

The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

Do You Feel That You Matter?

from the American Counseling Association

Professional counselors call it "mattering," and while it's a term most of us may seldom use, it's something that's important to all of us -- being needed by others.

We all want to feel that we matter to others. That feeling of being needed, of being significant to others, of "mattering," puts meaning in our lives. We need others to pay attention to us, take interest in us, consider us important and care about what we think and do.

How much we matter to others comes in a variety of levels. At the most basic is "attention," which is simply feeling we have the interest or notice of another person.

Another step up is "importance," believing we are important to someone else and may even be the object of his or her concern.

At the level of "dependence," we feel we are bonded to others by our dependence on them, and their dependence on us. "Ego extension" is when we believe that others are interested in our successes and disappointments, and are truly concerned with our fate.

All of these levels of mattering are our perceptions about how much we matter to others, but they may not always be accurate. It's easy to believe that someone really cares about you, like that boss who loves your work, and to have that belief shattered when he fires you or transfers you.

Similarly, there may be people in your life to whom you matter a great deal, yet you may not realize how important you are to them.

Mattering to others is important in helping build our self-confidence and overall happiness. It helps us understand how we fit into the bigger picture that lends meaning to our lives. If you feel at times that you don't matter to others, take some time to really think about those relationships and try and see if you're evaluating them accurately.

If you find that you are experiencing strong feelings of not mattering to others, it's a good time to consider meeting with a professional counselor. Counseling is a means of helping correct and strengthen perceptions about mattering, a means of giving you a more accurate understanding of your relationship with others.

It's also worth remembering the value of reinforcing, to those who matter to you, how much they really do matter. We all need to know that we matter to others.

Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

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