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MENTAL BLOCKS TO SELF-DEVELOPMENT

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The article is devoted to the issue of personal self-development and blocks which a person has to overcome in order to achieve the desired results. The accent has been made on definition of the categories of development and self-development. Personal self-development has been defined as a process of self-governed formation, development and improvement of the qualities, properties and functions of a person related to the physical, social and spiritual aspects of its being under the influence of biological and social, and internal (individual) factors. It has been stressed that in psychology there are two approaches to the problem of self-development – the subject-activity approach, and cultural-historical approach. It has been concluded that awareness of mental blocks and conflicts allows us to understand that self-development is hard, difficult, and risky work with an unpredictable result. There are seven main mental blocks to personal self-development: loss of connection with the Self; inadequate self-esteem; fear of possible negative consequences of self-development; lack of a subjective position in development; experiencing semantic conflicts in relation to changing features or personality traits; fear of the unknown; lack of focus on the result.

Key words: *Person, Personal development, Self-development, Self, Self-esteem, Conflict.*

Personal self-development is a process of self-governed formation, development and improvement of the qualities, properties and functions of a person related to the physical, social and spiritual aspects of its being under the influence of biological and social, and internal (individual) factors. Self-development is a complex process of finding a person's true Self which is associated with overcoming many obstacles, both external and internal. In this context, it is most important to focus on the internal mental blocks of self-development. It is on the awareness of these blocks that the success of the individual in overcoming them and developing himself as an individual depends.

The aim of this work is to investigate basic mental blocks that hinder the process of personal self-development.

Psychological aspects of self-development of a personality have been developed by representatives of psychoanalysis: Z. Freud [8], K. G. Jung [15], E. Fromm [9], K. Horney [13] and others. In their studies they encountered a contradiction due to the reduction of the spiritual foundations of the personality to subconscious drives, for which they were criticized by M. Scheler, L.S. Frank and others. Modern studies of the psychological side of a person are represented by the works of: B. Ananiev [3], N. Bekhterev [4], B. Zeigarnik [23], as well as the works of A. Adler [1], G. Yu. Eysenck [7], E. Berne [5], W. James [14], G. Allport [2], C. Rogers [18], E. Erickson [6], etc.

In modern psychology there are two main approaches to the study of self-development as a psychological phenomenon: 1) the subject-activity approach; 2) cultural-historical approach.

Personal self-development is a category that is interpreted differently in the context of various theoretical and methodological approaches, due to the complex and multi-level nature of the process denoted by this category. Development in a broad sense is a universal property of matter and

consciousness to change, passing from one state to another, more perfect, complex and highly organized. Development in the context of this study should be understood first of all as the development of a personality which can be defined as “the formation of specifically human higher mental functions in the process of human life under the influence of two factors – the environment and heredity” [10, p. 371].

Personality is always an integral system that is closely related to the Self. There are philosophical and psychological interpretations of the Self. In the philosophical interpretation the Self is presented in the philosophy of M. Heidegger as being the Self (self-existence), realized as concern for one’s own existence [11, p. 183].

In the works of I.G. Fichte selfhood is the self-movement of thought, and the Self is a prerequisite for the activity manifestation of personality. K. Jaspers considered freedom as the main manifestation of the Self. By distorting or realizing its freedom, a person either develops and actualizes its Self, or destroys it. In the psychological sense the concept of the Self in the Jungian concept is one of the archetypes that express the deep integrity of the personality [15, p. 94–95] and combining conscious and unconscious components. Thanks to the archetype of the Self a person realizes himself as something special, different from the surrounding world. As G. Zuckerman writes, “self-development is a conscious change and (or) an equally conscious desire to keep my “I-Self” unchanged. I myself determine the goals, directions, means of these changes” [24, p. 26].

In the context of the subject-activity approach self-development has been interpreted as a conscious self-change of a person as a subject in accordance with certain goals. This approach originates in the works of S. Rubenstein who said that a person does not exist without the ability to consciously take a certain position. The scientist wrote: “... the specificity of the human way of existence lies in the degree of correlation between self-

determination and determination by others (conditions, circumstances), in the nature of self-determination in connection with the presence of consciousness and action in a person” [19, p. 286].

In the context of the cultural-historical approach based on the ideas of L. Vygotsky self-development is understood as a process based on the mechanism of transition of possibility into reality. The prerequisite for the formation of this approach was the understanding that there is self-development that reflects personal consciousness, but lies beyond it, that is, it is not a conscious self-change, but a process that belongs to the sphere of innate abilities.

L.Vygotsky studying age-related changes in the psyche interpreted self-development as self-propulsion laid down by nature and realized during crisis periods of development in a certain social situation. At each stage of age developmentspecial unique relationships have been formed between the individual and the world which serve as a source of development of personal consciousness and the formation of certain neoplasms.

The impetus for self-development is the dialectical contradiction between the new possibilities of the psyche at each age stage and the old social situation. L. Vygotsky gave the following definition of the development process: “... a continuous process of self-movement that is characterized, first of all, by the incessant emergence and formation of a new one that has not been at the previous steps” [21, p. 9].The methodological foundations of the cultural-historical approach to the problem of personal self-development are actively developed in modern psychology with the help of the categories and patterns of synergetics. At the same time, age-related mental neoplasms have been analyzed from the standpoint of increasing complexity in a self-developing personality system.

In the process of self-development a person inevitably encounters many blocks.A block is a relationship between the elements of a system

that restricts the freedom of one of them. A psychological block, as a rule, arises before something new when a person enters a new environment, meets new people, takes on a new business, etc. The movement towards the unknown, towards the new, future Self which is carried out by a person in the zone of self-development, provokes the actualization of the psychological blocks inherent in the person.

First, the mental block to self-development of the individual is *the loss of connection with the Self*. In case of loss of connection with the Self a person loses the deep source of self-development and identifies itself with its own subpersonalities (the Persona archetype in K.G. Jung's works). In this case the singer identifies himself with the voice, the scientist – with scientific works, the judge – with lawsuits, and so on. Personality is flattened to a function; true self-identity is replaced by the identity of the social role (roles). This “expansion of the Persona” gives rise to stress, neuroses and somatic diseases. Its root lays the internal imbalance of the personality.

Ye. Seleznyova gives in this context a very successful example of such a situation – the story of L. Tolstoy's “Death of Ivan Ilyich”. As Ye. Seleznyova writes: “... Lev Tolstoy describes the painful overcoming of the imbalance towards the Person ... Ivan Ilyich overcomes his Person painfully, that is, with great difficulty, in constant conflict with himself, and this happens only when he falls ill. Lev Tolstoy experimenting on his hero is trying to find out: Can a human, completely immersed in the Persona as archetype regain individual integrity, even if only on the verge of death; will he be able to overcome the fear of self-disclosure, self-accusation, will he be able to overcome the inertia of existence and begin to fulfill himself? [20, p. 23]. When a person is not aware of its Self the events of its life have no personal sense, which means that they are not controlled. In this case self-

development does not occur. Life events come, as it were, by chance, a person feels alienated in relation to its own being.

Secondly, the block to self-development of the individual is *inadequate self-esteem*. As psychologists often say adequate self-esteem is a little overestimated self-esteem. For harmonious development a person must approve of itself already by the fact of his or her existence. Healthy self-esteem is based on self-acceptance and self-respect. If these two aspects are present a person can develop successfully by sensibly assessing its shortcomings and working constructively on them. Extremely dangerous is the attitude inspired from childhood that a person is initially bad, wrong, inferior, and in order to earn approval and love (first from parents, and then from friends, partners, colleagues, and so on), one needs to earn them. Healthy personal self-esteem begins with unconditional self-acceptance.

Absolutely correct are the words of Ye. Seleznyova who writes: "... a deviation from adequate self-esteem accelerates the process of expansion of the Persona and impedes or stops the self-development of the individual. At the same time adequate self-esteem actualizes the need for self-development, allows you to restore personal integrity, enrich individuality and self-fulfillment" [20, p. 25].

Thirdly, the block of personal self-development is *the possible negative consequences of self-development (risks)* predicted by the person which make it difficult to implement it. Among them are:

- 1) The risk of being assessed. The meaning of this risk lies in the fact that the person is afraid in the process of psychological transformation to become the object of close attention from others. This is the risk of a potentially conflicting attitude of various social groups to the changes taking place within the personality;

2) Risk of non-compliance. After its psychological transformation a person may turn out to be inconsistent with the values of the reference group and be subjected to ostracism;

3) Choice risk. This risk appears in the process of self-transformation when there is a situation of choosing the path of self-development. It may be accompanied by a conflict of meanings, values, and requires taking responsibility for the consequences of the choice;

4) The risk of self-disclosure is the risk of realizing the contradictions between the unconditional value of the inner Self and the negative properties that it contains.

Fourthly, the list of mental blocks to personal self-development includes the *lack of a subjective position in development* which includes: underdevelopment of the ability to self-knowledge; system of destructive stereotypes and attitudes; unformed mechanisms of self-development (self-acceptance and self-forecasting); lack of skills of self-education and volitional self-regulation[25].

Fifthly, the psychological block to personal self-development is the *experience of semantic conflicts in relation to changing features or personality traits*. As rightly writes S.Yaremchuk: "A person may strive to acquire features that, as it seems to it, have only a positive meaning and will facilitate the process of satisfying needs for it, or seek to get rid of some of its properties, traits, habits, focusing on its negative meaning. But since any feature of a person is included in the system of its personality and has both a positive and negative meaning, the motives of a person come into conflict with each other" [22, p. 54].

Sixthly, a serious block to personal self-development is the *fear of the unknown*. British researcher M. Lee believes that the main obstacle to the practice of self-development for a person is the fear of parting with established patterns of behavior and views against the background of the

unpredictability of a possible result. Self-development requires getting out of the shell of “contentment” which can be accompanied by a painful experience: old schemes are disbanded, a sense of self-esteem is challenged, and the usual life position is overturned. “To change we must have the courage to wonder and seek beyond our self-imposed boundaries... It takes courage to reach the threshold of the known and face the challenge of what goes beyond it” [16, p. 29].

Seventhly, the mental block to personal self-development is the *lack of concentration on the result*. American psychologist E. Pappas and his colleagues [17], generalizing the experience of studying the educational activities of modern students have identified the following three groups of barriers (blocks) to self-development of their cognitive potential, effective thinking and behavior:

The first group of barriers is excessive electronic stimulation and distraction associated with the use of social networks, video games, electronic communication systems against the background of a decrease in the age of availability of such devices and cultural motivation for their use in social and academic fields. In addition, in combination with the strategy of rivalry dominating in modern society, virtual communication hinders the experience of mutual assistance in development in the student community.

The second group of barriers is a dysfunctional relationship with time which refers to the syndrome of lack of time and low control over it: students feel that they must be constantly busy with something, they are in a hurry to do more, immerse themselves in solving numerous problems but this leads to the opposite effect – a decrease in concentration of attention and memory, the inability to reach a generalized level of management of their lives and activities due to the experience of lack for this time [12]. Such a race strategy leaves less time for self-care, enjoying artistic creativity, proper

nutrition, managing not virtual but real social relationships, as well as for focusing consciousness on oneself in the course of self-development.

The third group of barriers to self-development is the difficulty in accepting intentional changes. Many students expect personal change to come quickly and easily and they may decide to forego self-development when they discover that this is not the case. Stress, anxiety, low self-esteem and depression among students are at an all-time high [17] and often interfere with effective learning and the development of social skills. If students feel that they do not meet the expectations of parents, teachers, society and themselves this can lead to a vicious circle instead of self-development in the form of experiencing stress and avoiding overcoming difficulties with the help of a virtual reality game that gives a feeling of pseudo-success, drug addiction, alcohol addiction, as well as an increase in casual sexual relationships.

Therefore, the self-development of the personality is aimed at updating and maintaining the unity of its self as an internal system-forming principle. We can speak about seven main psychological blocks to personal self-development:

- Loss of connection with the Self;
- Inadequate self-esteem;
- Fear of possible negative consequences of self-development: the risk of being assessed; risk of non-compliance; choice risk; risk of self-disclosure;
- Lack of a subjective position in development (underdevelopment of the ability to self-knowledge, destructive stereotypes, unformed mechanisms of self-acceptance and self-prediction, lack of skills of self-education and volitional self-regulation);
- Experiencing semantic conflicts in relation to changing features or personality traits;

- Fear of the unknown;
- Lack of focus on the result.

Awareness of mental blocks and conflicts allows us to understand that self-development is hard, difficult, and risky work with an unpredictable result. This state of affairs exists because the efforts of individual subpersonalities that are part of the structure of a personality may not be coordinated or coordinated not to the extent necessary for ensuring the flow of the process of self-development which is optimal in terms of resource consumption. Personal self-development is path of a person to itself, its internal spiritual Odyssey, which requires overcoming internal inertia, fears, contradictions and passivity.

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