

Pannon Egyetem
University of Pannonia

Equal Opportunities in Higher Education

With a Focus on Wellbeing and Community

Pannon Egyetem
Esélyegyenlőségi Bizottság

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LEARNING ABOUT MYSELF: SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OTHERS

Author: Ágnes Hegyi



Developing self-knowledge is not only key to personal wellbeing, but also a fundamental prerequisite for understanding others and shaping social relationships. This study highlights how our self-image is influenced by our social environment, our attitudes, our biases and the new challenges posed by the digital world.

The Importance of Self-Knowledge and Self-Image

Self-knowledge is a key element of human development. The understanding we gain about ourselves not only influences our personal growth but also affects our decisions, actions and relationships. By improving self-knowledge, we come to understand our abilities, limitations, and the ways in which we impact our environment. Perhaps, one of the most important concepts is self-image, which is an individual's mental representation of themselves, encompassing knowledge about their own traits, abilities and social roles. Self-image is dynamic and continuously shaped by experiences and social feedback. Self-presentation refers to the process by which a person attempts to influence others' impressions of them, as well as how they are perceived and evaluated. Self-presentation can occur consciously or unconsciously, and its purposes may include gaining social acceptance, acquiring status or power, or establishing and maintaining social relationships. The self is not static but adapts to different situations. People consciously or unconsciously use self-presentation strategies, such as: ingratiation (trying to create the most positive impression through friendliness); exemplification (attempting to present a morally exemplary image); self-promotion (emphasising one's own achievements); supplication (displaying helplessness, excessive requests for help, or self-deprecation); intimidation (trying to achieve dominance through displays of power).

Attitudes, Attributions and Biases

An attitude expresses a relatively permanent positive or negative orientation of an individual towards a person, object, event or idea. Attitudes guide behaviour, influence decision-making, and provide a framework for perception. They are learned predispositions that shape an individual's responses to particular objects, people, situations or concepts. Attribution refers to the process by which people seek explanations for their own or others' behaviour. During attribution, we decide whether a given behaviour is caused by internal or external factors; in other words, the individual attempts to identify the causes of behaviour. We speak of dispositional (internal) attribution when behaviour is attributed to a person's traits, abilities or intentions. For example: "He got a good grade because he is hardworking." External attribution, on the other hand, occurs when behaviour is explained by external circumstances, the situation or chance. For instance: "He got a good grade because he cheated." Naturally, errors can occur when judging others' behaviour; these are known as attribution biases. One common example is the fundamental attribution error, where we tend to overemphasise internal causes when explaining others' behaviour while ignoring situational factors. For example: "That waiter was rude, so he must be a bad person," instead of considering that he might simply be having a bad day.

Self-Knowledge and Social Cognition

Without self-knowledge, there can be no true understanding of others, as we interpret other people through our own experiences and self-reflection. Socio-psychological phenomena demonstrate how the social environment and social norms influence our self-image and our judgement of others. The process of social cognition, for example, involves forming impressions of others through mental processes, which in turn affect our own self-image. This is an integral part of self-knowledge, as our relationships with others shape the way we see ourselves. Social comparison describes the process by which individuals compare themselves to others in order to determine their own abilities, opinions or status. Upward comparison occurs when we compare ourselves to people we consider better than us, in order to gain motivation or develop. Downward comparison occurs when we compare ourselves to people we perceive as less successful, in order to increase our self-esteem.

From Social Influence to Stereotypes

Conformity, or social influence, means that individuals adapt to the perceived social norms prevailing within a given group. It refers to changes in an individual's ideas, attitudes, beliefs or behaviour as a result of the influence of others. An experimental example of this is the lift experiment, which clearly illustrates that people tend to imitate the behaviour of others (if everyone in a lift turns their back to the door, the individual is likely to follow this behaviour). However, this mechanism of social adaptation goes beyond simply adopting patterns of behaviour: it can also contribute to how individuals think about certain groups. Through the influence of the social environment, stereotypes are more easily internalised, that is, simplified and generalised beliefs or assumptions that ignore individual differences. If these generalisations are accompanied by an emotional component (evaluation), such as dislike or anger, we speak of prejudice, which may also lead to discriminatory behaviour.

The Online Space as a New Socio-Psychological Arena

In the online space, many classic socio-psychological phenomena appear, albeit in new forms. The internet, and especially social media, creates a virtual environment in which individuals' identities are shaped more flexibly: new feelings, new patterns of behaviour and new roles can emerge. People often adapt to the norms of digital communities, which brings also the phenomenon of conformity into the online space. For example, the rapid spread of trends, challenges or memes can be explained by users' tendency to follow others under the influence of group pressure. Online presence is also about self-presentation and self-expression. Individuals seek feedback and desire recognition and appreciation (for example, through collecting likes, followers and shares). The phenomenon of 'Share, and let me rule!" (own wording) refers to the idea that users wish to control how others perceive them and strive to present a positive, idealised (self-)image on online platforms. Furthermore, basic social motives, such as the need to belong or the tendency to value those who belong to our group more highly, are also particularly important in online communities. The saying "If you're not on Facebook, you don't exist" illustrates the desire of individuals to reinforce their social connections through social networks and to avoid the feeling of exclusion. All these processes contribute to the formation of stereotypes, group norms and even prejudices and discriminatory patterns of behaviour in the online space, for example in internet debates found in comment sections. The online world is therefore not merely a platform for communication, but also a new arena for socio-psychological phenomena.

NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION THAT SUPPORTS WORKPLACE COLLABORATION

Author: Katalin Borbáth



"Spoken words are a person's ornaments, and they should not be uttered hastily, carelessly or disorderly, even when they are very important."

The foundation of workplace collaboration is open, empathetic and non-judgemental dialogue. This text presents how the method of nonviolent communication supports mindfulness, connection and attitude formation during workplace training.

Nonviolent Communication That Supports Collaboration

Nonviolent communication (NVC) that supports collaboration is not merely a communication tool, but a method based on modern psychological principles. Essentially, it is a tool that brilliantly captures different levels and forms of empathy in language, thereby developing the practice of conscious empathy. Its extremely rich methodology supports reflective thinking, access to our own and others' emotions, their precise understanding, and fosters a consciously reflective presence. All this is achieved through a linguistic approach, which facilitates the learning of the technique. Its attitude-shaping power is demonstrated by the aim of objective expression free from logical fallacies. The steps of NVC offer a professional tool for overriding automatic negative thoughts and for developing an assertive communication attitude. Its further psychological foundation is provided by the self-determination model developed by Ryan and Deci, which modernises earlier ideas related to Maslow's popular hierarchy of needs and describes the motivational background of behaviour. This theory demonstrates the behaviour-motivating force of three basic psychological needs: relatedness, competence and autonomy. Within the NVC method, the key achievement lies in translating brilliant, modern psychological theories with an eclectic background into equally modern communication and attitude development techniques.

How Does the Balance Between Theory and Practice Appear in NVC Training Sessions?

The training begins with a brief theoretical introduction in digestible "portions", tailored to individuals and the group (basic concepts, psychological background), followed by a presentation of the 4-step technique:

1. non-judgemental observation
2. expressing related feelings
3. recognising and articulating needs
4. formulating a concrete and positive request towards the other person that supports the fulfilment of the need

Strong linguistic precision – using exclusively first person singular, objective phrasing that clearly separates feelings and needs – is applied in practical situations, for example in real workplace conflict scenarios.

The Aim of the Training

In all cases, even in shorter workshops (1.5 to 3 hours), the aim is not only the transfer of theoretical knowledge but also experiential learning for participants, thereby fostering some degree of attitude change and increased awareness.

For this, a key element is, among other things, the creation of a safe atmosphere within the group, which is not always easy for trainers, especially in workplace sensitisation contexts, for there is a high likelihood that participants will be busy with self-monitoring and self-correction in order to present themselves positively in front of their colleagues. This inevitably emerging tendency works against the expression of genuine emotions and experiences.

Therefore, the initial 'check-in round' at the beginning of the training, the articulation of expectations and the establishment of a shared set of ground rules cannot be omitted. All of this lays the foundation for a transparent



and safe communication space. Once this is successfully established, the participants are more willing and confident to share their own stories and conflict situations during the exercises. Naturally, this only applies to topics that participants choose voluntarily and that do not cause "emotional turbulence" among them.

The Trainer's Facilitative Role

The trainer subtly facilitates the creation of this safe communication space, for example by setting a good example through sharing carefully selected personal experience. The use of diverse working methods is also a methodological "master key" to successful training. Following a theoretical foundation comprising no more than 10–15% of the session, participants find themselves engaged in various sharing activities and exercises, and gradually open up. Self-reflection following each exercise and the sharing of thoughts play an important role in raising awareness of attitude change.
From the trainer's side, the secret is that there is no secret.



SENSITIVITY TO CULTURES

Author: Andrea Balog



In an institution where students and staff from many different countries and cultural backgrounds work together, and where people of varying backgrounds and ages meet on a daily basis, the ability to establish appropriate connections and communicate effectively across different cultural contexts is of key importance.
Intercultural sensitivity is a competence that can be developed; it is therefore worthwhile to understand the importance of awareness-raising and how prejudice works.

Prejudice

According to Gordon W. Allport, we may feel prejudice towards a person belonging to a particular group based on the assumption that the individual possesses the negative traits we associate with that group. However, this prejudice can escalate through several stages:

- **Verbal prejudice** – expressions in which prejudice appears in speech, typically as condemnatory verbal behaviour or insults in the private sphere. In the public sphere, such verbal communication is referred to as hate speech.
- **Avoidance** – behaviour involving the deliberate avoidance of members of a group that evokes a sense of aversion (persona non grata).
- **Discrimination** – at this level, for example, the state may legitimise through regulation the deprivation of certain groups' rights that are otherwise granted to all citizens.
- **Physical aggression** – a more severe stage involving threatening or harmful behaviour.
- **Persecution** – the complete marginalisation or exclusion of a particular ethnic or social group.

A Survey Conducted by TÁRKI

In 2007, researcher Endre Sik examined xenophobia among people living in Hungary, using a questionnaire that explored attitudes towards different ethnic groups: how sympathetic they were perceived to be, and whether respondents would accept them as refugees in the country. Approximately one third of the respondents could be considered xenophobic, while the majority indicated that they would weigh the issue.

Why Is Awareness-Raising Necessary?

Our everyday behaviour and thinking contain many elements that operate almost automatically; we rely on patterns that were formed and fixed at certain stages of our lives. However, the human environment is a constantly changing structure, in which culture is the most dynamic and living matrix shaping our behaviour and mental state, continuously gaining and losing elements.

According to Allport, the degree of rejection is related to the level of exposure. In other words, the more frequently and directly we encounter representatives of another culture, the more the sense of unfamiliarity decreases and acceptance increases. Our current environment, through social media, exposes us to a greater volume of phenomena from other cultural contexts than ever before. We react to them unconsciously on a daily basis, and often there is neither time nor space to fully understand or interpret them – this can lead to rejection and fear, on which we attempt to reflect through interactive and playful exercises.

What Can We Encounter in an Intercultural Training?

In an intercultural training, participants can share their experiences of encountering new cultures throughout their lives and discuss whether they have experienced culture shock. They may reflect on how these experiences have stayed with them and how they have influenced their previously established habits and patterns. It is also worthwhile to consider what traditions and beliefs we inherit from our predecessors, and what defines our own cultural identity. It can be insightful to adopt multiple perspectives: what it feels like to be a guest in an unfamiliar environment and what it is like to host others as guests, and also, if we can recognise subcultures and cultural minorities within our own country. And perhaps we may also experience why it can be difficult to talk about these topics.



COLLEAGUES WITH DISABILITIES

Author: Péter Farkas

Today's society is more diverse than ever before, which brings both greater freedom and greater responsibility for individuals. The acceptance of diversity and "otherness" is supported not only by an inclusive mindset but also by awareness, grounded in positive attitudes and empathy, which are natural aspects of our humanity.



The Place of People with Disabilities in Society

For the wider community, accepting people with disabilities may be one of the greatest challenges, as their presence reminds us of the fragility of human physical, mental and emotional health, and of how ordinary – yet deeply personal – the stories behind these conditions are. For these reasons, the majority of people approach the topic with a degree of hesitation. In the rush of everyday life, there is little opportunity for non-disabled individuals to meet people with disabilities and to understand their world. One of the most interactive ways to bridge this gap in connection is through awareness-raising sessions.

Awareness-Raising Training Sessions

During such training sessions, children, young people and adults alike can gain insight into the feelings and fears of the "other side" and can reflect on emerging questions and perspectives. In doing so, they help establish communication channels that make it easier to find common ground in the future. The aim of awareness-raising sessions is to break down participants' potential prejudices and stigmas, thereby promoting social acceptance and inclusion. The impact of these programmes is strengthened when participants have the opportunity to meet people with disabilities in person, making the experience more tangible and personal.

Awareness Training on Physical Disabilities at the University of Pannonia

An awareness-raising training entitled *"Sensitivity Training Towards Students and Employees with Disabilities"*, organised by the Equal Opportunities Committee operating under the auspices of the University of Pannonia and offered to university staff, took place in January 2025. Its focus was on exploring knowledge and attitudes related to people with mobility impairments.

When selecting the topic, a key consideration was the fact that physical disability is perhaps one of the most visible forms of disability and, at the same time, one of the more socially accepted forms. For individuals with such disabilities, opportunities to obtain a degree and enter the labour market are attainable, despite the limiting factors. Consequently, higher education institutions are likely to encounter individuals with mobility impairments both among students and staff, making these organisations stakeholders in the integration and acceptance of such individuals on multiple levels.



Key Focal Points of the Awareness-Raising Training on Physical Disabilities

The sessions aim to map, reflect on, and "fine-tune" participants' attitudes. Since lasting positive change requires addressing three levels of attitude, even in relation to disability, the emotional, cognitive and behavioural components are all emphasised during the training.

Participants are given the opportunity to outline their existing knowledge about people with mobility impairments, express their emotions related to the group and reflect on their behavioural patterns. They can learn about social models of disability, revisit their own past experiences related to people

with disabilities, and use collaborative thinking to develop practical approaches that can facilitate everyday coexistence.

During the training, participants can learn about methods for integrating people with disabilities into education and the labour market, the ethical approaches governing the manner and content of cooperation, as well as the opportunities and challenges that shape their everyday lives.

The Contribution of the Awareness-Raising Training to Self-Knowledge

Participants in awareness-raising trainings on physical disabilities gain insight into a world that, while visible to many, is rarely understood in depth. The focus is not only on accepting difference but also on recognising that, despite limitations, the lives of others can be complete and fulfilling. This realisation can in turn strengthen participants' conscious and positive attitude towards their own lives.



WORK–LIFE BALANCE

Authors: Katalin Judit Fejes and Etelka Katits



Achieving a balance between work and private life is one of the greatest challenges of our present time, particularly in light of rapid economic, technological and social changes. This study seeks to explore how flexible forms of employment, a proactive organisational culture and AI-based solutions can contribute to enhancing employee well-being and long-term engagement.

The Balance of Flexibility and Security in a Changing Environment

Economic, social and technological changes require extremely rapid and continuous adaptation from all actors in the economy, including businesses and employees. Such adaptation calls for labour market conditions that are both flexible and secure: on the one hand, enabling businesses to adjust to changing circumstances, and on the other, ensuring job security for employees, supporting job retention, or facilitating re-employment in cases of becoming unemployed. Flexibility and security together are essential to ensure that transitions within the labour market result in positive outcomes for individuals.

Atypical Forms of Employment

Work–life balance has become a central issue, particularly with the spread of digitalisation, hybrid working patterns and AI-based solutions. The propagation of non-traditional (atypical) forms of employment can provide a solution both for increasing companies' adaptability and productivity, and for engaging those who remain outside the labour market. This includes exploring new employment opportunities that flexibly align with the needs of labour market participants, while also ensuring the conditions for secure employment.

A Proactive Organisational Culture for Work–Life Balance

Current research primarily focuses on individual coping strategies of employees, while less attention is given to proactive organisational measures. It is not entirely clear how proactive corporate governance affects employees' long-term commitment and mental well-being. However, proactive steps taken by organisations can have a significant impact on employees' mental and physical health. Atypical forms of employment, such as flexible working hours or remote work, can increase company productivity and support workforce activation, while also creating secure working conditions. In many industries, these solutions have been shown to improve employee satisfaction, reduce stress and enhance productivity. It is also important to highlight awareness-raising trainings aimed at developing organisational culture, which can help prevent burnout and support a healthy workplace environment.

The Role of AI-Based Solutions in Work–Life Balance

AI-based systems and virtual assistants can support work–life balance in several ways, for example through personalised and efficient time management, solutions that facilitate remote working and by reducing the burden of administrative and repetitive tasks. Such solutions enable employees to focus on more important responsibilities, thereby increasing their sense of control and overall satisfaction. They can also support employee well-being by offering suggestions to reduce workplace stress, monitoring changes in employee performance and satisfaction, and anticipating the need for intervention. However, when implementing AI-based solutions, it is essential to take into account ethical and



psychological challenges, such as anxiety related to job displacement and concerns about trust arising from the handling of sensitive data.

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