Psycho-Cybernetics Summary: Mindset Mastery Made Easy

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Psycho-Cybernetics was first published in 1960 and became one of the best-selling self-help books of all time. Translated into 25+ languages, it has sold well over 30 million copies worldwide.

This book summary will quickly tell you how to overcome past failures and reach impossible goals using "cybernetics" as an *automated success mechanism*.

Dive in to reprogram your mind and activate its cybernetic mechanism.

Quick Summary of Psycho-Cybernetics

Psycho-Cybernetics argues that our self-image, not external circumstances, dictates our success. It is a blueprint for rewiring our subconscious mind to achieve goals and overcome limitations. Maxwell Maltz asks us to think of our mind as a self-regulating thermostat — once we adjust our self-image through mental rehearsal and positive affirmations, our life adjusts accordingly.

> "Your self-image determines your self-worth."
>
> — *Maxwell Maltz, "Psycho-Cybernetics"*

Key Takeaways

- Self-image is a mental blueprint to guide our actions and achievements.
- Negative self-talk and limiting beliefs can sabotage our chances of success.
- Visualizing our goals vividly can bridge the gap between our desires and reality.
- Mental rehearsal and positive affirmations reprogram our subconscious for success.

What Is The Basis of Psycho-Cybernetics?

The basis of Psycho-Cybernetics is training your subconscious mind, which is like a big elephant, to follow your conscious mind's instructions, like a human keeper leading that elephant.

Big elephant (subconscious mind) — Little human (conscious mind)

Maxwell Maltz's innovative approach couples the principles of machines — *cybernetics* — with the psychology of self-image. This system redirects past failures toward rich and meaningful outcomes.

Maltz says he wrote "Psycho-Cybernetics" to steer "your mind to a productive, useful goal, so you can reach the greatest port in the world: peace of mind."

How Psycho-Cybernetics Works To Help You Succeed

Maxwell Maltz was a cosmetic surgeon who helped people look beautiful.

He observed his patients often transform into entirely new personas after their procedures. They changed their behavior, attitudes, habits, and even lifestyles to match their new looks.

Maltz concluded that the mind operates like a "servo-mechanism" or a "cybernetics" system. When our mind sees a better self-image, it automatically starts to remold our lives accordingly.

> *"Servo-mechanisms are so constructed that they automatically "steer" their way to a goal, target, or "answer.""*
>
> *— Maxwell Maltz, "Psycho-Cybernetics"*

To harness this power, Maltz outlined a two-step approach:

1. **Analyze Current New Self-Image**. Honestly review how you see yourself in your mind's eye right now. Is your self-image marred by self-doubt, shame, and thoughts of failure? If so, realize that it needs to change.
2. **Create A Brand New Self-Image**. Replace the negative self-image with a positive one. Constantly feed your mind with positive thoughts that support this new self-image. Within weeks, these thoughts transform into automatic actions, steering you towards your goals.

The whole sequence works as follows:

Old Self-image ⇒ Psycho-Cybernetics ⇒ New Self-image ⇒ Success

How To Analyze Your Current Self-Image

Self-image is the mental picture we create of ourselves that we base on our strengths, weaknesses, performances, and successes.

Here's how we build a self-image subconsciously: **Experiences ⇒ Interpretations ⇒ Beliefs ⇒ Self-image**

To accurately picture your current self-image, introspect these questions:

- Who am I in a few words?
- Who do I see in the mental mirror?
- What type of person am I to myself?
- What stories do I tell people about myself?
- How does my past shape my view of myself?
- What beliefs about myself do I accept without question?
- In what ways do I limit myself based on my opinions and beliefs?
- How do my past successes and failures color my present self-image?

Those answers tell you what your beliefs are based on your childhood, past experiences, successes, and failures.

How To Apply Psycho-cybernetics

- **Acknowledge Current Beliefs**: Recognize the beliefs that form your current self-image. Be honest about both the positive and negative aspects.
- **Identify Limiting Thoughts**: Pinpoint thoughts that limit your growth. These often stem from past failures or negative feedback.
- **Visualize Your Ideal Self**: Imagine the person you aspire to be. Consider characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes that align with your goals.
- **Create Affirmations**: Develop positive affirmations that reinforce your ideal self-image. Repeat them daily to embed these beliefs into your subconscious.

- **Reflect on Successes**: Regularly recall past successes, no matter how small. This reinforces a self-image of capability and achievement.
- **Challenge Negative Thoughts**: When negative thoughts arise, actively challenge and replace them with positive affirmations.
- **Seek New Experiences**: Engage in activities that align with your ideal self-image. New experiences can reinforce and reshape your self-perception.
- **Practice Self-Compassion**: Be kind to yourself during this process. Understand that change takes time and patience.

How To Create A Brand New Self-Image

Here are some steps to gradually build and solidify a new, positive self-image:

- **Decide To Reset:** Consciously decide to reset the unhelpful parts of your current self-image.
- **Positive Visualization:** Start regularly visualizing a confident, successful version of yourself.
- **Embrace New Roles:** Actively take on roles and responsibilities that match your new self-image.
- **Positive Peer Influence:** Surround yourself with people who reflect the qualities you aspire to.
- **Affirmation and Action:** Combine affirmations with actions that reinforce your new self-image.
- **Celebrate Small Wins:** Own and celebrate even small achievements that match your new self-image.
- **Record Progress:** Keep a journal of your growth and changes in self-perception.
- **Embrace Change:** Be open to evolving and refining your self-image as you grow.
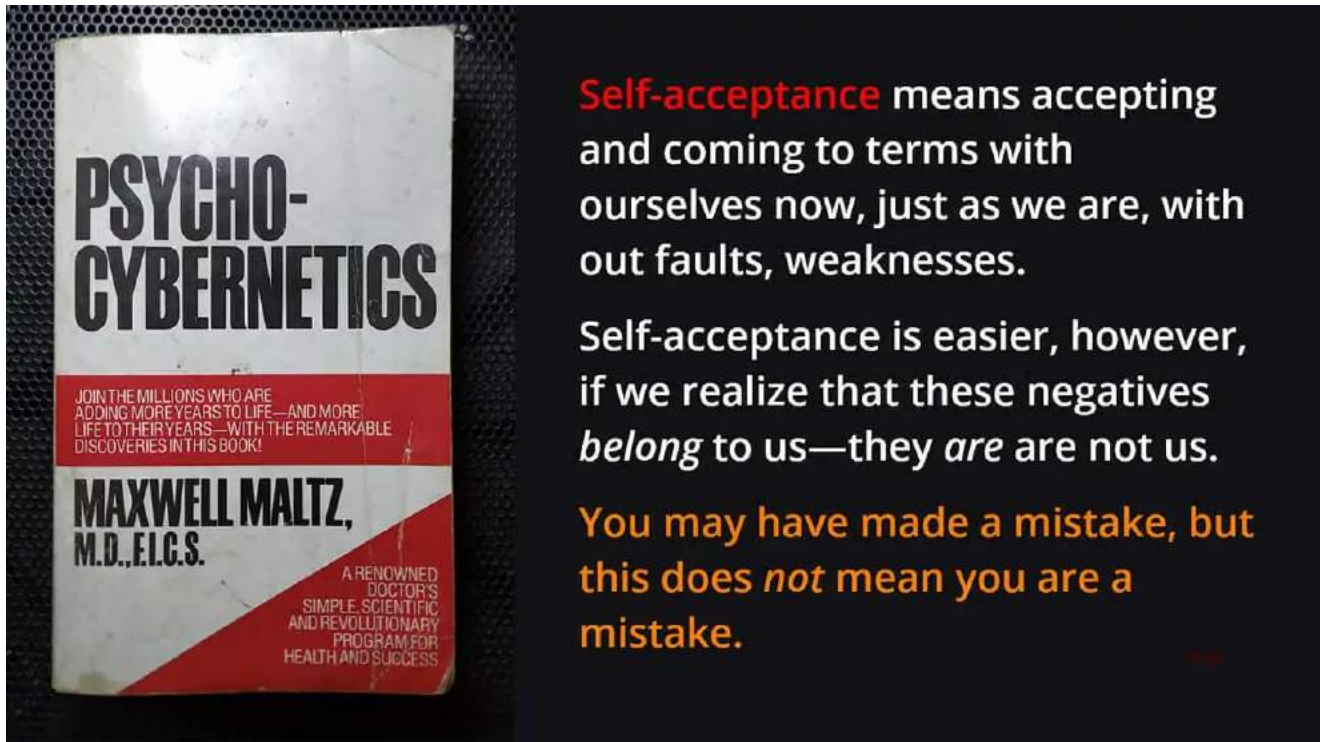
Psycho-Cybernetics: Maxwell Maltz

> "To really live, that is to find life reasonably satisfying, you must have an adequate and realistic self-image that you can live with. You must find your self acceptable to you."
>
> — *Maxwell Maltz*

Case Study On Self-Image Transformation

How Maltz's friend Alfred Adler changed his self-image?

Maxwell Maltz shares a story of his friend, **Dr. Alfred Adler**, a respected psychiatrist and neurologist who founded the School of Individual Psychology

Adler was poor at math in his school. He internalized how his teacher saw him — talentless in math. This led him into a sense of *inferiority complex* that he would forever be bad at math.

One day, Adler solved a difficult problem that surprised both his teacher and himself. This gave him confidence and allowed him to redefine his limiting self-image. He became better at math.

This is a glorious example of how discovering who you truly are can spark unprecedented growth.

The best surprise in life is when you realize how much you are worth, whatever your age. Maltz assures us that *"one is never too young nor too old to change his self-image and thereby start to live a new life."*
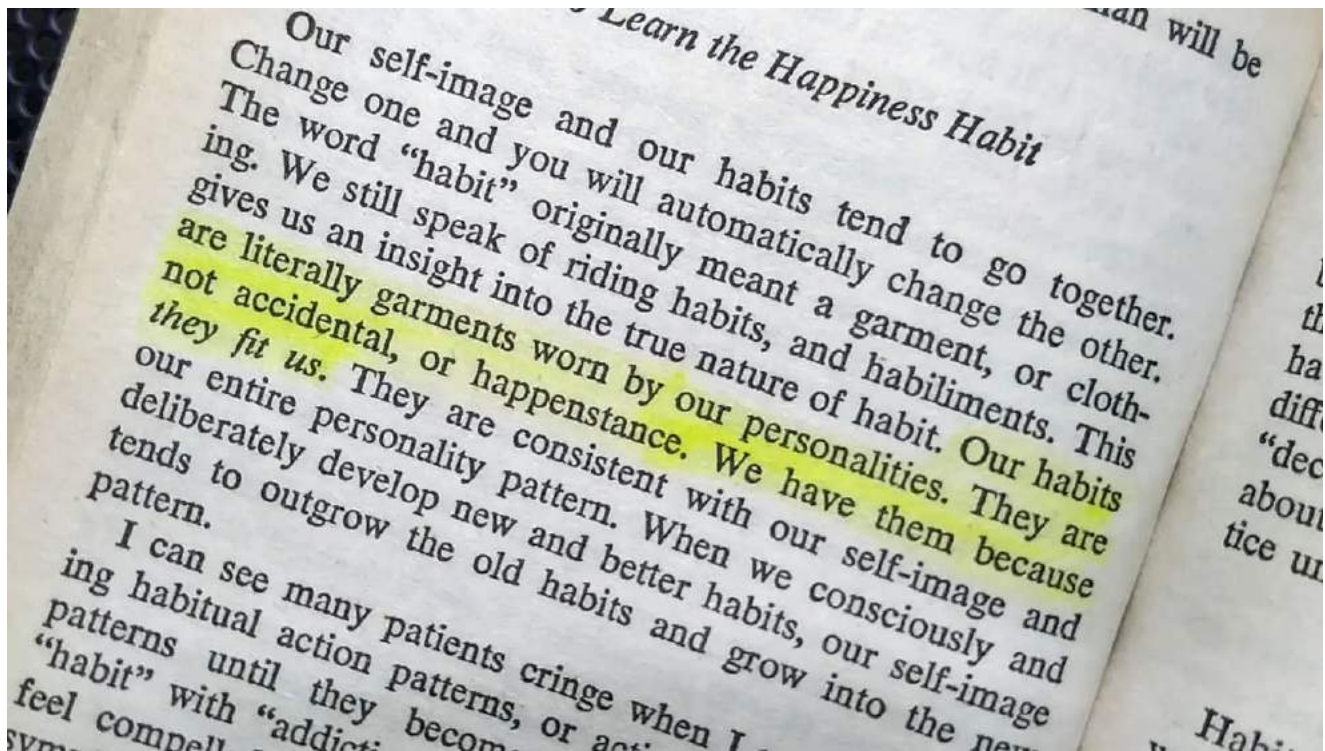
A page from my copy of Psycho-Cybernetics

My Experience with Psycho-Cybernetics

"Psycho-Cybernetics" was transformative for me during my medical studentship days. I had this book for a long time.

When I entered medical school, I had no one to guide me, since no one in my family was in the medical field. Moreover, I was in an alien city far from home. I felt culturally and academically pressured to fit in during my first two years of training. My grades suffered.

One day, I distinctly remember, I took a notepad and went to the Calcutta Botanical Garden — home to the 250-year-old massive and colossal *Great Banyan Tree*.

I sat there and wrote down a bunch of my negative opinions about my life and my academic abilities. Then I reversed them into positive self-statements. Finally, I chose 5 of those and filled pages upon pages writing those down.

I went back to my hostel and made it a point to say those to myself before the mirror every day.

I started asking questions in class, spending time in the library, taking notes, and reaching out to my seniors to explain some complex concepts. Gradually, I saw myself transformed from an anxious student to a confident future doctor.

That was a long time back (and I wish I had the notepad). I still go back to that process whenever I feel stuck.

My best lesson from the book will always be this: *You may have made a mistake, but this does not mean you are a mistake.*

Implementing Psycho-Cybernetics in Daily Life

Taking steps is *the only way* to achieve your goals.

Actionable steps for self-improvement:

- Know your negative thoughts and self-limiting beliefs.
- Replace your negative self-opinions with <u>positive affirmations</u>.
- Start with small, achievable goals that are modest enough to build confidence.
- Set <u>stretch goals</u> as you grow more confident, gradually stretching outside your comfort zone and increasing the complexity and scale of your goals.
- Reinforce your positive self-image by visualizing your successful, happy self for a few seconds every few hours.
- Practice mental rehearsal by imagining achieving your goals by completing them step-by-step.

Positive Affirmations

Positive affirmations are short and simple positive declarations to yourself. They replace your negative self-talk with empowering beliefs.

Repeat them daily to teach your subconscious to believe in your potential. Choose affirmations that feel true and believable, so you would love to repeat them.

Some examples of positive affirmations:

- "I am worthy of success."
- "I am confident and capable."
- "I am attracting abundance into my life."
- "I am achieving my goals one step at a time."

Focus on the emotional side of your affirmations. Your subconscious gets the message more strongly when you feel the emotions you'd get with your desired result.

Practical Exercises in Mental Rehearsal

Mental rehearsal is like a "dry run" for your desired outcomes, where you visualize each step of your goals-journey in your imagination.

Mental rehearsal boosts confidence by letting you experience success in your imagination. It reduces performance-related anxiety by familiarizing your mind with the possible scenarios. It also helps you stay focused and motivated towards your goals.

How To Practice Mental Rehearsal:

1. **Set a few clear goals**: Define what you want to achieve; be specific. The more detailed your goal, the better you can rehearse it.
2. **Close your eyes and relax**: Find a quiet place and get comfortable. Close your eyes and focus on your breath to calm your mind and enter a relaxed state. Maltz says, *"Scientific experiments have shown that it is absolutely impossible to feel fear, anger, anxiety, or negative emotions of any kind while the muscles of the body are kept perfectly relaxed."*
3. **Visualize the process in detail**: Imagine yourself *completing* each step of your goal. See yourself taking action, feeling emotions, and experiencing the positive outcome in vivid detail. Engage all your senses—sight, sound, smell, touch, and even taste—to make the visualization as real as possible.
4. **Feel the emotions**: Immerse yourself in the positive emotions you would feel upon achieving your goal. Feel the confidence, joy, and satisfaction of reaching your desired outcome.
5. **Repeat and refine**: Practice your mental rehearsal regularly. The more you do it, the more your subconscious mind will be programmed for success. As you practice, you can refine your visualization and make it even more vivid and powerful.

Tips for Effective Mental Rehearsal:

- **Daily visualization:** Dedicate time each day to practice mental rehearsal.
- **Start small:** Start with simple goals to build your confidence in the technique.
- **Be specific:** Visualize in clear detail to make your mental rehearsal more effective.
- **Feel the emotions of success:** Imagine and embrace the positive emotions of success.
- **Diverse Scenarios:** Practice with different success aspects/scenarios to build versatility.
- **Reflect on Progress:** After a few days, track your progress and reflect on insights gained.

How To Make Your New Self-image Attract Success?

Once you change how you see yourself, it gets easier to achieve things that match your new self-image.

These are some psycho-cybernetics exercises to attract success:

1. **Stop comparing yourself to others**. Embrace your uniqueness. Heed Maltz's advice, *"You as a personality are simply not in competition with any other personality because there is not another person on the face of the earth like you."*
2. **Keep tuning your self-image positively**. Use mental processes to further enhance your self-image. Interpret experiences positively to have more self-belief, optimism, and a positive mindset.

3. **Create believable and achievable goals**. Success begins with <u>setting effective goals</u> — goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).
4. **Focus on the end goal.** Keep your vision focused on the end rather than the means. Once you have fixed the end goal, the cybernetics system will find ways to take you toward it. *It is automatic.*
5. **Mistakes will happen on the way to your success**, and they are feedback to fine-tune and autocorrect. Errors handled this way are positive reactions that propel you toward your goal.
6. **Let your past mistakes stay in the past**, and do not let them direct your future. Rethink your past in a positive light, finding what you gained from it. Focus on the present choices that push you toward your goal.
7. **Use the brain's feedback mechanism**: Actively give your brain feedback so that it knows what to do more of, and what to stop doing. The brain stores successful responses for future use, helping in similar future tasks. Positive feedback encourages the brain to continue a behavior, while negative feedback prompts a behavior change.
8. **Activate cybernetics with imagination**: Use your imagination to envision positive outcomes. This can influence your actions in a positive direction. Like *hypnosurgery*, where patients *imagine* they have been given anesthesia to block pain, use imagination to overcome negative beliefs.
9. **Trust your journey**. Psycho-cybernetics works, so believe in its efficacy. Let it work automatically after installing a positive self-image, without forcing it to work.
10. **Embrace new experiences**. Try novel activities that make you feel happier, reinforcing your optimism and positivity.

Goal Setting with Psycho-Cybernetics

Defining Clear and Achievable Goals

- **Specify Your Objectives:** Clearly define what you want to achieve.
- **Realistic and Attainable:** Ensure goals are achievable and realistic.
- **Time-Bound Targets:** Set deadlines for your goals.
- **Write Them Down:** Document your goals for clarity and commitment.
- **Review Regularly:** Regularly revisit and adjust your goals as needed.

Role of Goals in the Cybernetic Mechanism

- **Direction for the Mind:** Goals provide a clear direction for subconscious focus.
- **Activates Success Mechanism:** Clear goals activate the mind's 'success mechanism'.
- **Guides Decision-Making:** Helps in making decisions aligned with your objectives.
- **Feedback Loop:** Use progress towards goals as feedback to adjust actions/plans.

- **Fosters Growth and Learning:** Goal pursuit promotes personal development and learning.

Maxwell Maltz's Principles To Live By

Integrating Maltz's principles into your life can help you pave the way for personal growth, happiness, and fulfillment.

1. **Embrace Past Mistakes as Lessons**: View past failures as learning experiences, not as sources of fear. Remember the lessons, but let go of the associated fears.
2. **Belief in Self-Transformation**: Understand that positive change starts with self-belief. Personal transformation is unlikely without the belief in one's ability to change.
3. **Trust Your Mind's Cybernetic Mechanism**: Focus deeply on an issue, then temporarily set it aside. This allows your mind's cybernetic system to unconsciously work towards a solution, often revealing insights upon revisiting the problem.
4. **Cultivate a Positive Self-Image**: Harness the power of imagination. Your brain perceives imagined scenarios as real, so envisioning a positive self-image can lead to tangible success.
5. **Find Happiness in the Present**: Do not postpone happiness for future achievements. Happiness should be a current state, independent of goals or successes.
6. **Strive for Holistic Well-being**: Prioritize fulfilling the seven needs for well-being as identified by Maltz: Love, Security, Creative Expression, Recognition, New Experiences, Self-Esteem, and Positivity about the Future.

Research & Anecdotes In Psycho-Cybernetics

- **Enhanced Sensory Perception**: Maltz references Kekcheyev's research, highlighting that pleasant thoughts can sharpen sensory perceptions like sight, taste, smell, hearing, and touch.
- **Positive Thoughts and Eyesight**: He cites Dr. William Bates' experiments, which demonstrate an improvement in eyesight when individuals engage in pleasant thoughts or observe enjoyable scenes.
- **Memory and Positive Thinking**: Maltz discusses Margaret Corbett's findings that memory significantly improves when subjects entertain pleasant thoughts.
- **Unhappiness and Criminality Link**: He notes Harvard psychologists' discovery of a correlation between unhappiness, criminal behavior, and unhappy backgrounds.
- **Frustration Study at Yale**: A ten-year Yale study, as Maltz mentions, suggests a strong connection between our own unhappiness, immorality, and hostility towards others.
- **Psychosomatic Illnesses**: Maltz quotes Dr. John A. Schindler: *"Unhappiness is the sole cause of all psychosomatic illnesses, and the only cure is happiness."*

- **William James on Unhappiness**: Maltz includes William James' perspective: *"The attitude of unhappiness is not only painful, it is mean and ugly. What can be more base and unworthy than the pining, pulling, mumping mood, no matter what outward ills it may have been engendered?"*
- **Blaise Pascal on Living in the Present**: Finally, he references Blaise Pascal's observation: *"We are never living, but only hoping to live; and, looking forward always to being happy, it is inevitable that we are never so."*

Learned Helplessness: Self-Image of A Failure

Martin Seligman, the Father of Positive Psychology, found out that dogs learn to feel helpless in certain situations.

- First, dogs were put in a box and given electric shocks, from which they could escape by jumping over a low partition.
- Then, they were given shocks and *not* allowed to escape. Gradually, as the dogs found they could not escape the shocks, they lay down whimpering, feeling *helpless*.
- Later, when these "helpless" dogs were put into boxes with a low partition that they could jump over, and given shocks, they did *not* try to escape and instead lay whimpering. These dogs had *learned helplessness*.

Shock

No shock

"Learned Helplessness"

Seligman said this may be similar in humans too, where people experiencing uncontrollable negative events become passive and give up trying to improve their situation.

Seligman's idea was similar to Maltz's. Maltz had earlier suggested that our self-limiting beliefs are at the root of our failures.

FAQs

1. **What does Psycho-Cybernetics talk about?**

   Maxwell Maltz coined the term "psycho-cybernetics" to describe our minds' automatic success mechanism, and how we might harness it to achieve our goals. He was the first popular author to show how a person's self-image has immense power over their ability to realize any goal.

2. **Is Psycho-Cybernetics worth reading?**

   Psycho-cybernetics is highly recommended for its insightful approach to achieving success and happiness. Its cybernetic principles apply to personal development, relationships, and business. It also helps readers find love, security, success, and happiness.

3. **Is Psycho-Cybernetics a good book?**

   Maxwell Maltz's Psycho-Cybernetics is an excellent self-help book that shows how re-imagining one's self-image positively can help one accomplish desired success in real life. The book gives us principles and tactics to create success, even if one has been a failure. Maltz assures us that the human mind can be reprogrammed to help us get better at anything we do, whether it is our career, sports, or personal relationships.

4. **Who was Maxwell Maltz?**

   Maxwell Maltz was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1909. He graduated at the age of 15 and studied at Columbia University to receive his medical degree in 1934. Maltz became a cosmetic surgeon using hypnosis for his surgeries. He published Psycho-Cybernetics in 1960. The book was a bestseller and later named one of the *50 Best Self-Help classics of all time*.

5. **What is Cybernetics?**

   Cybernetics is the system of instructions, actions, and feedback of automated machines that get them to fulfill their tasks effectively. Translated from Greek, *cybernetics* means "a helmsman who steers his ship to port."

6. **How can psycho-cybernetics change your life?**

Psycho-cybernetics is a mechanism of self-improvement and success-achievement based on changing one's self-image. It teaches how to create a positive self-image, set major life goals, defeat complacency and procrastination, and live richer and happier lives.

Final Words

> *"The "self-image", the individual's mental and spiritual concept or "picture" of himself, was the real key to personality and behavior."*
>
> *— Maxwell Maltz, "Psycho-Cybernetics"*

- Your self-image, molded by your experiences, shapes your life.
- You can create a positive self-image to improve your chances of success.
- Your more successful version also raises your self-worth, happiness, and social value.

√ *Please spread the word if you found this helpful*.