

**OPEN ACCESS**

SUBMITTED 16 October 2025

ACCEPTED 08 November 2025

PUBLISHED 12 December 2025

VOLUME Vol.05 Issue12 2025

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# The Syndrome Of Low Self-Esteem In Students And Its Psychological Causes

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**Abstract:** The article examines the syndrome of low self-esteem in students as a significant psychological phenomenon that influences their personal development, academic performance, and social adaptation. The main causes of low self-esteem are analyzed, including family relationships, characteristics of the educational environment, social comparison, and individual personality traits. Special attention is paid to the role of emotional experience, interpersonal interactions, and intrinsic motivation in the development of feelings of inferiority. The findings presented may be useful for psychologists, educators, and researchers working with issues related to student youth.

**Keywords:** Self-esteem; low self-esteem; students; psychological causes; inferiority complex; academic adaptation; personal development; psychological well-being.

**INTRODUCTION:** If a person is trying to put on a show, it is only because they feel inferior and do not sense enough inner strength to compete with others in anything truly useful. That is why they continue to engage in futile things.

The problem of complexes is highly relevant, because complexes block our lives and prevent us from fully realizing ourselves. We have seen that every symptom in a person's life manifests dynamically, that is, in development. Therefore we may say that it has a past and a future. The future is inextricably linked to our aspirations and goals, whereas the past points to the nature of the inferiority or inadequacy that we are trying to overcome. That is why the inferiority complex is of greatest interest to us at the outset, while the superiority complex is of interest to us in its dynamics,

in its development. Moreover, these two complexes are naturally interconnected. We should not be surprised if, in a case where we are examining an inferiority complex, we find a more or less hidden superiority complex. Conversely, if we study a superiority complex in its dynamics, we will always find a more or less concealed inferiority complex.

Let us first clarify the definition of the word “complex.” This concept was introduced by Carl Gustav Jung. In his view, a complex is “an agglomeration of associations – something like a cast of a more or less complicated psychological nature – sometimes of a traumatic, sometimes simply of a painful affective character.” Complexes are memories and thoughts repressed into the subconscious and affectively charged. According to Jung, the most frequent cause of the emergence of a complex is a psychologically traumatic situation. It is “emotionally accentuated and, moreover, incompatible with the habitual position of consciousness.” This image possesses autonomy and, as a rule, is not consciously controlled by the individual. A complex can be suppressed by an effort of will; however, this does not make it disappear or heal, and at the first opportunity it manifests again. Complexes may appear in dreams, in behavior, in relationship patterns, as well as in other unconscious states (states of alcohol intoxication, delusions, hallucinations). That is, we can say that complexes manifest themselves in situations where consciousness (will) is unable to suppress them – in vivid manifestations of the unconscious. From this it follows that complexes are autonomous and, as Jung wrote, “not only do people possess complexes, but complexes also possess people.”

The concept of the inferiority complex was introduced by Alfred Adler, an Austrian psychologist, psychoanalyst, Neo-Freudian, and founder of individual psychology.

According to Adler, an inferiority complex is a pathological feeling that necessarily demands easy compensation and special gratification, and at the same time hinders the achievement of success, increasing barriers while reducing reserves of courage.

Student years are a unique period for studying various personal characteristics of an individual, including complexes.

The most common complexes among students.

A psychological complex is an erroneous idea a person has about their physical or psychological shortcomings, an exaggeration of these, accompanied by deep experiences that are usually hidden from others.

Complexes develop and are maintained at the

subconscious level as traces of internal psychological conflicts. Their awareness usually gives rise to very unpleasant feelings, and as a result the so-called “censorship” blocks the penetration of information about them into the person’s self-consciousness.

Complexes are formed in early childhood, at a stage of life when the child’s brain is still not mature enough to analyze and differentiate incoming information. However, a complex can settle in our psyche later as well – at 20 or even 30 years of age. In that case, it is necessary that some person or circumstance repeatedly “press” on an already existing “sore spot,” thereby reinforcing our subconscious insecurity. It is believed that the earlier a complex appears in our psyche, the more difficult it is to get rid of it.

Within the structure of personality, most complexes are interconnected. They are combined with defense reactions, which play not only a negative but also a positive role in a person’s life. For example, an inferiority complex in a person is often combined with such defense mechanisms as rationalization and sublimation (substitution).

Physiological complex. The presence of an underdeveloped organ or other physical defects in a child from birth is a very powerful source for the development of an inferiority complex.

Inferiority complex. An acute, exaggerated experience of one’s own weakness and imperfection. The term is widely used in everyday speech in a not entirely accurate sense. As a rule, it is taken to mean that a person does not value themselves highly and suffers from a lack of self-confidence. This phenomenon, which indeed occurs quite often, would more correctly be defined in terms of low self-esteem. However, in Adler’s view, the content of the inferiority complex is not identical to low self-esteem or, at the very least, is not exhausted by it.

Superiority complex. This is the desire to achieve one’s own “coolness” – to such an extent that everyone around would fall at your feet and cry: “Oh, how great and powerful you are!” In the superiority complex it is very important to appear great. A superiority complex is an insufficiently justified attitude of a person that they are superior to those around them and that this gives them the right to enjoy special privileges among them. A characteristic feature of this type of complex is that it is formed in a person’s consciousness as a defense mechanism – primarily as a consequence of an inferiority complex and hostility. The feeling of superiority shapes egocentricity and contributes to a person’s constant withdrawal from social life, thereby aggravating the depressive state that develops over time.

The “failing student” and “straight-A student” complexes.

The “failing student” understands that it is useless for him to try; in any case he cannot rise above this level, and he continues to live by inertia, without particular effort.

The “straight-A student,” on the other hand, is used to always being at a high level, to maintaining this standard by all possible means. From early childhood he has been deprived of the right to be worse than others in anything, but public evaluation is far removed from teachers’ marks, and when such a “straight-A student” grows up, he will inevitably encounter a situation in which it is not he but someone else who becomes the best. For the “straight-A student,” this will be a severe stress. Striving not for knowledge but for being the best, he will strain his last reserves of strength, yet it will still be difficult for him to remain at this level, because the bigger world is not a classroom.

“Failing students” and “straight-A students” are hostages of school marks, and they will remain dependent on other people’s opinions all their lives. “Average students,” however, are free from this dependence and therefore are just the ones who are free of complexes. They determine their own interests; nothing presses on them. It is precisely “average students” who very often achieve great results in life.

The “black sheep” complex.

Guilt complex. The guilt complex is expressed in the fact that a person with a highly developed conscience and sense of responsibility constantly worries about themselves, about their actions and similar actions of other people, and does so without sufficient grounds. It often seems to them that they are personally to blame for what happens to them and around them, as well as to other people, although in reality this is not the case.

Hostility complex. The hostility complex manifests itself in heightened aggressiveness. An individual may possess strength and be convinced that having this strength gives them the right to wield power over others, or they may believe that all people are enemies to one another and that, consequently, aggressiveness is a forced response of one person to the treachery of another. The hostility complex has two paths of development: the first is open aggression toward not only those around the person but also toward close ones and relatives; the second is hidden hatred and malice toward the surrounding world, which over time develops into more complex mental disorders (most serial killers suffered in childhood from precisely this type of psychological complex).

The most complete and accurate definition seems to us

to be the following: hostility is an antagonistic attitude toward people that includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. The affective component includes a range of interconnected emotions such as anger, irritation, resentment, indignation, disgust, and so on. The cognitive component includes negative beliefs about human nature as a whole (cynicism) and beliefs about the ill will of others toward the subject themselves (hostile attributions, distrust). Finally, the behavioral component includes various forms of the manifestation of hostility in behavior, often covert ones: aggression, negativism, unwillingness to cooperate, avoidance of communication, and so forth.

Without the slightest hesitation, we can say that the method of individual psychology begins and ends with the inferiority complex.

As we have seen, inferiority lies at the basis of human strivings and achievements. On the other hand, the feeling of inferiority is the cause of many problems and poor adaptation in society. As a result of a person’s lack of an appropriate and concrete goal of superiority, an inferiority complex arises. It leads to a desire to flee from life, which is expressed in a superiority complex that is nothing other than useless and meaningless activity offering satisfaction through false and illusory successes.

This is what the dynamics of human life are like. To be more specific, it is known that errors in the functioning of the psyche are far more harmful for a person than errors in the functioning of any other organs and systems. We also know that a style of life crystallizes in the tendencies that are formed in childhood, with the formation of the prototype occurring at the age of four to five years. Thus, our entire mental life realizes what was laid down in childhood.

As for the upbringing of a child, its main goal, as we have shown, should be the development of a feeling of community, on the basis of which healthy and useful life goals then crystallize. Only by teaching children to live in accordance with social norms can we achieve that the universal feeling of inferiority serves healthy personality development and does not turn into an inferiority or superiority complex.

Social adaptation is like the reverse side of the medal of the problem of inferiority. Precisely because the individual person is inferior and weak, we find that human beings live together. Thus, the feeling of community and social cooperation are a person’s salvation.

Advice to students on getting rid of complexes: It is desirable to develop new, full-fledged psychological qualities that serve as good compensation for the corresponding complex. The important thing is that

these qualities should be a sufficiently good counterweight to the qualities you lack.

1. A person with a “straight-A student” complex needs to reconsider their understanding of the world and find in themselves the courage to be imperfect.
2. Praise yourself! One of the main conditions for combating complexes is forming a new, positive attitude toward yourself.
3. Rely on realistically attainable results and show flexibility in your relations with people.
4. Make a list of your strengths and, in any situation, place emphasis precisely on your positive qualities. Moreover, this list should be updated. Try to look at yourself through the eyes of someone who knows nothing about your inferiority complex: you will surely discover a great deal that is attractive in you.
5. Establish the following rule for yourself: “In my life, the most important person is me.” Do not be afraid of overdoing it – with your character, you definitely will not turn into a self-absorbed egoist.
6. Do not be afraid to surprise others.

7. Keep improving yourself. Clothing, appearance, a toned figure, hobbies, education – all this gives you the opportunity to make yourself more attractive. So make use of it.

8. Do not be afraid to be open. Say what you like and what you do not like so much. After all, the people around you are not X-ray machines; it is sometimes difficult for them to guess your wishes.

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