
Spotlight Effect As A Reason Of Low Self-Esteem

Application Essay #2: Spotlight Effect

In society, people are constantly self aware. All they can think about is what others think about them. This thought process can be self-destructive as one becomes so self-conscious that they invent themselves to be exactly who society wants them to be and not who they really are. In psychology this is known as the spotlight effect. Psychology defines the spotlight effect as “overestimating others’ noticing and evaluating our appearance, performance, and blunders” (Myers, 2013, 545). The catch with the spotlight effect is that nearly everyone experiences it. This means that everyone is so busy worrying about what others think of them to even have time to think about others. This leads to a selfish community with low self-esteem.

The spotlight is often associated with the illusion of transparency. While the spotlight effect is when you think people are judging you externally, how you look and what you do, the illusion of transparency is when you think people are judging you internally, how you feel. The spotlight effect is more common in big social situations, while the illusion of transparency has more effect in intimate social situations. While the spotlight effect is common among the majority of the population, the illusion of transparency seems to be more common in people affected by general anxiety disorder. Both of these self-focused attention concepts are destructive to self-confidence and untrue. People experiencing the spotlight effect or the illusion of transparency both overestimate how much people are paying attention to them (Brown et. al., 2007). While these concepts of self-impression destroy the self-esteem when put into practice, if the idea is shattered, self-esteem can also be wounded. The thought that everyone is paying to attention to someone can help that person feel unique and important. However, after learning about the spotlight effect they may begin to understand that they are just like everyone else in this world, which can cause a different spiral into self-esteem.

Personally, I have experienced both the spotlight effect and the illusion of transparency. For example, the other day I was in the psychological services office in the Wilk so that I could see a psychologist to help me with the transition to college. As I walked into the waiting room I saw a friend from a few years back there. As we talked and began to catch up the whole time I was panicking about what she might think of me because I needed to see a psychologist. However, after that appointment, I looked back on the situation and realized that she was probably worrying the same thing when really I did not even think twice about her being there. I just thought she was worried about what I was doing. It amazed me how blind we can be in our own lives.

The illusion of transparency has been less common in my life but I can still think of a prime example. When I was fifteen I moved to New Jersey from Georgia. The move was very hard on me and I struggled socially for the first couple of months. One of my classes, gym class, had a group of people that I thought were nice, but I never had the courage to talk to them. I stayed quiet in this class for almost the whole year until I was put into a group with them. As I was put in the group we began to talk and become friends. Years later that group of people were my best friends and we were reminiscing about our first impressions of each other. One of my friends stated that they remembered me as extremely comfortable and fun to be around. That

shocked me, because when I look back on that year comfortable is no where near how I felt. I thought that people could all see how I was feeling, but it turns out, to my friends, I looked completely fine.

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