

Self-Efficacy for the Professional

Understanding the Theory/Concept

Perceived self-efficacy is defined as a person's belief about their capabilities to produce specific levels of performance that have influence over events that affect their lives. *"Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes."*

A person with a strong belief in his/her own ability to approach difficult problems faces the challenge rather than avoids it. The individual sets high goals and is committed to achieve the goal. If one should fail, one searches for a way to improve one's knowledge and skills to tackle the problem again. *"They quickly recover their sense of efficacy after setbacks or failure."* This strong sense of efficacy results in accomplishment and less risk of depression.

In contrast, a person with a low belief in one's ability to confront problems shies away from difficult tasks, viewing them as a personal threat. When confronted with a difficult task the person focuses on his/her weaknesses and possible obstacles, rather than a solution to the problem. This person has low aspirations and weak commitments to the goals he/she wishes to achieve. Previous failures contribute to one's lack of faith in his/her capabilities. These individuals are at higher risk of depression.

WORKING WITH YOUR PATIENTS

In discussing risk factor behavior changes and making a plan, ask patients how confident they are to make the agreed upon change (on a scale of 1-100% or 1-10). The individual is more likely to be successful when their confidence level is 70% or greater.

1	Explain the problem; ask the patient for possible solutions.
2	For those who have anxiety, set goals in small stages.
3	Assess their self-efficacy and focus on moving it toward a 70% confidence level. (See Form 16E)
4	Introduce the patient to someone who has faced a similar health problem, eg, refer the patient to a cardiac rehabilitation program where he/she may learn some coping strategies.

table continues ➡

Self-Efficacy for the Professional *(cont)*

Understanding the Theory/Concept

Sources of Self-Efficacy

1	Mastery of experiences – Each successful experience builds one’s belief in his/her ability to overcome difficulties. This cannot only be done through easy success, it also requires experience in overcoming obstacles through continuing effort.
2	Vicarious experiences through social models – Observing others achieve success helps one believe that one can achieve similar success. On the contrary, observing the failure of another person to achieve a similar goal can cause doubts that one can overcome a similar problem. The impact of modeling on perceived self-efficacy is strongly influenced by the perception that there is a similarity of oneself or one’s situation to the models.
3	Social persuasion – Encouraging words from others can help motivate one to overcome fears and doubts. These boosts in perceived self-efficacy lead people to try harder to succeed and promote development of skills and a sense of personal efficacy.
4	Reduce one’s stress reactions – Encouraging a positive attitude reduces stress and decreases negative thoughts.

Self Efficacy beliefs contribute to motivation by determining the goals people set for themselves, how much effort they will put forth, how long they will persevere, especially when it is difficult, and their resilience to failures.

Glossary

Affective Processes	Processes regulating emotional states and elicitation of emotional reactions
Cognitive Processes	Thinking processes involved in the acquisition, organization, and use of information
Motivation	Activation to action. Level of motivation is reflected in choice of courses of action and in the intensity and persistence of effort.
Perceived Self-Efficacy	People’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce effects
Self-Regulation	Exercise of influence over one’s own motivation, thought processes, emotional states, and patterns of behavior

Adapted from:

Bandura A. Self-efficacy. In VS Ramachaudran, ed. *Encyclopedia of human behavior*. 4th ed. New York: Academic Press; 1994:71-81.
 Reprinted in H Friedman, ed. *Encyclopedia of mental health*. San Diego: Academic Press; 1998.

