



Self Strength Work

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Self Strength Work

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Introduction

A certain inner strength creates deep sources of creativity and well-being. Natural life energy and enthusiasm is within you, even if it is currently dormant.

Working with and building self strength enables and bolsters your ability to resolve big or little mental and social challenges/problems.

Attaining this inner strength involves self-trust (-confidence), initiative, inner-harmony, and flexible self-management of emotions and instinctual urges – all of which is quite an achievement. Mastering these capacities within family, work, and/or performance settings can be surprisingly challenging.

In psychotherapy, self-strength and self-development are key internal

instruments for recovering from complex or severe traumas, resolving many disorders, improving health and body issues, and solving life problems.

In coaching, self-strength can be a key element that enables you to successfully navigate the slings, arrows, and distractions of high-pressure performance to mobilize and sustain your highest potential, both individually and in a group or relating context.



Understanding Self-Strength Work

With a focus on your desired future, Self-strength work in psychotherapy/coaching enables you to flexibly access, enhance, integrate, and repair needed powers and parts of yourself, so that your mind can be an active and self-regulating agent in your life.

The performance and realization framework for self-strength work is based in brain-mind-body scientific research. Everything the brain can do, you – the brain-as-self – can do, as well. Depending on which one is useful at any given time, you can use the framework of “you are the brain” (and thus live the flow of your own brain-changing process) or “you are separate from your brain” (and thus can guide your own brain-changing ability).

The next four sections present specific components of self-strength improvement work in the [brain-as-self](#) framework: Interpersonal Relating and Mirror Neurons, Parts of Self, Development of Self, and Neuroplasticity.

Interpersonal Relating and Mirror Neurons

A brain doesn’t exist by itself, but rather as a system with mind/spirit and body; not only this, but a human mind-body-self inherently exists in the context of relating and adapting to others and its habitat. Our brains are filled with what scientists call ‘mirror’ neurons, which activate in us the same brain and body

experience happening in someone whom we are observing. We can learn from our internal encounter with another's experiences, not just our own. Further, we can make therapeutic use of our involvement with others to strengthen and repair our self.

Parts of Self

As complex and adaptable human beings, our built-in self-wiring includes many different automatics of being (which can also be thought of as parts of self with a point of view). Psychology describes some parts of self as a multitude of non-conscious, pre-prepared response repertoires. Circumstances can trigger such responses even before conscious left-hemisphere "will" areas of the brain have had time to assess the situation. Ideally, "these processes are in our service and best interests. ...'mental butlers' who know our tendencies and preferences so well that they anticipate and take care of them for us, without having to be asked (Bargh and Chartrand, p 476)."

Are your personal internal protectors, nurturers, consultants, coaches, and managers – your parts of self – effectively working for you? Are they accessible, and do they support and enable you to shift and transform toward your desired future? If the answer is 'not as well as I would like', there is good news.

Any unhelpful or accidentally negative adaptations can be reprocessed through self-strength work – freeing you to improve your skills and self-sensibilities for reaching your aspirations.

Mixed in with your thinking, your self contains copies of other people's past responses and messages and templates of yourself in relation to them. Your self has already coded the automatic body, emotion, and belief reactions your [brain-as-self](#) made during these encounters, as well as your subsequent automatic coping strategies and conclusions.

Varied sets of reactions – universal in people – involve capacities lower in the brain, body, and evolution. Any and all body functions, posture, facial and body gestures/sounds are one variety. Emotional and instinctual circuits such as aggression, "seeking [add definition], fear, rage, lust, care, panic (separation distress), and play" (Panksepp, 2009, p. 1) are another variety.

In addition to your thinking, parts of self are your living memories and learning. Some psychotherapy methods refer to ego states; these are parts of self. All parts of self may not be working in your best interest. Self-strength work can help align all with your present goals, solutions, and desired future.



Development of Self

Having a good early development of self works to the advantage of your adult brain and body. The initial development of the non-verbal right hemisphere is particularly important. This right-sided self-organizing of the brain occurs through young children forming attachments (a felt sense of personal connection/love) with and making internal copies of other people – other brains – with whom they have attuned and positive relationships (for example, Schore, 2009). Young children code copies of how adults treat them along with conclusions about their existence, safety, value, and entitlement.

The social brain/mind developmental process gives the adult numerous benefits:

- First, the brain gets its own built-in attuned adult self that nurtures, protects, guides, and supports a person's real-self development.
- Second, this adult self is the foundation for essential capacities, such as those used in high performance and accomplishment situations and in sustaining/recovering health throughout the lifespan. Specific capacities include: emotion- and body- regulation, stress-coping, adaptability to rapidly changing environments, and healthy interpersonal participation.
- Third, these self-functions can be drawn upon, strengthened, and repaired to accomplish many coaching or psychotherapy goals.

A person's basic sense of identity – along with their beliefs, concepts, and conclusions about their self, place in other's lives, and safety and security in the world – start forming early in life. Later development adds more layers of experience and new capacities as each person incorporates beneficial encounters and remodels inner glitches, which stemmed from unhealed lousy experiences, traumas, or mal-adaptations.

As neurological architecture matures, the brain works on integrating its varied elements and differentiating a separate psychological self from that of the parents. Additionally, the child gains self-regulatory abilities and can alternate between healthily functioning solo or as part of a relationship/team, based on the circumstances.

It is these same self-regulatory and self-functioning abilities, which the adult brain needs to recover from a traumatic experience or other mental and emotional suffering. These abilities help you sustain optimal performance and realization, in addition to [OR as well as] building new components of resilience.

Moreover, a human brain doesn't exist by itself, but rather as a minded/spirited system within the body. Even further, a human mind-body-self inherently not only develops, but also sustains life and well-being in the context of relating and adapting to and with others and its habitat.



Neuroplasticity Powers

Human beings possess amazing neuroplasticity (brain-changing-ability). The *homo sapiens* brain routinely changes itself to adapt, create, repair, and recover (Doidge, 2007).

From the beginning, your brain knows who you are (your real self, core, or center) and how to develop into your adult self so that you survive and thrive. Self-strength work calls upon and builds from this wellspring of one's life force.

Therefore you – the brain-as-self – can use neuroplasticity to strengthen and repair yourself, within human nature. An extremely complex brain, like that of human beings, has brain-as-self neuroplastic (brain-change) powers involving

self-integration/development, learning and relearning, information-processing, adapting and readapting (such as the adaptive information processing system of [EMDR](#) and other [Brain-as-Self](#) adaptation constructions).

Being a robust system, our brain-as-self monitors our environment and body and makes adjustments along the way to finding healthy, happy, and successful adult functioning. Your brain continuously and automatically works/learns to distinguish the lousy, unsafe, or not effective from the healthy, good, safe, or effective. This endeavor is not 'work' in the difficult sense, for your brain enjoys what it is doing.

A. Psychology finds that – as our self – we live or 'operate' two adaptive processing systems that learn: one from logical thinking/inference and one from experience associations, the latter driven by emotion and body experience (Epstein, 2008 in press). Self strength work includes learning with the latter experiential system – meaning we don't just talk about you, but rather connect and build with who/what you are and any felt experiences or memories your body knows are relevant to you and your desired future.

B. Many people are familiar with using body processes, eating/breathing /exercise, posture, facial and body gestures to bring improvement contributions from the bottom up. Practicing preferred behaviors, habits, and routines are well-known contributors to improvement. Do you know, for example, that standing in a posture that feels bodily confident actually cues the brain to feel mentally confident?

C. Numerous top-down and bottom-up, left- and right-brain powers are marshaled in the methods and approaches employed. We tune into you as we both understand and enhance self strength in regards to your goals in your circumstances and challenges.

D. The adult human brain – due to the addition of capacities higher in the brain, body, and evolution – can use new experiences to heal, rewire, and rebuild what is traumatized or inadequately constructed as part of self-strength work. Many of the abilities you already use for interacting with other people and the world, you may also employ interacting within yourself.

For example, you pay attention. Guiding inner attention is popularly called by various names: mindfulness, mindful awareness, conscious awareness, observing presence, focused attention, and working memory. Attention powers can be employed internally to be self aware, conscious, and have mindsight. In comprehensive work. These can be teamed with other capacities to change the brain in ways that increase mental strength/integration, heal, and repair development.

E. The brain-as-self adaptively processes all internal and external information. Methods in psychotherapy systematically harness this power.

Brief Situational Work

Brief situational improvement work mobilizes your existing self-strength to get you moving towards your desired goal in regard to one specific current challenge or situation. Such in-session work includes, the processing of a specific trauma, fear, or other interfering experience; the shifting of internal power, flow, presence, or state; and teaming up. In the process, this work further strengthens the self in the process.

One's self can greatly benefit from certain information about mind/spirit, brain, body, or human nature.

Comprehensive Repair and Integration

Healing and repair of minor or major components of the house that is our self is illustrated with the role deciding to forgive may play in self-improvement. By forgiving someone who has burned down or damaged their house, people may be able to move on from being preoccupied by anger, resentment, or revenge. Other components of recovery, such as securing the resources and doing the work to rebuild or move to another home, still have to be done. With a focus on your desired future, deeper self-strength work secures a new home. Self-repair, or self-integration is a collaborative process, usually over a longer term.

Specific improvement processes allow you and your brain to improve or repair in psychotherapy what was not developed or adapted well-enough (whether previously as an adult, as a youth, or in early childhood) and to heal trauma. The brain's power to organize, re-organize, and re-build itself throughout your whole life is harnessed.

From your core, your brain naturally knows how to develop, heal, function as one, and thrive vibrantly. Just as health care workers through medical techniques place and hold two ends of a broken bone together so your body can knit them back into a single bone, psychotherapy/coaching works with you and your inner healer to shape internal and external conditions so that your brain can proceed with its automatic healing, development, information, and integration processing abilities.

Systematically using newer brain capacities/ parts in inner improvement and repair work enables you to healthily master what is interfering or troubling and gives you more productive options in how you get involved in the performances, challenges, and issues that matter to you.

Mental, social or performance challenges/problems of any size can be successfully addressed. Culture, lineage, immigration, gender, and sexual orientation are productively employed from the healthy human nature context of self strength work. PerformanceAndRealization.com describes many of the

performance, mental, and physical health issues and goals that can be mastered with self strength work.

Comprehensive psychotherapy/coaching involves stages, with beginning work preparing the way for later work. Initial fundamental components include what you need for

- Calm, containment (closing up, putting away), grounding, centering
- accessing and strengthening positive top-down and bottom-up qualities and resources
- being present as your desired future 'soaks in' now
- knowledge, information, and perspective.

Utilizing natural neuroplasticity powers, work

- teams up capacities to increase mental/body strength
- sets up healing conditions
- internally remedies lousy experiences (neglect, unmet needs, injury, trauma, loss),
- readapts maladaptive parts of self,
- facilitates self-development and integration, and
- strengthens inner regulatory capacities.

Compared to what would be possible without self strength work, your self system transforms to be more open to

- experiencing inner peace, health, happiness, and calm as fits the situation,
- integrating and manifesting your real-self wisdom and feelings,
- actualizing your talents and competencies,
- using creativity and solving challenges in your circumstances now.

It is easy for people to mix up 'whose feelings and beliefs are whose'. Those arising from old associations within ourselves can easily be perceived to be coming from others. We can also mistakenly experience something as internal when it outer, good or bad. Self-strength work greatly enhances individuals to minimize the negative back and forth loop and maximize the positive.

In a related vein, after this work, people tend to be able to better keep focused on 'the big picture', end goals, or what is meaningful, when dealing with the crap that life and other people throw.



Application of Self Strength in a Group Setting

As part of my work, you learn to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy settings and choose or participate in shaping healthy environments. You get in touch with your personal powers and ability to coordinate with others in a positive fashion to enable optimal – indeed synergistic – interactions and outcomes. Being there for yourself and, when appropriate, others contributes to your individual success and well-being.

Team Sports Example

These principles translate into a setting where a championship team embodies a united force of individual self. A classic example is the Miracle on Ice victory of the USA hockey team over the USSR in 1980 in Lake Placid, New York. A recent example would be the Pittsburgh Steelers, 2009 victors of Super Bowl XLIII: “The men ... never lost their belief in themselves nor their faith in one another. When faced with adversity, the[y] persevered, they remained determined. And they did it together.” (Steel Curtain Rising blog)

Self Strength in Families Example

Sustaining the integrity of the self in healthy relationships with others can be surprisingly challenging. Understanding how to accomplish and sustain a sense of self within a family can paradoxically be the key to success in those relationships. With a healthy blend of autonomy and inter-dependence, you can truly be there for your self and others, creating an invigorating and galvanizing climate for accomplishment and growth. Individuals in couples can understand different stages of self-development and facilitate further maturation to contribute to greater harmony and well being. Parents understanding this process of self-

differentiation for children ranging in age from a toddler to a teenager can aid handling the challenges and drama of the growing person.

Self Strength at Work

Self strength work enables you to understand and master the dynamics of your habitat. You draw upon deeper wisdom and guidance powers as you synergistically structure, coordinate and compete in the halls of money, power, authority, recognition, and competence.

Self Realization Goal

Exploring your situation and self, we consider together what particular mind, brain and self-strengthening methods and perspectives might assist you in your journey. Earlier limiting experiences can be worked through.

As you mobilize your intuition, curiosity, and action, answers emerge from within. You come to know your desires, abilities, and path forward in addition to having the strength and vitality to proceed.

Self-strength work is an active and collaborative relationship to begin or continue the life-long journey of self-development and self-creation toward a more realized future.

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