

# Self-image



When you look in the mirror, what do you see?

Self-image may consist of four types:

1. How you see yourself.
2. How others see you.
3. How you perceive others see you.
4. How you perceive you see yourself.

These types of self-images are a blend of your internal self-awareness (how well you know yourself) versus external self-awareness (how well you understand how others see you).

*I am not what you think I am;  
I am not who I think I am;  
I am who I think you think I  
am.*

Consider the following questions:

- How difficult is it to be yourself around your family, friends, and other people?
- Who would you find it difficult to be yourself around? Why do you think this is true?
- Who or what things in your life affect your self-image?
- How much impact do friends, family advertising have on how you see yourself?
- What things do you feel you need to do or be in order to be accepted by society? How can these things rule your life?

## Charles Horton Cooley (1902)

Much of our identity is wrapped up in how we believe other people perceive us.

Cooley developed this idea by watching his own children at play.

- Children learn to judge themselves based on how they imagine others will react to them.
- Other people serve as a mirror for the development of self.

**Looking-glass self:** a self-concept based on what you believe others think of you

## Charles Horton Cooley (1902)

According to Cooley, the looking-glass self is a 3-step process that constantly takes place.

1. We imagine how we appear to others (our perception of how others see us).
2. We imagine the reaction of others to our (imagined) appearance.
3. We evaluate ourselves according to how we imagine others have judged us.

This process is not a conscious process, and the stages can occur quickly. The results can be positive or negative self-evaluation.

Because the looking glass comes from our imagination, it can be distorted.

- The mirror may not accurately reflect other's opinion of us.
- Unfortunately, regardless of whether or not we are correct or incorrect about their perception the consequences are just as real as if it were.
- "I don't think they liked me; therefore, they don't like me."

# Why do we wear masks?

The reasons behind the different masks that people wear vary considerably, but they can be both positive and negative.

Some reasons include:

- To gain social acceptance...to be liked
- To hide excitement
- To hide vulnerability
- To hide the truth
- To hide fear
- To hide anger
- To hide sadness
- To hide pain
- To deceive
- To manipulate

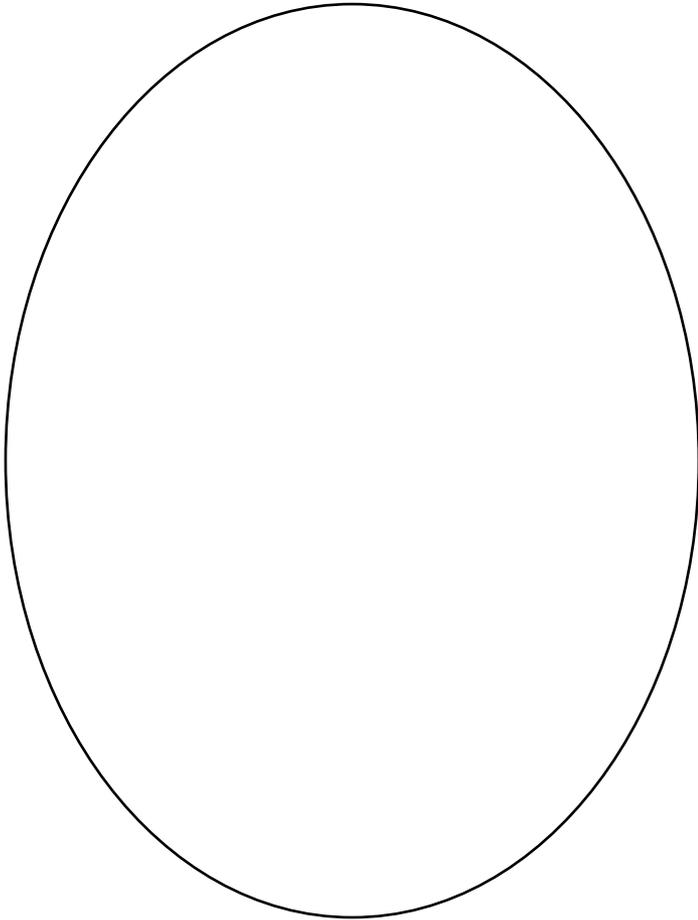
# Do you wear a mask?

Consider the following questions:

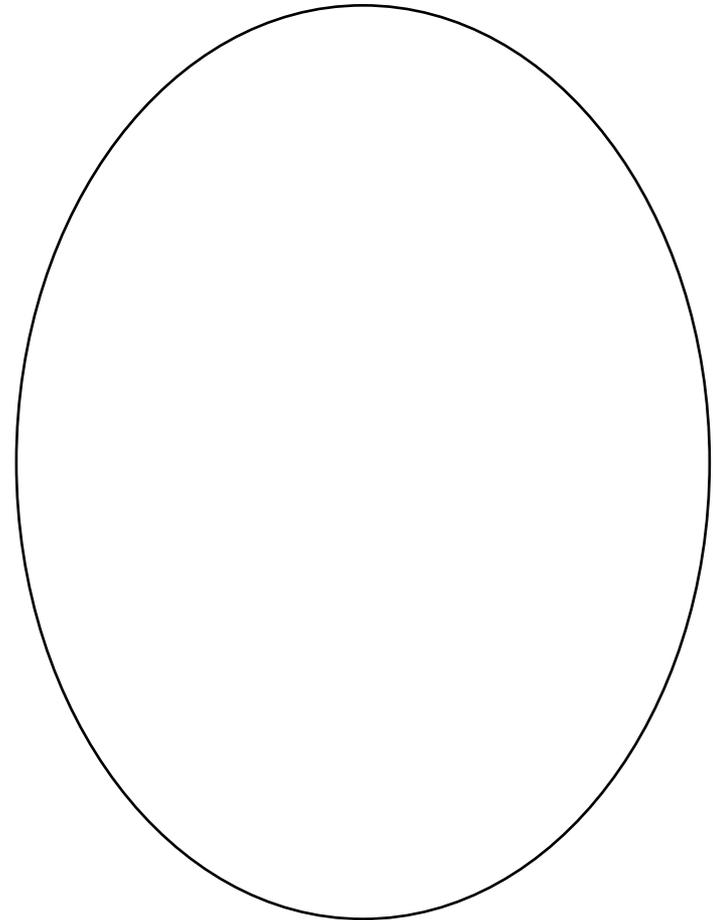
- Do you wear a mask?
- How do you feel when you are wearing one of those masks? Real? Phoney? Scared? Confident?
- What are some things that you hide behind a mask? Why do you hide these things?
- How is wearing a mask harmful to your self-image?
- What would encourage you to lower the mask?
- What would happen if you stopped wearing the mask?

**ACTIVITY: Create a mask that shows the different “faces” you present to society.**

**FRONT**



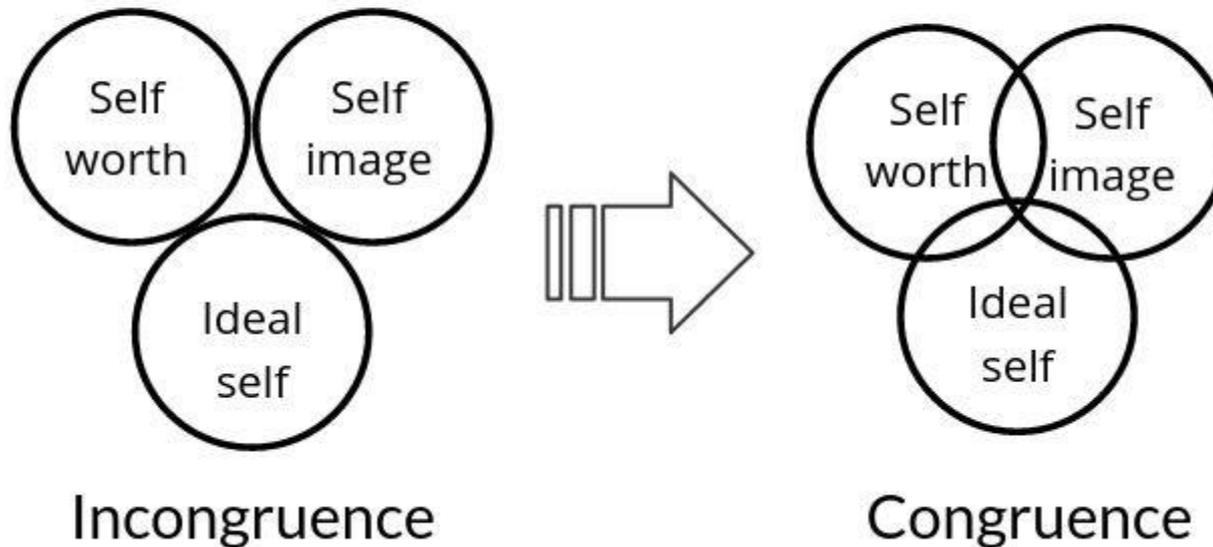
**BACK**



On the front of the mask, put the faces you show your friends, family, for example. You can show these behaviours any way you like—with pictures, poetry, colours, words/slogans/phrases, etc.

On the back of the mask, show who you really are. Again, you may illustrate your true self any way you like—with pictures, poetry, colours, words/slogans/phrases, etc.

## The Person Seeking Congruence



Congruence is a term used by Carl Rogers (a humanistic psychologist) to describe a state in which a person's ideal self and actual experience are consistent or very similar.

What type of person do I want to become? And why?

This is an inside out approach. It follows the line: Be -> Do -> Have

*“The more you repeat a behaviour, the more you reinforce the identity associated with that behaviour. In fact, the word identity was originally derived from the Latin word essentitas, which means being, and identidem, which means repeatedly. Your identity is literally your **“repeated beingness.”**”*

We only believe that we are that kind of person because we have proof for it. Proof that has accumulated over months and years.

Don't be fooled by the face I wear, for I wear a thousand masks, and none of them are me. Don't be fooled.  
For God's sake don't be fooled.

I give you the impression that I'm secure, that confidence is my name and coolness my game. And that I need  
no one. But don't believe me.

Beneath dwells the real me in confusion, in aloneness, in fear. That's why I create a mask to hide behind, to  
shield me from the glance that knows, but such a glance is precisely my salvation.

That is, if it's followed by acceptance, if it's followed by love. It's the only thing that can liberate me from my  
own self-built prison walls. I'm afraid that deep down I'm nothing and that I'm just no good, and that you will  
reject me.

And so begins the parade of masks. I idly chatter to you. I tell you everything that's really nothing and nothing  
of what's everything, of what's crying within me.

Please listen carefully and try to hear what I'm not saying. I'd really like to be genuine and spontaneous, and  
"me." But you've got to help me. You've got to hold out your hand.

Each time you're kind and gentle, and encouraging, each time you try to understand because you really care,  
my heart begins to grown wings, feeble wings, but wings.

With your sensitivity and sympathy, and your power of understanding, you alone can release me from my  
shallow world of uncertainty.

It will not be easy for you. The nearer you approach me, the blinder I may strike back but I'm told that Love is  
stronger than strong walls, and in this lies my only hope.

Please try to beat down these walls with firm hands, but gentle hands, for a child is very sensitive.

Who am I, you may wonder. I am every man you meet, and also every woman that you meet, and I am you,  
also.

The image of an ideal self should drive and empower you to grow.

Not make you feel bad about your actual, current self.



**Behind every mask  
there is a face, and  
behind that a story.**



Marty Rubin  
[www.geckoandfly.com](http://www.geckoandfly.com)

Be congruent, be authentic,  
be your true self.

Mahatma Gandhi