6

THE STRIVING TO DEVELOP AN AUTHENTIC INNER COMPASS AS A KEY COMPONENT OF ADOLESCENTS' NEED FOR AUTONOMY

Parental antecedents and effects on identity, well-being, and resilience

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The chapter presents an important, yet underexplored, aspect of the need for autonomy and autonomous functioning: *The desire to know what we truly value within the affordances and constraints of our reality*. To know what we value we need to develop an authentic inner compass (IC): a deeply anchored self-guiding schema of interests and values that helps us decide and select optimally-satisfying actions. Rudiments of this schema emerge in early childhood. Then, in adolescence, they enable identification and communication of one's values and interests, as well as reflection on and selection of long-term goals, commitments, and group-affiliation. Two recently conceptualized autonomy-supportive socializing practices were found to be unique predictors of authentic IC, which then guides satisfying identity choices, and protects against deviant peer-affiliation: Reflective IC facilitation and inherent value-demonstration (IVD). IVD is of special interest because it suggests that in order to foster autonomy and growth in children parents should develop and demonstrate their own IC.

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> Space seems to be tamer or less offensive than time; we're forever meeting people who have watches, very seldom people who have compasses. We always need to know what time it is, but we never ask ourselves where we are.
> *(Perec, 1997)*

George Perec's quote alludes to the importance of having an authentic inner compass (IC). In this chapter, I discuss this notion, emphasizing that we not only need to know where we are, but also where we *truly* want to be. However, before focusing on the notion of IC, I first place it within my view of the need for autonomy, anchored mainly in Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan and Deci, 2000). Specifically, I conceive autonomy as a propensity including three components, one of which consists of the striving to develop an authentic inner compass. After briefly discussing the three strivings of the need for autonomy, a more detailed description of the content, structure and development of the authentic IC is provided. Next, the notion of IC is distinguished from related extant concepts and from the non-authentic IC. The last part of the chapter presents parenting practices that promote the development of an authentic IC. The chapter concludes with a summary of the most innovative aspects of the conceptual and empirical work presented.

The need for autonomy

The concept of autonomy is widely used and has many interpretations in the humanities and the social sciences (for example, autonomy as an ethical or educational ideal or virtue; e.g., Aviram and Assor, 2010; Berlin, 1961; Kant, 2005). In this chapter, I only focus on one aspect: autonomy as a general need. The conception to be presented draws mainly on Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci and Ryan, 2000) and to a lesser extent on John Stuart Mill (1947).

Definition and underlying assumptions. Deci and Ryan (2000), in a seminal paper on SDT's conception of needs, describe the need for autonomy as an organismic desire "toward self-regulation of action and coherence" (Deci and Ryan, 2000, p. 253), that is, a need "to self-organize experience and behavior and to have activity be concordant with one's integrated sense of self" (Deci and Ryan, 2000, p. 231). Similarly, Mill (1947) refers to autonomous functioning as a process in which people direct their lives in ways that allow their authentic "inward forces" to become basic guiding values in their life (see also Aviram, 1986; Aviram and Assor, 2010). Both views emphasize the importance of directing and regulating one's life in ways that are truly satisfying because they are congruent with one's "true inclinations." In line with these views, I define the need for autonomy as "the general need to feel that I can direct and regulate myself in ways that feel truly satisfying." To more fully understand this definition, let us examine the following components of the definition: "I direct" and "truly satisfying."

The phrase "I direct" means that the individual determines what s/he does. It does not mean that the individual does not rely on others or external sources (i.e., pure

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independence). However, ultimately, it is the individual that determines what s/he does. The phrase "I direct" also does not mean that I do not allow others to choose for me. Rather, it implies that when I let others choose for me, I do so willfully, since their choices are consistent with my preferences. Most important, I know that if others' choices on my behalf would not fit me, I can regain the reins, and direct things in ways that I prefer. This sense of direction is similar to that of an adolescent who joins various activities initiated by friends as long as they are consistent with her/his self-endorsed values and goals (see also Van Petegem, Beyers, Vansteenkiste, and Soenens (2012) for a discussion of the related phenomenon of volitional dependence).

Let us now consider the phrase "truly satisfying." The emphasis here is on the idea that individuals not only need to direct their life, but they also need to direct their life in ways *that feel truly satisfying and worthy*. Underlying this notion is the assumption that some types of apparent self-direction do not constitute *true self-direction*. This is because the individual directs his/her life in ways that do not reflect his/her *true preferences and needs*. In the latter case, the director of one's life is not the real "I" or self, but a false self.

Three component-strivings comprising the general need for autonomy whose satisfaction creates the experience of true self-direction. What kind of experiences (inputs) do we need to have to feel that we direct (or can direct) ourselves in ways that are truly satisfying? What kinds of experience (inputs) do we need to avoid in order to minimize the feeling that we are not truly directing our life? Deci and Ryan (2000, p. 252) describe a need "to self-organize and *regulate* one's own behavior (and *avoid heteronomous control*), which includes the tendency to work toward *inner coherence and integration* among regulatory demands and goals" (emphasis added). Weinstein and Ryan (2010, p. 224) state that "autonomy need satisfaction refers to the notion that individuals experience themselves as having been generally *free* and *self-congruent* over time" (emphasis added). Mill emphasizes the formation of life goals that guide us in ways that reflect our "inward forces." Based on these views, I suggest that in order to feel fully autonomous we need to satisfy three component-strivings of the general need for autonomy:

1. **Freedom:** To be free from (external and internal) coercion or arbitrary limitation of options, and to be free to access, explore, express, and realize our authentic inclinations. As will be explained later, the term *authentic inclination* refers primarily to basic psychological needs (e.g., relatedness and competence), temperamental dispositions, interests, and talents.
2. **Authentic IC:** To know what our authentic inclinations are and how we can realize them within the affordances and constraints of our reality, so we can select optimally satisfying actions. That is, to know what we truly value and to develop deeply anchored self-guiding schemas (of values, interests, goals, group-affiliation) that provide a self-fulfilling direction.
3. **Behavioral self-realization and congruence:** To feel that our behavior enables us to realize our authentic inclinations, and that our behavior is congruent with these inclinations.

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In short, to feel that we can truly direct ourselves, we need to feel that: (1) we are free to pursue our authentic inclinations; (2) we know what these inclinations are and how they can best be realized within our life-context through our values, interests, and goals; and (3) we realize our authentic inclinations in our behavior. Importantly, the first two components—freedom and inner compass—greatly enhance our capacity to initiate actions that realize our authentic inclinations. Put simply, when we identify our authentic inclinations and know how to realize them, and when we are free to do so, we are more likely to actually realize them. Box 6.1 presents examples of items assessing the extent to which the three strivings are satisfied in adolescence and beyond. In the following pages, I explain the contribution of each component to the experience of true self-direction. Then, the chapter focuses solely on the more innovative notion of IC.

The striving for freedom. This striving corresponds to what Fromm (1941) called "freedom from" and what Berlin (1958) called "negative liberty." It involves the striving to (a) *be free from* (external or internal) *coercion* and *arbitrary limitation* of realistic options, and (b) to be free to *access, explore, express, and realize* our authentic inclinations. In addition to disliking external pressures (e.g., punishments and bribes), we also do not want to feel pressured by internal psychological forces to do things only because we want to gain others' conditional regard (e.g., Assor, Roth, and Deci, 2004). Importantly, the coercion we seek to avoid does not have to be explicit. It can be implicit, constraining not only overt behaviors or expressions of our opinions, but also the freedom to access and explore what we feel, or what values and directions we would like to form. Consistent with this view, Israeli-Halevi, Assor, and Roth (2015) found that mothers' use of conditional positive regard to promote adolescents' tendency to suppress their fears and anxiety was associated with negative emotional outcomes in adolescents. Thus, we strive to be free to go through feeling and thinking experiences and processes that may help us establish an authentic inner compass, particularly at points where such a compass hardly exists or is unclear.

A great deal of SDT-based theorizing and research has focused on the striving to be free from external and internal control. For example, Chen et al.'s (2015) scales assessing need-autonomy frustration appear to capture well the frustration aspect of the striving for freedom from control. The early scales assessing need-autonomy satisfaction also capture the satisfaction of the striving to be free from control and have choice and voice (Deci et al., 2001; La Guardia et al., 2000).

The striving for an authentic inner compass. This striving is aimed at developing ideas and schemas about values and interests that enable us to know what our authentic inclinations are, and how we can realize them within the affordances and constraints of our external and internal reality. Such schemas help us to feel that we can truly direct ourselves because they inform us on how to select actions that are likely to be optimally satisfying. When we do not have such schemas (knowledge),

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BOX 6.1 ITEMS ILLUSTRATING THE THREE STRIVINGS COMPRISING THE NEED FOR AUTONOMY

Freedom from control and optional influence and choice

Satisfaction:

I generally feel free to express my ideas and opinions.
I am free to do things my own way.

Frustration:

I often feel pressured by other people to do things I do not really want to do.
I often feel that there is something in me that pressures me to do things I do not really want to do.

Inner compass

Satisfaction:

I have (something like) an inner compass that helps me to know what is truly important to me in life.
I have principles that usually enable me to know what is the right thing to do in difficult situations.
I have things that really interest me and I want to invest time in.
I have values that help me decide what kind of people I want to spend time with.
I have goals that I fully identify with.
I know what kind of a person I definitely do *not* want to be. (reverse)

Frustration:

I feel confused about what is important in my life.
Presently, I feel that there is nothing that is really worth pursuing for me.
I feel that I do not have any direction in my life.
I have no idea about the kind of person I want to become.
There are no human attributes that I really value.

Behavioral congruence (the satisfaction part is mostly from Weinstein, Przybylski, and Ryan, 2012)

Satisfaction:

The actions I initiate promote my real needs and inclinations.
My decisions represent my most important values and feelings.
My actions are congruent with who I really am.

Frustration:

I often act in ways that undermine my real needs and inclinations.
I often act in ways that do not represent who I really am.
My decisions often contradict my most important values and feelings.

Note: The items are phrased at the general personality level, but they can be adapted to how one feels within a particular relationship or context.

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we feel confused primarily because we do not know what actions to select. The contribution of the IC to our sense of true direction is especially important in difficult or confusing situations, particularly in the post-modern information age, where a firm and authentic IC may enable us to overcome the desire to escape from freedom.

The striving for behavioral self-realization and congruence. The realization in behavior of our authentic inclinations (often via the directive work of the IC) creates an experience of true self-direction because it allows us to perceive and feel that we indeed *actively initiate and direct* our behavior in ways that allow us to realize our inner compass and in ways that are congruent with our authentic inclinations, and therefore are truly satisfying. In contrast, the perception that in our own behavior we actively undermine the realization of our authentic inclinations is likely to create an acute experience of lack of true self-direction.

The extent to which the striving for behavioral self-congruence is satisfied appears to be best captured by the satisfaction aspect of Chen et al.'s (2015) measure of the need for autonomy, by the authentic-behavior component of Kernis and Goldman's (2006) conception of authenticity, and by the authorship/self-congruence component of Weinstein et al.'s (2012) conception of autonomous functioning. However, the latter measures and concepts do not explicitly conceptualize behavioral congruence as a striving reflecting the need for autonomy, and the corresponding measures do not always capture the experience of *initiating* behaviors that promote optimal satisfaction of one's needs.

Summary. In this section, the need for autonomy was defined as aimed at attaining an experience of *true self-direction*. This general need includes three component-strivings: (1) to be free from controls that constrain our ability to explore and express our authentic inclinations; (2) to form and have an authentic inner compass: action-guiding schemas that identify our authentic inclinations and inform us on optimal ways of realizing them; and (3) to feel that in our behavior we realize our authentic inclinations. The satisfaction of each striving contributes to the overall experience of true self-direction.

The striving for an inner compass as a *need*-component: Criteria and perspectives

Conceptualizing the striving for an authentic inner compass as a *need*-component requires further clarification regarding the ways in which it functions as a need. As the first step in this clarification process, I discuss two SDT-based criteria and suggest two perspectives on this issue that are especially relevant to the striving to have an authentic IC.

Perhaps the most basic criterion for classifying motivational constructs as basic needs is their function as *essential nutrients* for psychological growth, vitality, and optimal functioning (e.g., Deci and Ryan, 2000). Recent advancements in SDT (e.g., Vansteenkiste and Ryan, 2013) suggest that it is important to further

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distinguish between *frustration-avoidance* and *satisfaction-promotion* aspects of basic needs. Accordingly, there are inputs and experiences that we need to minimize in order to avoid distress, stagnation, and malfunctioning ("toxins"), and there are inputs and experiences (nutrients) that we need to attain in order to thrive. As noted in Box 6.1, each of the three proposed need-autonomy components has both a frustration-avoidance component and a satisfaction-promotion component.

However, there are two additional important criteria for classifying a need/striving as a basic need/striving that are particularly relevant to the striving for an IC: high frequency and substantial immediate impact of need-required inputs. Deci and Ryan's (2000) description of the nature of basic needs suggests that such needs require frequent and continual inputs; furthermore, when such inputs are available their positive impact is immediate and substantial, leading to noticeable improvement in vitality and functioning. The same goes for inputs that we need to avoid ("toxins"): we need to avoid them continually, and when they are present they have an immediate and substantial negative impact. While the strivings for freedom and for behavioral realization appear to require frequent and immediate-impact nutrients, the picture with regard to the striving for an authentic direction-giving IC is more complex. Thus, it appears that the striving to avoid inputs that undermine our IC is continually present and IC-frustrating inputs usually have immediate strong impact; but this may not be the case for the striving for inputs supporting the IC.

The importance of continual avoidance of IC-frustrating inputs is supported by evidence indicating that exposure to a parenting environment with confusing contradictions between and within parents' expectations undermines children's IC and well-being (e.g., Assor, Ezra, and Yu, 2015; Assor, Ezra, Yu, and Soenens, 2016). However, we do not have evidence that it is important to receive continual IC-supporting inputs. Considerable research suggests that inputs supporting the construction of authentic IC value-schemas include parents' behavioral demonstration of the relevant values (e.g., Assor, 2011). Consider for example parents who treat a relatively poor housekeeper with respect, discuss events where people of different color were treated unfairly, and volunteer for humanist causes. Most likely, the children in this family do not feel that they need this kind of value-demonstration and cross-spouse behavioral consistency as acutely as they need continual relational support. Weeks may pass with no behaviors demonstrating the relevant value; and when these behaviors occur, their positive emotional impact may be weaker than that of behaviors showing that parents love their children. Yet, the steady demonstration of the value of respect for all human beings is likely to make this value an important part of an authentic IC that provides a satisfying and meaningful direction.

The positive effect of steady, yet infrequent, low immediate-impact, need-inputs such as value-demonstration and inter-spouse value-consistency suggests that, to the extent that a striving requires steady inputs that are essential for flourishing, it can be considered a basic need also if the inputs are not so frequent and do not

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have high immediate impact. Thus, like some vitamins, there may be certain psychic nutrients whose impact is not immediately noticeable, but their infrequent-yet-steady accumulation is essential for growth. Importantly, the required frequency and immediate impact of inputs supporting the striving to formulate value- and interest-based goals may increase at sensitive periods. Thus, like the bodily nutrient of Vitamin B9 (particularly essential during pregnancy), the required frequency and impact of parenting inputs supporting goals and interest formation may increase during adolescence or when major career decisions are made.

The discussion of the required immediate-impact and frequency of psychological nutrients leads us to a distinction that may prove important: *A motivational moment-to-moment short-term perspective versus a developmental, long-term perspective* on basic psychological needs. From a long-term, personality development, education, and parenting perspective, a need can be viewed as basic also if it only requires steady, low immediate-impact, and low-frequency inputs that are essential for thriving and coping in the long run. In contrast, from a moment-to-moment motivational perspective, a need would be viewed as basic only if it requires high immediate-impact, high-frequency inputs. Thus, the long-term developmental perspective suggests an expanded definition of the concept of basic needs, one that does not require that basic needs would always require high-frequency nutrients that have substantial immediate impact.

Summary. This section discusses some qualities of the striving for an inner compass as a need. It posits that the frustration-avoidance aspect of the striving for an authentic IC is similar to the frustration-avoidance aspects of other basic needs, as it continually seeks to avoid IC-frustrating inputs which have strong and immediate negative impact. In contrast, the striving for IC-supporting inputs may not require frequent, immediate-impact inputs. Rather, like some essential vitamins, it usually only requires a steady input of psychic nutrients whose impact is not immediate, but their infrequent-yet-steady accumulation is essential for growth. This characterization of the striving for an authentic IC is based on a developmental, long-term perspective of the need construct.

The content, structure, functions, and development of the authentic inner compass

The content of the authentic IC. Figure 6.1 presents a simplified scheme of a mature authentic IC structure. A more detailed developmental-structural account appears in Figure 6.2. Figure 6.1 underscores the importance of rich, multi-anchored, concepts of values and interests as critical foundations of the other components of the authentic IC.

The extent to which the values, interests, and goals comprising the IC are experienced as authentic is determined both by the ways they were promoted (primarily by parents) and by their content. First, let us consider the way parents promote values and interests. SDT differentiates between values and interests that

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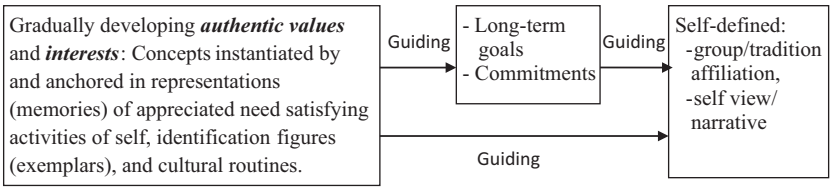

FIGURE 6.1 A simplified scheme of a mature authentic IC structure

are internalized due to internally controlling practices involving conditional regard and guilt induction, and autonomy-supportive practices. When practices involving conditional regard are used, the values and interests are primarily adopted in order to gain the approval of valued others, often at the cost of ignoring authentic inclinations (e.g., Assor et al., 2004; Assor, Kanat-Maymon, and Roth, 2014; Assor and Tal, 2012; Israeli-Halevi et al., 2015; Roth, Assor, Niemiec, Ryan, and Deci, 2009; Ryan and Deci, 2000). Consequently, the IC is not likely to feel authentic. In contrast, autonomy-supportive practices (e.g., Ryan and Deci, 2000) promote internalization or self-initiated development of values and interests by enhancing the child's true volition and appreciation of the merit of the relevant value or interest. Consequently, the IC is likely to be experienced as relatively authentic.

The second factor that determines the authenticity of the IC is the extent to which the values and goals included in it can be experienced as volitional and authentic. SDT (e.g., Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser, and Deci, 1996) posits that there are some values that, if nurtured in autonomy-supportive ways, can be experienced as authentic because they direct us to act in ways that promote basic need satisfaction. These values are termed "intrinsic" and focus on desirable states and actions involving community contribution, physical health, and close relationships (e.g., Kasser and Ryan, 1996), perhaps also self-understanding and engaging in interesting activities. Other research suggests that we also can include in this category values such as consideration for others or benevolence (Warneken and Tomasello, 2009), and perhaps also self-protection (de Waal, 2005).

A preliminary developmental outline of the structure and self-directive functions of the authentic IC. Based on SDT's conception of values and the internalization process (e.g., Deci and Ryan, 2012: Grolnick et al., 1997), we can conceive of the contents of the IC as falling on a continuum ranging from the authentic to the non-authentic. In Figure 6.2 and in the final pages I also briefly describe the important phenomenon of an unauthentic IC. The two central columns in Figure 6.2 present three components of the authentic IC assumed to develop sequentially, but not necessarily fully linearly.

Representations of specific activities promoting realization of authentic values and interests. This component starts to develop in early childhood, and includes representations of concrete ways of realizing our authentic values/interests. Examples are activities involving fine motor coordination for children with intrinsic interest and talent for such activities, or activities involving interaction with a small number of children in a relatively quiet context for children with an introverted

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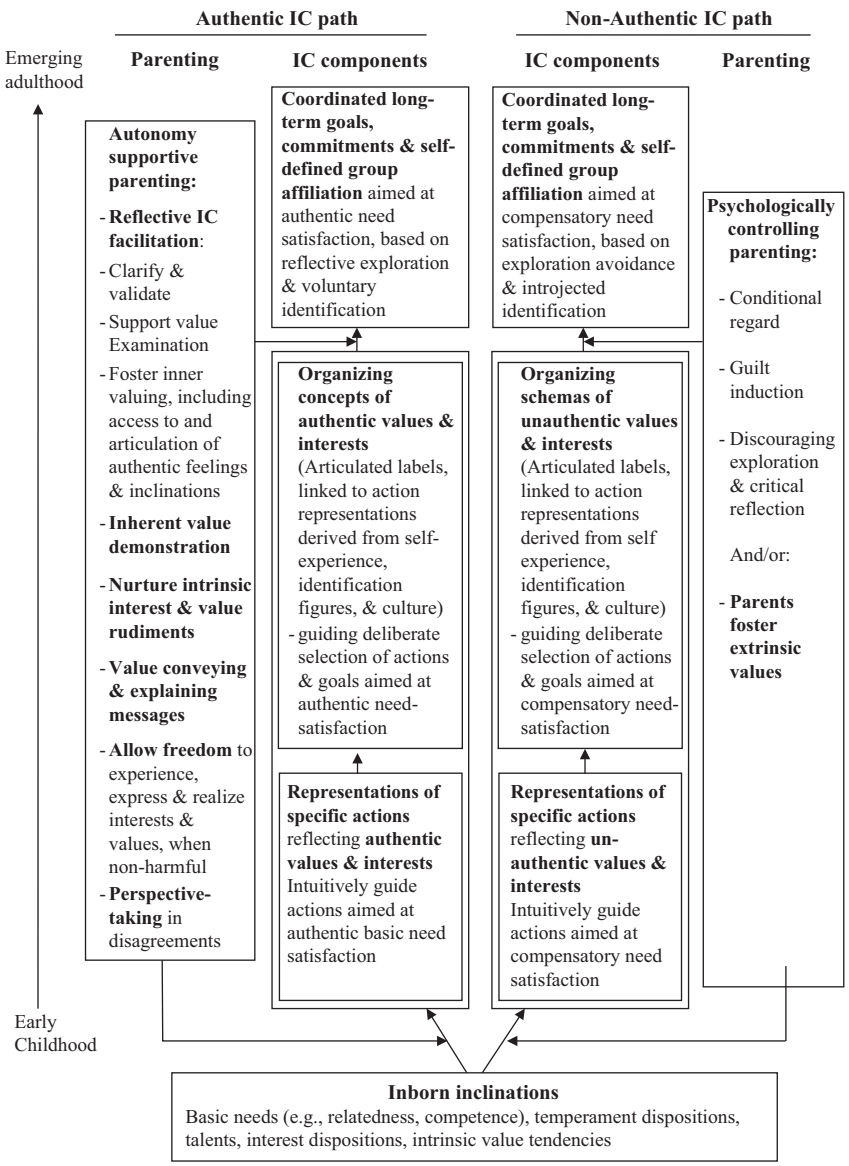

FIGURE 6.2 Parenting practices leading to the development of an authentic versus unauthentic IC

temperament disposition. Children who have such representations feel more capable of self-direction because they know what to do when given a choice, and can also communicate their preferences to their parents. Such representations are particularly likely to contribute to our experience of true self-direction in situations where it is difficult to choose satisfying actions because of various pressures, the necessity to restrain one's impulses, or lack of sufficient clues in the immediate situation regarding what would be a satisfying action.

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To illustrate, let us consider the behavior of sharing an attractive toy with another child, or allowing another child to get some attention in a family get-together. Although the enactment of the considerate behavior may involve some frustration, it can ultimately be satisfying and feel authentic because at a deeper level the child may feel the relief and pleasure of the other person, the satisfaction of realizing inborn prosocial tendencies, and the growing competence to regulate one's impulses. Importantly, these considerate behaviors can be cultivated in ways that help to internalize them volitionally (e.g., Assor, 2011; Assor et al., 2016), resulting in representations that feel authentic. These representations may then be part of the rudiments of children's moral values, functioning as the intuitive vehicle through which our emerging authentic moral values lead us to behave in ways that would be optimally satisfying.

Concrete value- and interest- representations enable us to feel self-directing also because they provide *emotionally essential instantiations* of more abstract labels depicting our values. Without such instantiations (of meaningful value-expressive activities of ourselves and of identification figures), these concepts may remain sterile and ineffective as tools for directing our behavior. The existence of such emotionally authentic IC foundational representations might be especially important in post-modern, relativistic moral contexts where it is difficult to provide rational justification for one's values and commitments.

Organizing concepts. As children's cognitive capacities mature, extant representations of value- and interest-expressive concrete activities that have developed from early childhood onward are organized into concepts including summary labels reflecting the central values and interests of the IC. The action representations instantiating the values and the interests are derived from children's successful attempts to initiate optimally satisfying activities, from identification figures, and from the child's culture (including cultural heroes, ceremonies, and valued cultural narratives).

Let us consider a child who has already developed a representation of sharing a toy as an activity that realizes an intrinsic inclination (value) toward prosociality or benevolence (e.g., Warneken and Tomasello, 2009). As the child develops, the representation of the sharing activity may be joined by additional representations of satisfying sharing activities performed by herself and others. Examples are similar sharing activities initiated by parents and exemplary figures in the child's culture and tradition. Moreover, all these different sharing activities may be organized under the label of sharing or sensitivity to others' needs; a label that has strong positive connotations in one's culture; for example, the Jewish virtuous practice of unpublicized charity (Tzdaka). As a result, the child now has a rich, emotionally meaningful concept of sensitivity to others' needs, which can serve as a core component of her developing inner compass.

Organizing concepts of this type contribute to the feeling of self-direction because they reduce non-voluntary dependence on others' evaluations and directions. Thus, knowing that we behave according to our explicitly endorsed authentic

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values provides at least some assurance for our self-worth, and reduces our dependence on changing fads or others' continual approval.

The importance of having rich concepts that represent and explicitly identify our authentic interests and values becomes considerably greater toward adolescence and beyond, when many youth need to make important decisions with long-term consequences. Thus, as noted by Assor (2012) and Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Beyers, Verstuyf, and Assor (2016), values and interests that we truly endorse may be essential for selecting identity commitments that can be deeply satisfying. Having relatively clear interest- and value- concepts appears to be of special importance for youth in the post-modern, relativistic, information age. The decline of traditional authorities, moral relativism, anomie, and, in some places, the availability of lots of career options, as well as conflicting values and living styles, is confusing for many youth. In response, many may escape from freedom.

Having clear and rich value and interest schemas can help youth to cope with the complexity of choices and lack of authorities without escaping into submission or thoughtless conformity (e.g., Fromm, 1941). Instead, these concepts can function as an anchor for a reflective exploration process (e.g., Marcia, 1988), allowing the selection of self-endorsed commitments. Having explicit and rich schemas of our authentic values and interests may also contribute to our sense of true self-direction by promoting deep identification with and persistence in relation to the goals and commitments we select (e.g., Vansteenkiste and Soenens, 2015). Thus, rich and explicit value and interest schemas are likely to help us to overcome difficulties, pressures, and doubts, because they highlight the merit of the activity questioned.

Finally, organizing concepts identifying our authentic inclinations contribute to the feeling of self-direction because they allow us to see that seemingly different choices and actions all reflect our attempt to direct ourselves towards the same self-realizing aim. These concepts also support our sense of coherence and continuity (e.g., Erikson, 1968), because they prompt us to enact similar inclination-reflecting behaviors across time, and they also allow us to understand the theme unifying apparently different actions. In addition, they also provide a sense of meaning because they link our actions across time and different contexts to an organizing concept that we see as valuable.

The importance of having explicit concepts of values and interests as the basis of autonomy as a moral ideal has been emphasized by a long line of philosophers (e.g., Aviram, 1986). In fact, many of them would consider people as truly self-directing only if they have developed their values and goals through a thorough process of rational reflection, and if they can use these values and preferences rationally in making their decisions (e.g., Kant, 2005). The essential role of personal reflection in the formation of goals and commitments was also recognized by major theorists of identity development, and is reflected in the notions of moratorium and exploration (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1988). However, Erikson and Marcia also suggest that goals and commitments are often based on implicit, emotionally laden, early-developing, concrete value/interests representations. Yet, it appears important that the long-terms goals and commitments selected would be conscious because

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conscious and explicit concepts can further strengthen one's sense of clarity and self-direction.

Summary. This section provided a preliminary description of the authentic inner compass as a rich action-guiding schema constructed gradually from early childhood onward. In adolescence, the schema is assumed to include value and interest concepts with summary labels that are instantiated by representations of concrete actions, derived from self-experience, close identification figures, and one's culture. These concepts allow articulation and communication of one's values and interests, as well as reflection on and selection of preferred activities, future goals, and commitments. Preliminary studies highlight the role of the authentic IC in the selection of satisfying identity-choices, in the pursuit of goals and commitments in the face of difficulties, and in resistance to negative peer influence.

Differentiating the concept of the authentic inner compass from theoretical concepts within and outside SDT

SDT and other theories clearly include concepts that are related to the notion of an inner compass presented in this chapter. The IC notion does not imply that such concepts are unnecessary. Rather, it provides a comprehensive framework that enables us to identify the *common function* of disparate constructs describing specific direction-giving, action-selection structures (guides) within and outside SDT (e.g., values, interests, goals/aspirations, commitments, and identification with social groups and traditions). In addition, it also specifies the relations among them, and underscores the foundational role of values and interests (as noted in Figure 6.1). However, there are important extant theoretical concepts that may seem to overlap with the entire notion of the IC. In this section, I try to distinguish between these concepts and the inner compass, and delineate the unique contribution of the concept of the inner compass relative to these existing concepts.

The integration process according to SDT. Deci and Ryan (2000) describe the integration process as aimed at attaining increased organization and congruence within ourselves (among different needs and authentic inclinations) and between our environment and ourselves (primarily our basic needs). The authentic inner compass (i.e., action-schemas of values and interests enabling optimal need satisfaction within our internal and external constraints and affordances) is the major structure through which the process of integration occurs. Thus, while the notion of an inner compass refers to a structure and to the striving to have a structure, the notion of integration refers to a process. The two of course are related: the integration process helps us to construct our inner compass, and the inner compass contributes to further integration. In a way, the developmental process described in the previous section can be viewed as description of important aspects of the integration process.

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Autonomous motivation. The experience of autonomous motivation refers to the experience that one truly wants to engage in a certain activity because one values or likes it (e.g., Ryan and Deci, 2000). In contrast, the experience of having an authentic inner compass does not focus on a certain activity, but on one's internal state: do I have something inside me that allows me to know what is truly valuable for me? These two distinct constructs are, of course, related. Having an authentic inner compass enables us to feel autonomously motivated to engage in a certain activity because we perceive it as likely to realize our inner compass. Moreover, one type of autonomous motivation—integrated motivation—actually presupposes the existence of the authentic value component of the inner compass. The concept of integrated motivation refers to the experience of wanting to engage in a certain activity because it reflects one's most important intrinsic values. Therefore, it follows that in order to experience integrated motivation, one must have intrinsic values, which are a central component of the authentic inner compass.

The disposition to act autonomously. Weinstein et al. (2012) define the disposition towards autonomous functioning as comprised of three components: authorship/self-congruence, interest-taking, and low susceptibility to control. The notion of an authentic inner compass suggests that in order to act autonomously and direct ourselves in ways that are truly satisfying, it is also important to have a fourth component not identified by these authors: an authentic and firm inner compass (i.e., direction-giving action-selection schemas of values, interests, and goals).

Identified and integrated values/goals and intrinsic interests. These constructs have much in common with the notion of an inner compass. However, the concept of the authentic inner compass adds the following potentially important points:

1. The striving to form the constructs of identified and integrated values, goals and interests is an essential component of the general need for autonomy and of autonomous functioning.
2. The schemas of identified and integrated values, goals, and interests are cognitive-emotional structures that develop gradually toward higher levels of complexity and richness, starting in early childhood.
3. These constructs or schemas have to be anchored in identification with social groups and traditions.
4. These schemas are the foundation of healthy identity development and socio-emotional functioning, particularly in the post-modern information age.
5. It is important to examine people's overall perception that they have such guiding constructs or schemas.
6. The formation and cultivation of these constructs or schemas is a major task of autonomous development and autonomy-supporting parenting.

Self-concordance. This concept refers to the perception that one pursues a certain goal because one is really interested in it and/or values it, and not because one feels

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forced to pursue it (Sheldon and Elliot, 1999). The concept of an inner compass refers to a considerably more general construct. As a structure, it not only includes self-concordant goals, but also values and interests that guide us not only proactively but also *reactively*. That is, they inform us regarding the preferred reaction in situations where we do not have a clear guiding goal. In addition, the IC also includes social groups and traditions we identify with, which reflect our values and interests. The IC notion also refers to the general feeling that I have an inner compass that provides true direction, and the striving to have such a feeling as a major aspect of the need for autonomy, two aspects that the notion of self-concordance does not explicitly address.

Personal expressiveness. According to Waterman (2011), this concept refers to the perception that a certain activity enables the development and expression of one's best potentials. When an activity is perceived as enabling personal expressiveness, it is likely to become an authentic interest that is part of one's inner compass. However, the inner compass is a wider concept referring also to values, and goals, and the striving to have an inner compass.

Purpose. One construct that is particularly close to the concept of IC is the notion of purpose, developed by William Damon and his associates (e.g., Damon, Menon, and Cotton Bronk, 2003; Malin, Liauw, and Damon, 2017). Damon et al. (2003) defined purpose as "a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self." Research has shown that having a purpose is associated with important positive attributes (e.g., Malin et al., 2017). While having a purpose is likely to be an important part of the authentic IC beginning in adolescence, the notion of the authentic IC is more general, and includes aspects that are not part of the purpose construct. First, while purpose is a highly proactive attribute, the IC also has important reactive components; particularly values and self-knowledge that indicate what your limits are; what kind of things you would not do. Second, the IC includes valued and preferred activities that do not necessarily have clear beneficial consequences to the world. Third, the IC schema is assumed to be influential also in early and middle childhood, a period where the notion of purpose might be less relevant.

The awareness component of Kernis and Goldman's (2007) conception of authenticity. This concept refers to awareness and knowledge of and trust in one's motives, feelings, desires, and self-relevant cognitions. It is likely that such awareness helps to develop an authentic inner compass, particularly in contexts where one is pressured to ignore one's authentic inclinations. However, this concept does not directly assess the experience of having authentic self-directing values, interests, and goals.

The unauthentic IC

So far, I have only focused on one type of IC, termed "authentic." However, based on SDT and other writings describing the phenomenon of "False Self" (e.g., Winnicott,

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1965) I posit that under certain conditions people may develop action-selection schemas of values and interests (and derived long-term goals and commitments) that do not feel authentic; that is, they are unauthentic. Figure 6.2 presents, for demonstration purposes, two widely different paths of IC development: authentic and non-authentic. However, it would be more accurate to think of the developing IC as falling on a continuum ranging from authentic to non-authentic.

The unauthentic IC develops in response to internally controlling parenting, and is more likely to focus on what SDT (e.g., Kasser and Ryan, 1996) has described as extrinsic goals or values (e.g., power, prestige, lots of wealth, and perfect physical appearance). The unauthentic IC does not necessarily represent a complete motivational failure. Rather, as in some other attempts to gain substitute need satisfaction (Deci and Ryan, 2000), it may provide partial satisfaction for the need for self-direction or autonomy. More precisely, it may satisfy the aspect of the need for autonomy concerned with feeling that one can direct her/his actions. What is not satisfied is the aspect of the need concerned with attaining *true* satisfaction. Put differently, one does direct one's life, but not in a direction that one's true self really wants. A prototypical example of unauthentic IC emerges when youth adopt goals aimed at attaining conditional parental regard (Assor et al., 2014), or in foreclosed identity (i.e., Marcia, 1988). In extreme cases, we may talk about "a well-organized false-self."

Parenting practices promoting the authentic IC

This section focuses only on parenting practices promoting an authentic IC because practices promoting the non-authentic IC were described elsewhere (Assor, 2011). Figure 6.2 presents six parenting practices posited to promote the development of an authentic IC, and Box 6.2 presents item-examples of scales assessing these practices. The two practices presented at the bottom of Figure 6.2—perspective-taking and allowing-freedom—are assumed to nurture the IC development from early years. In addition, they are considered essential supports for all three autonomy strivings throughout life. In other publications, these two were termed basic autonomy-supports (Brambila, Assor, Manzi, and Regalia, 2015; Assor, 2012). The practice at the top—reflective value facilitation—is considered less fundamental, becoming more important during adolescence and emerging adulthood. Herein, I devote more space to the practices of inherent values demonstration and reflective IC facilitation, which were only recently proposed (Assor, 2012), and which are of special significance for the development of the IC in adolescence (Box 6.2).

Perspective-taking. To support children's need for autonomy, it is particularly important that parents and educators take children's perspective and accept their feelings, particularly when parent and child disagree (see Assor, 2012 for a more detailed presentation of this practice).

Allowing freedom to express and realize authentic inclinations. This practice includes behaviors minimizing control and arbitrary limitations, as well as allowing choice, encouraging self-initiation of activities, enabling the experience and expression of one's feelings, preferences, and opinions, and having a voice in

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BOX 6.2 ITEMS ILLUSTRATING RECENTLY DEVELOPED SCALES OF PARENTING PRACTICES PROMOTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN AUTHENTIC INNER COMPASS

Inherent merit demonstration (Assor, 2012; Yu, Assor, and Liu, 2015)

My parents have values and goals that are really important to them.
My parents' actions match their beliefs.
When my parents act according to their principles, they appear content and at peace with themselves.
My parents are able to realize values and principles that are important to them.

Reflective IC facilitation (Assor, 2012; Assor et al., 2016)

Fostering inner valuing:
When I have to make a tough decision my parents encourage me to first examine what I think is the right and desirable thing to do.
When other kids pressure me to do what is considered cool or popular my parents encourage me to first consider what I think is the right thing to do.
My parents help me to feel it is natural and OK to be stressed about hard decisions.

Supporting value examination:
My parents think that it is OK that I talk about my personal aspirations with people that have different views than our family.
My parents encourage me to think deeply on what kind of studies or career would best fit me.
My parents do not listen if I express opinions that differ from theirs. **(reverse)**

Support IC clarification and formation:
Talking to my parents helps me to clarify my attitude to important issues in life.
Consulting my parents regarding my future goals and aspirations is not helpful. **(reverse)**
My parents are able to give me useful feedback about issues I overlook when I set goals and plans.

IC-validation:
When I talk to my parents I feel:
- more confident that my goals are good and reasonable.
- less confident that my goals are good and reasonable. **(reverse)**

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family decisions. This practice is often assessed via the choice-support and control-minimization items of the Perceptions of Parents Scale (POPS; Grolnick, Ryan, and Deci, 1991), and its importance was demonstrated in numerous studies.

Value-conveying and explaining (rationale-giving) messages. In order for children to develop authentic values, parents need to communicate values and norms that show how children can meet their needs in ways that would be socially acceptable and even commendable. Autonomous internalization of these values may lay the foundation for an authentic IC that is later developed and revised as youths mature and experience various challenges. Four features of value-transmitting parental messages, when accompanied by perspective-taking and freedom, may be especially helpful:

1. **Consistency within and between parents:** This feature shows that the parents think that the value is important; when absent children may be confused regarding what is truly valuable.
2. **Rationale:** This feature enhances the likelihood that children would internalize the value-reflecting behaviors because they understand and identify with their merit; the rationale and specific behaviors exemplifying it may then become part of the IC schema.
3. **Intrinsic values:** As already noted, it is important that the values communicated would be *intrinsic*.
4. **Limited number of values and norms:** In order to avoid undermining offspring's sense of freedom, it is important that the number and the specificity of value-expressive norms would be limited.

Nurturing intrinsic value and interest rudiments. These practices include parents' initiatives to involve their children in activities reflecting intrinsic values and interests. For example, the value of consideration for others (benevolence) may be fostered by mentoring refugee children in subjects where the child-mentor has considerable competence and interest, with considerable room for mentor initiative and choice. It is assumed that repeated experiences of true volition and vitality during these activities are likely to promote early autonomous internalization of the value of benevolence, and thus help establish it as part of the foundation of one's emerging IC. While intrinsic values are likely to stay stable from an early age if encouraged in autonomy-supportive ways, this may not be the case for individual interests (Hidi and Renninger, 2006). Thus, individual interests may change as children develop. Yet, the experience of feeling intrinsically motivated while engaged in an interest-based activity for a certain period is likely to be cherished and to orient children to seek and develop an authentic interest, and make it an important part of their developing IC.

Inherent Value Demonstration (IVD). This parental practice promotes children's tendency to willingly identify with parents' values because parents demonstrate the inherent merit of their values by enacting them in behavior in ways that show that they deeply identify with these values (e.g., Assor, 2012). Thus, the values

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appear worthy because the person enacting them appears content and vital. As the notion of IVD has obvious similarity to the concept of modeling, it is important to note that IVD only refers to a type of modeling that appears autonomous (Yu et al., 2015). A recent study by Beyers, Soenens, and Assor (2016) showed that Belgian college and high-school students distinguished between IVD, parents' perspective-taking and choice-provision, and reflective IC facilitation. Furthermore, in both samples, youth perception of their parents as manifesting IVD was a unique predictor of youth experience of having an authentic IC that, in turn, predicted their well-being.

Findings demonstrating the unique positive contributions of IVD were also reported by two other studies. Yu et al. (2015) showed that Chinese college students' perceptions of their parents as engaged in IVD and as providing basic autonomy-support (minimizing-control, choice-provision, and perspective-taking) both uniquely predicted students' well-being through sense of self-congruence. Similarly, Brambilla et al. (2015) showed that Italian high-school students' perceptions of their parents as engaged in IVD in the domain of religion and as providing basic autonomy-support both uniquely predicted youth autonomous-motivation to observe religious practices.

Theoretically, IVD should promote the formation of an authentic IC and consequent positive feelings and self-experiences through a process of autonomous identification with the values demonstrated by the parent engaged in IVD (Assor, 2012). Results supporting this view were obtained in three studies with Israeli, Chinese, and Belgian students (Assor et al., 2015, 2016). Thus, youth indicating that they willing identify with their parents' values perceived themselves as having an authentic IC, which in turn predicted self-congruence and well-being.

Reflective IC facilitation. This set of parental behaviors includes practices that promote offspring's inclination and capacity to seriously and freely consider what are the values and interests they truly identify with and then derive from them goals, commitments, and self-defined group-affiliation that feel authentic (Assor, 2012; Assor, Cohen-Melayev, Kaplan, and Friedman, 2005). It is quite possible that significant others who are not parents (mentors, friends, counselors) will also employ these practices, especially in adolescence and beyond. The general practice of reflective IC facilitation includes four specific strategies.

Fostering Inner Valuing (FIV). This strategy is likely to be the most basic and developmentally early way to enhance reflection on one's emerging IC. In this practice, parents nurture offspring's tendency and capacity to pay attention to their authentic values and needs despite social pressures, and in particular when facing difficult decisions. An important aspect of this practice is the cultivation of the capacity to accept and tolerate the ambiguity and stress experienced in such situations, so that children can take the time to reflect on the issues at hand, rather than respond quickly to escape emotional and social pressures, or to gain approval.

Research anchored in SDT has assessed and studied this tendency only in adolescents and young adults (e.g., Assor et al., 2016). However, theoretically it appears important to nurture this tendency from early childhood. This can be done by unintrusively helping children to describe, understand, and articulate

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their emotional experiences and needs, what they value, and what they are interested in. Methods for developing young children's capacities to reflect on their experiences were developed by researchers focusing on reflection and understanding one's emotional experiences (e.g., Fonagy and Target, 1997; Thompson and Lagattuta, 2006), and may be adapted to focus also on the child's authentic values and interests. The capacity to access and understand their socio-emotional and motivational experiences may then help children to form the rudiments of their authentic inner compass; that is, the activities they truly value and want to engage in. Then, as children become adolescents, the FIV practice may help adolescents to tolerate the often-stressful task of selecting long-term goals and commitments in adolescence and beyond.

Support for Value/Interest Examination (SVE). In this practice, parents encourage a thorough and open-minded reflection on goals, values, and interests, through discussions, activities, and experiences in different contexts. In line with Erikson's and Marcia's view, the examination process may then enable selection of relatively satisfying goals and commitments in adolescence and beyond. Two recent studies demonstrated the unique positive effects of the perceived practices of SVE and FIV. Beyers et al. (2016) showed that among Belgian high-school students (10th–12th grade), perceived reflective IC facilitation (SVE and FIV combined) and perceived IVD both had unique positive significant effects on adolescents' experience of having an authentic IC, which then predicted adolescents' well-being. These effects were detected also when controlling for the effects of perceived parental perspective-taking and choice-provision. Assor and Olshtein (2017) studied the longitudinal effects of Israeli 18–19-year-olds' perceptions of their instructors' practices in year-long educational programs. They found that perceptions of the instructors as using the practices of reflective IC facilitation (FIV and SVE), and of perspective-taking and choice-provision, both uniquely predicted increases across time in identity-exploration and commitment, and autonomous-motivation to participate in the program's activities. Additional studies demonstrating the importance of SVE and FIV appear in Assor (2011, 2012).

Support for IC clarification and formation. This variable refers to active help in the goal- and interest-formation process. It includes suggestions on how to examine the issues at hand and, when appropriate, also challenging observations and questions. The latter type of responses, in the context of non-controlling empathic relationships, may help youth to face needs, feelings, or realities they avoid or distort. Avoidance or distortion of their reality may cause youth to form non-optimal or harmful goals. In this context, challenging-yet-sensitive interventions by close others may help youth to identify their avoidant or distortive behavior, and create a more accurate picture of their reality. The more accurate perception could then help youth to form more optimal goals and commitments.

IC validation. This practice may be particularly relevant after youth have engaged in reflective-exploration and selected long-term goals. In this practice, parents validate the youth perception and feelings that the goal/commitment/interest they follow is worthy and desirable. Even more important: they try to avoid invalidation. Another

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aspect of validation is conveying the view that the youth has the capacities to attain the relevant goal. The challenge of validation is especially difficult when the youth is adopting goals and interests that parents do not particularly respect, or that appear too demanding.

Support for the importance of IC validation was obtained in a recent study of Israeli and Chinese college students, conducted by Assor et al. (2015). Results showed that students' experiences of their mother as validating their IC (in relation to goals and life aspirations) and as providing freedom (optional-choice and minimal-control) were both unique positive predictors of autonomous motivation to spend time and talk with mother, which then predicted feelings of vitality while spending time with mother. The Israeli participants also completed a measure of the extent to which the goals and aspirations mothers validated were intrinsic. It was found that mothers' perceived validation of their children's IC had a positive effect on autonomous motivation to be with mother and consequent vitality, only when the aspirations that were validated were intrinsic. This finding suggests that youth not only need validation of the aspirations aspect of their IC, but that it is also important for them to develop an intrinsically oriented IC.

Summary. This section presents a number of parenting practices assumed to support the development of an authentic IC. Three of these practices—perspective-taking, allowing freedom, and value-conveying and explaining messages—were shown to have beneficial effects in many studies, and can be considered basic autonomy-supportive practices. The present chapter describes three additional practices. Two of these practices—Inherent Value Demonstration (IVD) and Reflective IC Facilitation—were found to be associated with a more authentic inner compass, self-endorsed identity commitments, subjective well-being and resilience to negative peer influence. The practice of IVD is of special importance because it suggests that in order for parents to promote the growth of their children's IC, they need to develop their own authentic IC.

Experiential and behavioral outcomes of having an authentic IC

Theoretically, an authentic IC is supposed to have a number of important experiential and behavioral outcomes. The outcomes of sense of self-congruence, autonomous-motivation, and subjective well-being have already been presented. Here I present three additional potentially important outcomes.

Resilience against deviant peer-affiliation. In a study of Belgian youth, Soenens et al. (2016) found that having an authentic IC was associated negatively with deviant peer-affiliation, and positively with resistance to peer pressure. Perhaps most strikingly, having a relatively firm authentic IC acted as a protective buffer against negative effects of deviant peer-affiliation. Similar findings were obtained in a sample of Chinese youth, where IC predicted resistance to negative peer pressure. Interestingly, perceived parental IVD was found to predict IC and subsequent resistance to peer pressure.

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Maintaining identity commitments in the face of pressures. Changing social contexts may create considerable pressures to change one's goals and commitments. It is likely that having a firm authentic IC enables youth to resist pressures to change goals and commitments because of fear of rejection or popularity concerns.

Open-mindedness. While an authentic IC may support resistance to social pressures, it may also allow an open-minded examination of experiences and inputs suggesting that one's goals, commitments, perhaps even value hierarchy, might benefit from re-alignment. This is because the authentic IC is more resilient to fears of rejection or loss of self-worth due to value or commitment changes. Consistent with this view, Assor et al.'s (2015, 2016) studies of Chinese and Israeli college students showed that having an authentic IC was negatively related to dogmatism, close-mindedness, and a foreclosed style of identity-formation.

Further thoughts on the need for autonomy and the concept of IC

This section addresses several conceptual issues related to the notions of autonomy and IC demanding further clarification.

Need for autonomy as a general need. Throughout this chapter, the need for autonomy was conceptualized as a general need. One justification for using this term is that it has multiple functions or components, as noted, for example, in Deci and Ryan's (2000) description of this need as a carrier of the general tendency toward self-regulation and organization of action, integration, self-congruence, and freedom from heteronomous control. The multiple functions of this need (echoed in my tripartite view of the need for autonomy) suggest that it is more useful to describe it as a meta-need with several components, all aimed at promoting the capacity to direct ourselves in ways that would optimally realize our authentic inclinations.

However, a more important reason for viewing autonomy as a meta-need is that the components of integration and congruence posited by Deci and Ryan (2000) as comprising the need for autonomy (and all three components I propose) *actually incorporate the satisfaction of the needs for relatedness and competence, and other authentic inclinations*. For example, people feel self-congruent (and therefore autonomous) when they are free to express their needs for relatedness and autonomy, or when their behavior is congruent with these two needs.

Why not use the concept of true volition to describe the experience sought by the need for autonomy? SDT posits that the experience of volition emerges when we feel that our basic needs, including the need for autonomy, are satisfied. Obviously, we should not use the same term to describe the cause and its product. Therefore, it is important to avoid confusing the experience of volition with the experiences of need satisfactions promoting it.

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Conclusion

What are the major contributions of the notion of IC? First, it highlights the importance of developing an authentic self-guiding schema for the experience of autonomy. That is, it underscores the idea that to feel a deep sense of self-direction it is not enough to be free to express authentic inclinations or to act according to them. In addition, it is also essential to develop internal schemas of values, interests, and derived goals that can give us direction. Only when such schemas exist may people be able to face the difficult choices posed by the post-modern information age without escaping from freedom. In other words, autonomy is not only about freedom from control and behavioral self-realization; it is also about figuring out and knowing what we believe and feel is valuable. Based on this understanding, I suggest adding a fourth component to Weinstein et al.'s (2012) conceptualization of autonomous functioning: *a tendency to reflect seriously on one's true values, interests, and goals*, particularly in situations involving highly consequential decisions. Second, the proposed notion of IC highlights the importance of gradually developing deeply anchored authentic value and interest schemas for optimal identity choices and commitments, for persistent commitment-enactment, and for resistance to negative peer influence.

Finally, perhaps the most important implication of the concept of IC is in the areas of parenting and education. For almost three decades, SDT-based research has highlighted the importance of interacting with children in ways that support their strivings for freedom from control and for expression of authentic inclinations. The notion of IC assumes that in order to help children develop an IC and a deep sense of autonomy parents need to engage in two practices hardly discussed in most SDT work; namely, inherent value demonstration (IVD) and reflective IC facilitation. Research suggests that these practices contribute to the growth of an authentic IC, autonomous internalization of parental values, and other positive outcomes.

The practice of IVD is of special importance for two reasons. First, it consistently emerges as a distinct practice with unique beneficial effects. Second, IVD reflects an important yet underemphasized educational principle: If you want to foster autonomy and growth in children, it is not enough to interact sensitively with them; in addition, it is crucial to develop and demonstrate your own IC. Accordingly, in parent and teacher education and in counseling we should focus on processes of parents' IC-formation, in addition to practices supporting children's needs directly.

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