

# Admitting our faults: When does self-acceptance trump self-destruction?

May 21 2014

---

When face-to-face with our failures, it's hard not to deny the consequences of our shortcomings—and sometimes we make problems worse by engaging in the behaviors we have been trying so hard to avoid. According to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, practicing self-acceptance may be the best way to boost our self-worth and avoid self-deprecating behaviors and consequences.

"Consider the person who has just realized that they are poorly prepared financially for retirement," write authors Soo Kim and David Gal (both Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University). "They might either go out and buy something expensive or start [binge eating](#) or drinking as a way to avoid dealing with their problems. We introduce the idea that practicing [self-acceptance](#) is a more effective alternative to this type of self-destructive behavior."

Across five experiments, the authors confirmed that practicing self-acceptance helps to reduce a person's likelihood of engaging in damaging behavior and increases the likelihood that they will work toward improving the areas where they fall short. In one study, participants read about the concept of self-acceptance and were then asked to select either a luxury magazine or the book "Power and Influence for Dummies." As predicted, participants were more likely to select the book over the magazine, indicating a desire to improve their overall well-being.

These results provide insight for brands targeting consumers who might be more forgiving than others (elderly vs. young) or brands selling

products requiring more advice than others (financial or dietary products). Conversely, brands targeting groups with low self-acceptance should take care to carefully phrase their advice-related messages in a non-threatening manner.

While the benefits of self-acceptance can help to boost a person's self-esteem as a means to promote well-being, the authors caution against using undeserved praise that can give people unrealistic beliefs and expectations about their abilities. "When a person's beliefs and expectations are undermined, it can detrimentally harm their self-worth. Unlike self-esteem, self-acceptance that is inherently unconditional may better prepare someone for inevitable failures—ultimately serving as a less volatile alternative for promoting well-being," the authors conclude.

**More information:** Soo Kim and David Gal. "From Compensatory Consumption to Adaptive Consumption: The Role of Self-Acceptance in Resolving Self-Deficits." *Journal of Consumer Research*: August 2014.

Provided by University of Chicago

Citation: Admitting our faults: When does self-acceptance trump self-destruction? (2014, May 21) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-05-faults-self-acceptance-trump-self-destruction.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.