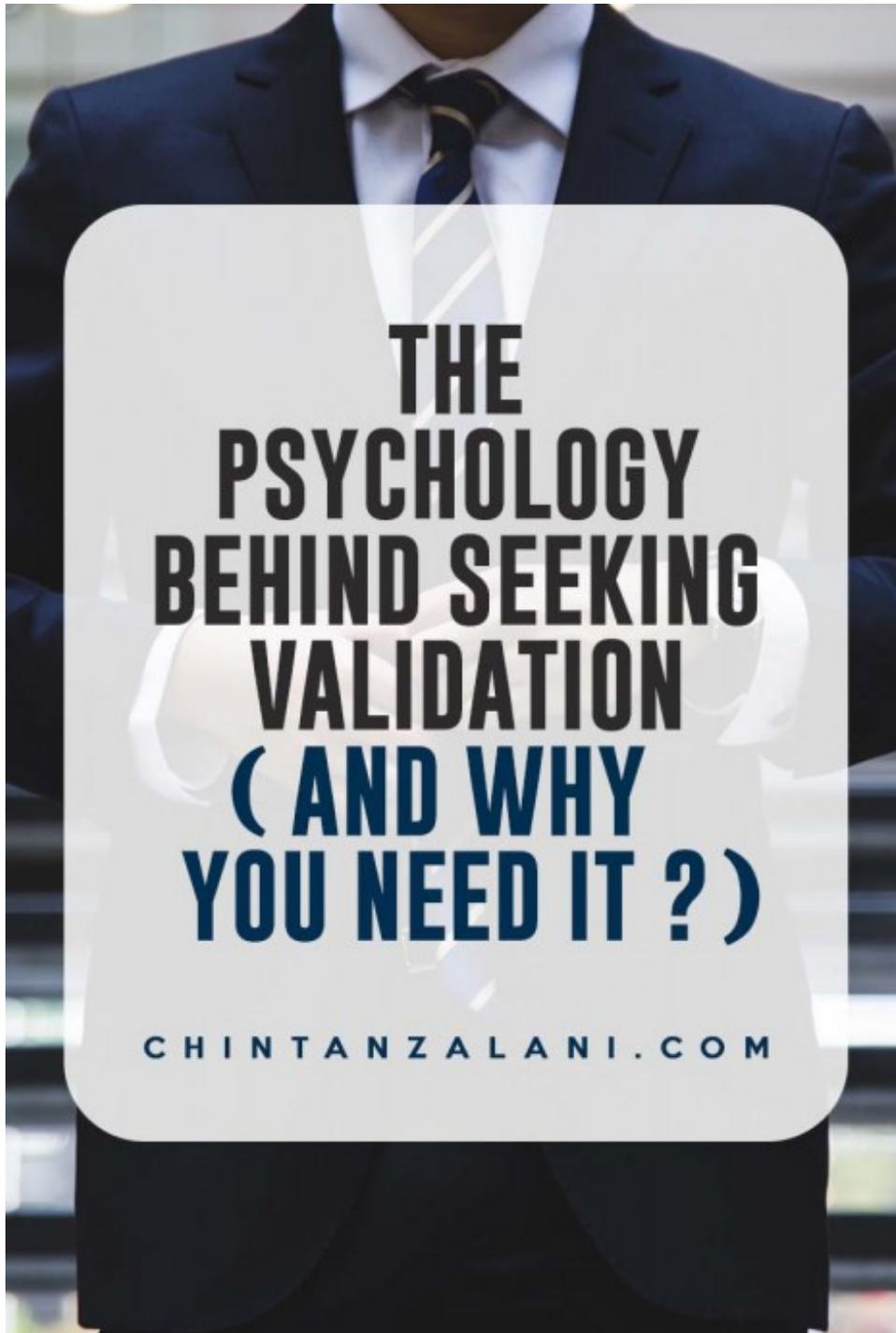


The psychology behind seeking validation (and Why YOU need it?)

 chintanzalani.com/psychology-behind-seeking-validation-need

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Speak your heart out. Don't let your life choices be determined by other's opinions. Trying to please people will drain your energy.

Hundreds of similar statements are coated as self-improvement advice around the term "validation."

I am not going down that path today.

Let's start with a cute food story.

While placing a home delivery order from a nearby restaurant, my friend (let's call him Mark because it's a cool name) turned to me.

Mark questioned if the food will be good. Neither of us had tried the food at this place before. Yet, I nodded in agreement like a cute dog.

The food's taste wasn't going to change, but Mark felt contented to have my approval onboard.

Similarly, you might regularly confirm your choice of clothes with someone else. You want people to think well of you. You desire to get accepted by others and feel accomplished.

Turns out, seeking validation and encouragement are everyday activities for most of us.

It has gotten a bad name due to a backlash by self-improvement blogs against it.

Isn't it time we break down the **validity of the advice against seeking validation?**

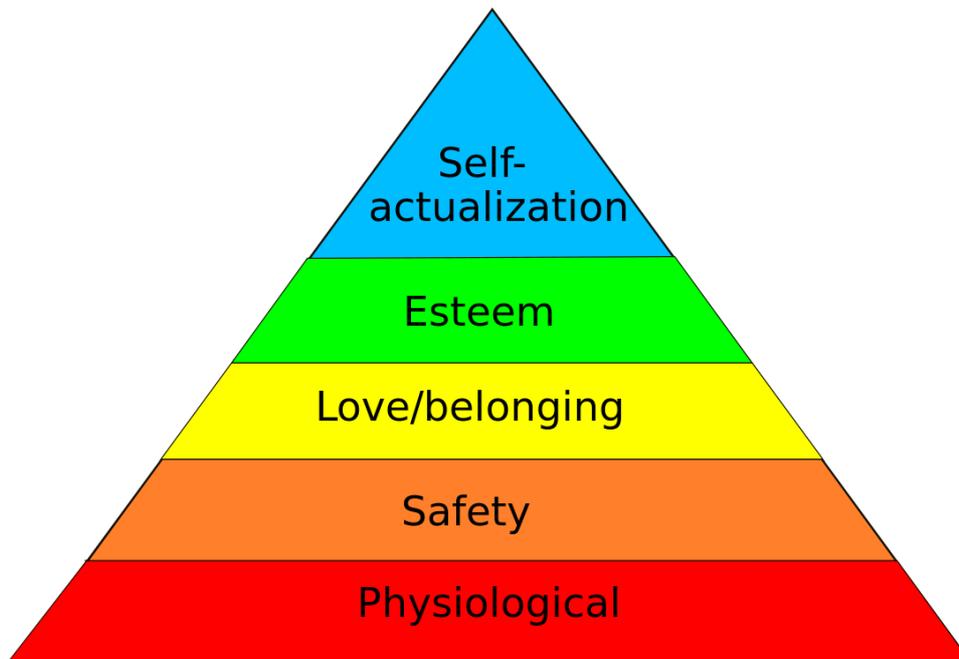
Here we go.

Why we seek validation on Facebook and in our everyday conversations?

As much as you might love to say that you're open-minded, it's difficult to hear out people that have contrary opinions.

You mostly hang out with people with similar tastes that agree with you. You want to have fulfilling relationships and feel loved by friends and family.

As per Maslow's hierarchy of needs (a psychology theory), esteem and love/belonging are an essential component of human motivation.



A great validation-seeking example from our daily life is **Facebook**.

Have you seen that little 'Like' thumb?

Yeah, that SCREAMS validation.

We share photos and update statuses in the hope of getting approved by our Facebook friends. When the "you look gorgeous" comments and 'hearts' flow in we feel happy.

As long as you don't consider Facebook as an extension of your identity and get obsessed forcing people to 'like' your updates, you're doing fine.

Likewise, it's not difficult to search for instances in your everyday conversations when you want to feel encouraged.

You know one of those moments when you're looking for people to tell you that you're doing fine (without judging your actions). You don't want people to shove how-to advice and the practicality of the situation in your face. It only fuels your frustration.

Until recently, I was that cocky guy that pushed elaborative 10 minute-advice down people's throats. I was a "problem-solver" and didn't like casual conversations.

I was judgemental about people sharing their feelings and thought of them as losers. The truth is that most of us seek such validation occasionally.

Changing behavior is the trickiest piece of the puzzle, and you shouldn't judge anyone's period of struggle. Your casual tap on their shoulders might give them the strength to step outside their comfort zones.

Take it from me - Don't hunt, analyze, and hand out unsolicited solutions to people in every conversation.

If someone shares their feelings with you, it means that they trust you. Your first response

should be empathetic by saying things like:

- It's going to be fine.
- Don't worry; I am here for you.
- Give it some time. You'll figure it out.

There's nothing wrong with seeking such validation occasionally.

Then, why do most self-improvement articles on the subject advise against it?

Evaluating the 'don't seek validation' advice that most self-improvement blogs spit out...

Remember I told you about how you hang out with people sharing similar interests?

Psychologists call such a group of people with a shared identity as an in-group. Occasionally, you might choose to value yourself based on the opinion of your in-group.

If you regularly seek such validation, then it might escalate to become your NEED. It might start affecting your everyday choices.

Your sole goal might change into pleasing people around you - even if it conflicts with your internal values and feelings.

That's where it gets ugly.

You might face performance anxiety and get depressed based on what others think of you. Self-improvement publications try to tackle the low-value issue by providing frameworks for practicing self-acceptance.

They throw advice to rewire your brain to stop depending on others. Just identify your unique talents. And let your life choices be based on your feelings, so that you steer your life's course. Now go find out what's right for you and take action.

Will such advice bring rainbows back in your life?

Well, the advice sounds good in theory. You completely get rid of approval by others. You appreciate your skills, talent, and personality. You've defined what success means for you. You create personal goals and knock them out of the park.

Good for ya.

But wait:

What about other people?

Well...

Now you're sliding into a dangerous lane where you feel **everything is okay as long as it makes you happy**. YOU become the centerpiece of every argument. Let me show you a couple of such instances:

You have a selfish goal of being the 'best annual performer' at work. And it's negatively impacting your prospective customers (you know, by tricking them with bogus offers to close more sales).

Your line of thought: Fuck ethics and respecting people's financial limitations. I've to meet my professional goals irrespective of the repercussions.

You asked out a couple of women out for coffee and got rejected.

Your line of thought: Women are bitches. They don't deserve me because I am ENTITLED to be happy and accepted. Plus, I'm awesome.

Instead of validating your choices from external sources, now you're entirely dependent on YOURSELF.

That doesn't change the condition - *You've merely treated a symptom.*

Now, you're a person with a different set of problems.

You can do better.

Instead of simply changing your validation source, search and identify the underlying cause.

For example: If you're obsessed with what other people post about you on Facebook then you might be suffering from low self-esteem. Another earlier study went to the extent of recommending that people with low self-esteem shouldn't use Facebook.



Now since I don't have any tips to let go of your need for external validation, let's move on to how to prevent yourself from falling from a bias.

If you plan to get rid of external validation, then don't let THIS bias creep in...

If you've lived in a culture that relies on approval of your family, then you might find it difficult to wade through life on your own.

You'll need to internalize that you don't necessarily need to pursue what's expected of you. And you need not end up going down cliched life paths (due to the herd instinct).

Eventually, you should start to view life clearly with your unique perspectives.

At this stage, you also need to remain mindful. It's easy to high-five yesmen that boost your ego and disregard the naysayers as bullshitters. What's difficult is looking at **negative** feedback *objectively*.

Sure you might have lived in the mountains for a month to find out your opinions of yourself and gotten over your obsession for external validation. While I appreciate your effort, there's still a possibility that your hypothesis might be wrong.

If you go by the traditional validation advice, you might end up rationalizing every life decision. You'll search for patterns of info that confirm your existing beliefs (as I mentioned in an earlier article it's called as apophenia).

The tendency to look at new evidence in a way that confirms your existing hypothesis, while conveniently ignoring the facts that violate your ideologies, has a fancy name in psychology:

Confirmation bias.

Even the best of us have fallen for this bias.



What's astounding is that when your wrong opinions are repeated a sufficient number of times, then your mind will reinforce a feedback loop. You'll be more confident that what you believe is indeed true.

(Even Donald Trump repeats his arguments couple or more times. Now, you know why).

I am sure you don't want to fall into the trap of disregarding negative feedback against you merely because it's against your opinion.

Even if you're confident of your opinion about yourself, be open to receiving criticism. The goal is to let your voice flourish while allowing space for feedback.

Ultimately, it's about walking the fine line!

Your friend might ask you about gymming, writing, relationships or any other aspect of life. The truth is a majority of people won't even attempt to change their behavior.

Don't judge your friend for seeking validation. Instead, give them a pat on the back and help them overcome fear.

Similarly, you might also want to portray a 'cool' personality and get appreciated. Don't make a big deal out of it. Such feelings are inherent within all of us.

Just upload the fucking picture on Facebook or seek whatever external validation cues are available.

Remember not to let external validation go too far. Else, you give people around you the permission to determine your worth and value. In such cases, find out the insecurities holding you back and work ground up to build your identity. Even when you practice such internal validation, beware not to give in to confirmation bias.

Like many things in life, you've to strike a balance with validation.

Yes, you are sufficient ALONE. But it's okay to have chocolate cookies with your friend while casually validating each other's lives.