Been... been waiting long?
- 126 01:14:01:19 >> Ages.
- 127 01:14:06:14 Good.
- 128 01:14:07:22 All right.
- 129 01:14:09:05 Not only can we manipulate our own status, it's possible to lower the status of the person you're with.

- 130 01:14:15:07 >> ZIMBARDO: All right.
- 131 01:14:16:02 >> Let's try that.
- 132 01:14:22:15 >> ZIMBARDO: Hello.
- 133 01:14:24:10 >> Hello.
- 134 01:14:25:18 >> ZIMBARDO: Been waiting long?
- 135 01:14:27:18 >> Ages.
- 136 01:14:33:06 >> ZIMBARDO: Status transactions take place all the time between all kinds of people.
- 137 01:14:37:27 They're a form of interpersonal communication in which people establish their relative degrees of social status and power.
- 138 01:14:44:24 They demonstrate as well as anything the social aspects of the self-concept.
- 139 01:14:50:01 To manage the impression we create in others, we all engage in what's called strategic self- presentation -- how we present ourselves to others so that they'll see us the way we see ourselves.
- 140 01:15:02:16 >> Take that, okay, into your body.
- 141 01:15:04:26 And make it so grand that it would be almost total melodrama.
- 142 01:15:07:29 >> ZIMBARDO: Daena Giardella is a Boston area psychotherapist and actress who uses the tools of acting to explore the process of strategic self-presentation.
- 143 01:15:17:01 >> Okay.
- 144 01:15:18:10 >> Okay.
- 145 01:15:19:09 And there... you are this little.
- 146 01:15:21:02 You are down there.
- 147 01:15:22:14 >> ZIMBARDO: In the following scenes, she will demonstrate how this process of self- presentation works.
- 148 01:15:28:06 >> Oh, I feel so lousy.

- 149 01:15:30:26 I don't think things could get much worse.
- 150 01:15:33:27 >> Hi.
- 151 01:15:35:18 >> Hi.
- 152 01:15:37:01 >> Are you going to the concert tonight?
- 153 01:15:40:02 >> I don't know.
- 154 01:15:41:01 I feel really down.
- 155 01:15:42:04 I don't know.
- 156 01:15:43:07 I'm in a really bummed-out place.
- 157 01:15:45:08 I don't think I can deal with it.
- 158 01:15:47:14 >> I was thinking...
- 159 01:15:48:27 >> ZIMBARDO: Other people react to us according to the context our behavior has created.
- 160 01:15:53:24 Then we see the way they respond to us, which confirms our original belief about the kind of person we really are.
- 161 01:16:01:27 >> I blew it again.
- 162 01:16:04:04 >> ZIMBARDO: It's a closed circle -- what researcher Mark Snyder has called "behavioral confirmation."
- 163 01:16:14:21 Our beliefs, our sense of self, create their own reality.
- 164 01:16:18:22 That's why depressed people elicit negative reactions, and tend to be treated as if in fact they are inadequate, while extroverts create an easygoing social climate in which others tend to respond positively to them.
- 165 01:16:34:21 >> Hi.
- 166 01:16:35:28 >> Hi, how you doing?
- 167 01:16:36:22 >> Good.
- 168 01:16:37:15 You going to the concert tonight?
- 169 01:16:38:29 >> Yeah, I am.
- 170 01:16:39:19 Looking forward to it.

- 171 01:16:40:10 >> Great.
- 172 01:16:40:28 >> You coming?
- 173 01:16:41:18 >> Yeah.
- 174 01:16:42:07 >> Oh, good.
- 175 01:16:42:27 >> I'll see you there.
- 176 01:16:43:17 >> Okay.
- 177 01:16:44:07 Take care.
- 178 01:16:44:27 >> Bye-bye.
- 179 01:16:45:17 >> Bye-bye.
- 180 01:16:49:08 >> ZIMBARDO: Who we are is part of a constant cycle of internal and external perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors.
- 181 01:16:54:17 One of the most important factors that influence our identity is the cultural context in which we live.
- 182 01:17:00:25 Cultural Psychologist Hazel Markus of Stanford University, looks at the intimate connection between the self and culture.
- 183 01:17:08:15 >> When we talk about self, we're talking about the way in which the biological being becomes a person.
- 184 01:17:19:02 Becoming a person is a social endeavor.
- 185 01:17:24:22 You can be a biological being all by yourself, but to become a person, to become a self, you have to engage with or take on or incorporate the cultural meanings, cultural ideas, cultural practices.
- 186 01:17:41:15 You have to use those to become a person.
- 187 01:17:44:24 You can't be a self by yourself.
- 188 01:17:46:26 You can be a biological entity, but to be a person, to be a self, you have to do it in some set of culture-specific ways.
- 189 01:17:59:28 >> ZIMBARDO: Culture can be seen not as biologically based, but rather socially based.
- 190 01:18:04:26 It is a set of behaviors and attitudes we adopt as a means of

defining who we are.

191 01:18:11:17 >> Lots of people tend to think of culture as something inside people, like some entity or some essence.

192 01:18:18:05 Often people will think about Americans have some kind of American genes or American traits or some kind of American attributes that make them American.

193 01:18:27:27 It's absolutely not that.

194 01:18:30:02 Culture is what you do.

195 01:18:32:15 And so if you take a person and have that person connect with and use American ideas and American ways of doing things, that person will be an American.

196 01:18:44:27 If you take that same person and put that person in a Japanese context, that person will become Japanese in that sense.

197 01:18:55:05 Culture is a matter of the common ideas and the common ways of doing things.

198 01:19:01:21 >> ZIMBARDO: We can view culture and self as a collaboration: culture shapes self and self perpetuates culture.

199 01:19:08:17 This idea is known as mutual constitution and is reflected in the artifacts, art, literature, even the media of all societies.

200 01:19:18:24 >> Most of us are exposed to hundreds, maybe thousands of images in a given day.

201 01:19:24:18 A lot of them you don't pay a lot of attention to, but they're out there, and they shape our thinking about how to be a person, how to be a self.

202 01:19:31:14 This is... Dennis Rodman says he's not the boy next door.

203 01:19:35:23 That's important, because none of us as Americans want to be the boy next door.

204 01:19:40:13 This is for a cologne -- "A declaration of independence."

205 01:19:44:04 What does that have to do with the cologne?

206 01:19:46:19 Who knows?

- 207 01:19:47:18 But we are, after all, a culture of the individual.
- 208 01:19:50:04 "Ditch the Joneses."
- 209 01:19:52:27 It used to be keeping up with the Joneses is the thing to do, but now it's important not only to be up to them -- be a little bit different from the Joneses.
- 210 01:20:02:08 You will never see an ad in Japanese advertisement that says, "Ditch the Kitiamas," you know?
- 211 01:20:08:17 It just wouldn't be a sentiment that would work in Japan.
- 212 01:20:11:18 In Japan, the goal of being a person is to be connected with others, so this is an ad that reflects that idea.
- 213 01:20:18:13 The ad says, "Win the nearest to the pin contest."
- 214 01:20:22:03 Well, clearly only one person can win the nearest to the pin contest, but they don't just show one golfer all by him or herself out on the greens, as I think an American ad might show.
- 215 01:20:31:07 Instead, what they show is the whole group.
- 216 01:20:33:28 They're happy to be together.
- 217 01:20:35:08 The way to be is to be part of it.
- 218 01:20:38:25 Not different, not separate, not unique, but with others.
- 219 01:20:42:24 More and more people these days have the opportunity, really, of being bi or tri-cultural.
- 220 01:20:53:00 It's not a simple thing to do, but it'll be the task of more and more people in the world.
- 221 01:21:00:16 >> ZIMBARDO: One of the greatest challenges to cultural identity is overcoming the threat of bigotry.
- 222 01:21:06:14 The ethnic and racial prejudices of a dominant culture can eat away at the self-regard of minority people.
- 223 01:21:12:26 Prejudice is a kind of psychological genocide that works across generations.
- 224 01:21:18:02 It contributes to the despair, drug abuse, and violence we see in communities whose cultural identities are under siege.

- 225 01:21:26:28 We see it in the high levels of depression, alcoholism, and suicide among Native Americans.
- 226 01:21:32:28 And yet, even in the face of adversity, there's another side to the self that can create new realities, transforming life into art.
- 227 01:21:42:07 This is what Alfred Adler called the creative self.
- 228 01:21:46:02 Throughout history, men and women have put their creative imprint on anything that can be shaped, colored, or rearranged.
- 229 01:21:59:22 Even in the depths of despair, prisoners of German concentration camps created art on whatever scraps of paper they could hide from their executioners to give meaning to the incomprehensible horror of their lives and deaths.
- 230 01:22:19:25 Teresa Amabile of Brandeis University is a leading researcher in the psychology of creativity and the self.
- 231 01:22:27:08 >> We did a study a few years ago looking at the effects of competition on children's creativity.
- 232 01:22:32:14 Competition obviously includes elements of reward and evaluation and that competitive aspect also.
- 233 01:22:39:26 We did this in the context of a party, a group sort of situation.
- 234 01:22:44:01 We ran two different parties in a community center and in an apartment complex.
- 235 01:22:48:20 We invited half of the girls who lived in the apartment complex to come to an art party on Saturday, and the other half we invited to come to an art party on Sunday.
- 236 01:22:57:19 These were girls ages seven through 11.
- 237 01:23:00:16 The key activity both days was making a paper collage.
- 238 01:23:03:15 And we told the children, "You can do anything you'd like, but we want it to be a silly sort of collage."
- 239 01:23:10:11 We gave them all the same kind of theme to work with.
- 240 01:23:13:01 For each group, before they started their collages, I stood up at the front of the room and I said, "Look, I have these three

- neat prizes up here."
- 241 01:23:20:01 And I showed them.
- 242 01:23:21:16 They were attractive things to seven-year-old, 11-year-old kids.
- 243 01:23:25:21 In one group, the Sunday group, we said, "We're going to award these prizes to the three best children -- to the three best artworks, the children who made those, at the end of the art party."
- 244 01:23:36:23 And the other group, the Saturday group, we said, "We have these three prizes and we're going to raffle them off after you've made your artworks."
- 245 01:23:44:10 So the prizes were there for both groups, however distracted they might have felt, or excited, was the same in both groups.
- 246 01:23:51:03 The only difference was what those prizes meant -- if it was a competition or not.
- 247 01:23:54:23 They all made their collages, and then later on, when we had artists look at all the collages made by the girls in both groups and rate them on creativity, we found that those made by the girls in the competition group were significantly less creative.
- 248 01:24:09:16 The competition group children tended to make very ordinary kinds of symbols, whereas the children in the non-competition group, some of them used just a few pieces in their collage.
- 249 01:24:18:09 Some of them used almost all the pieces that they had.
- 250 01:24:21:06 They really did a lot of nonrepresentational things in the non-competition group.
- 251 01:24:26:12 We have found as a grand principle in all of our research that people will be most creative when they feel motivated primarily by the interest and enjoyment, the satisfaction, the challenge of the work itself, and not by external pressures.
- 252 01:24:43:17 >> ZIMBARDO: So now you know some of the ways in which psychologists try to follow the Delphic Oracle's exhortation to "Know thyself."

- 253 01:24:53:06 We've explored a number of aspects of the self, which each of us knows intimately, but which psychologists must try to understand objectively and scientifically.
- 254 01:25:02:24 And we've also seen how we differ in our self-concepts, and how our behavior differs as a result.
- 255 01:25:11:06 In our next program, we're going to pursue this subject of individual differences a bit further, only this time from the perspective of psychologists whose job it is to measure these differences among us in creativity, intelligence, and personality.
- 256 01:25:26:14 We'll find out how they do it, and how well, next time.
- 257 01:25:30:03 I'm Philip Zimbardo.
- 258 01:25:33:29 [Captioned by The Caption Center WGBH Educational Foundation]
- 259 01:26:10:18 >> *Funding for this program is provided by Annenberg/CPB to advance excellent teaching .*
- 260 01:26:21:06 >> *For information about this and other Annenberg/CPB programs, call 1-800-LEARNER and visit us at www.learner.org .*