
- Youth with balanced and plausible academically focused possible selves spent more time doing homework, were less disruptive, and more behaviorally engaged in class-room activities. Youth with feared off-track possible selves attended school more (had fewer school absences).


- Possible selves most likely to produce behavior are those that suggest behaviors people feel confident they can perform and sustain that are not inconsistent with associated self-representations.


- Greater clarity of future possible selves was associated with less depression, less alcohol use, and more life satisfaction

- Thinking clearly about one’s future was connected to more positive affect and positive automatic thoughts, less negative affect and fewer negative automatic thoughts, more life satisfaction, less anxiety, depression, and alcohol use, stronger psychological connection to the hoped-for possible self, and endorsement of fewer negative traits as possible for the future self.


- Adolescents who believe that positive possible selves are likely to be attained have higher self-esteem than those who do not (Knox et al, 1998)

- High performing students may have an easier time imagining positive academic possible selves than low performing students (e.g. Leondari, Syngollitou, and Kiosseoglou, 1998).

- Low performing students who come to believe that they can succeed in spite of obstacles may be able to create and sustain academic possible selves in spite of a lack of previous academic success.

- Adolescents learn about what is possible and what is valued through engagement with their social context (Oyserman and Markus, 1993).

- Change in possible selves mediated significant change in school behavior, grades, and depression (Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry, 2005).
• Even in samples with high risk of academic problems due to high poverty concentration, when youth had more academically focused possible selves and strategies to attain them, they had significantly improved grades (controlling for previous year GPA) compared with youth lacking these possible selves (Oyserman, et al., 2004).

• By the 9th grade, a quarter of youth without any positive expected selves reported heavy substance use, as compared with only 1% of those with three positive expected selves.

• Possible selves have been implicated in both promoting positive outcomes – academics and in increasing risk of negative outcomes – delinquency, alcohol and tobacco use, and early sexual activity.

• In a sample of low-income African American middle school students, academic or school-related possible selves linked with strategies predicted positive change in grades.


• Adolescents who possess academically oriented possible selves are significantly more likely to attain improved grades than those without these possible selves.

• Possible selves may facilitate optimism and belief that change is possible because they provide the sense that the current self is malleable (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

• Gonzales et al. (2001) found that articulating a goal elevated mood, improved well being and created a sense of optimism about the likelihood of attaining the goal for participants, compared with participants who did not articulate a goal.

• Possible selves and other self-directed goals can serve to guide and regulate behavior, providing a roadmap connecting the present to the future.

• Youth actively seek evidence of who they might become through social interactions and role models.


• Children who envisioned a possible self dependent upon education were more likely to invest more effort in schoolwork and these efforts paid off in better grades.

• Children are more likely to expend effort on school if this effort feels like an investment toward attaining an education-dependent future self, and not like an identity-relevant chore.

❖ Research Composite: “Possible Selves” 10.28.12 ❖ Segue Career Mentors ❖ www.SegueProgram.org ❖