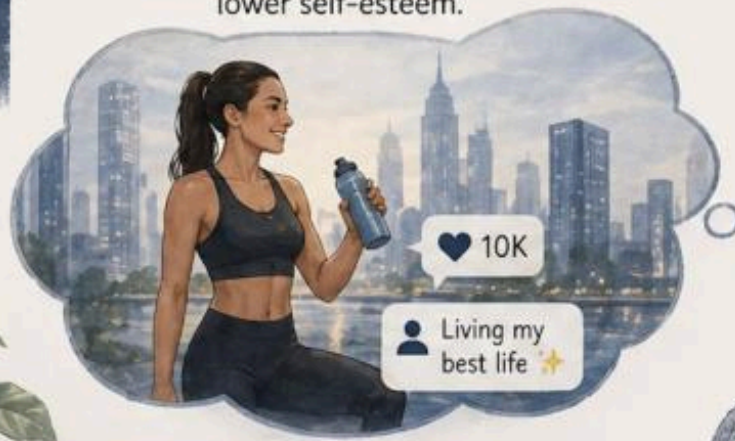
Social Comparison Theory

We evaluate ourselves by comparing to others.

UPWARD COMPARISON

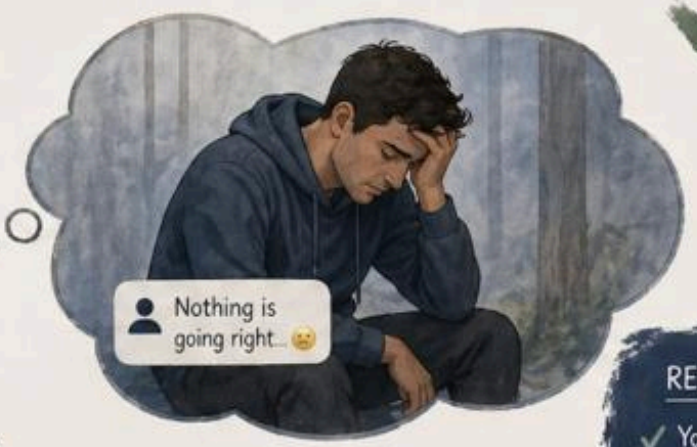
Comparing to those who are better off or more successful can inspire us to improve, but may also lower self-esteem.



Can motivate growth and self-improvement.

DOWNWARD COMPARISON

Comparing to those who are worse off can boost our self-esteem and perspective.



Can increase gratitude and self-acceptance.







REMEMBER:

- ✓ You are unique
- ✓ Your journey is your own
- ✓ Comparison is a tool, not a trap
- ✓ Focus on growth, not comparison

Sean | ♡ Pepper | Sabrina

REFLECT • AWARE • GROW

The idea that we learn about our own abilities and attitudes by comparing ourselves to other people. People socially compare when there is no objective standard to measure themselves against and when they are uncertain about themselves in a particular area.

Explain the basic principles of social comparison theory.

Describe the difference between upward and downward social comparisons and the psychological impact of each.

- Upward comparison: Comparing ourselves to people who are better than we are regarding a particular trait or ability.
  - Or comparing yourself to a future version of us that will be better at a particular trait or ability
    - Is when we want to know what to strive towards.
- Downward comparison: Comparing ourselves to people who are worse than we are regarding a particular trait or ability.
  - Or comparing yourself to a past version of you that was worse at a particular trait or ability
    - When we want to feel better about ourselves

Provide one original example of an upward comparison and one of a downward comparison that are not included in your textbook.

- Upward comparison: Sabrina is a behavior specialist- when her clients are in crisis and she can't regulate them and she thinks to herself that she is not good enough and questions her abilities and if she ever learned the skills. She is working toward a better future version of herself.
- Downward comparison: There was a guy feeling depressed and super sorry for himself so much that he slid down the wall and he was just giving up and crying because he didn't have any shoes. A guy tapped him on the shoulder and when he looked over at the guy, he didn't have any feet.

How might excessive upward comparison on social media influence mental health?

- Thinking that people online have a better life than we do worsens mental health outcomes and might lead to more feelings of depression, insecurity, jealousy, anxiety, self-doubt or disordered behaviors (e.g., anorexia & bulimia)

Discuss one strategy individuals could use to mitigate the negative effects of social comparison online.

Limiting screen time and spending time with friends, family, outdoors, doing things that made you happy, unfollowing individuals who make you feel this way,

Flip it and do downward social comparison ("I actually have a better life than this person because ...") to feel better about yourself..