

Locus of Evaluation

Locus of evaluation refers to the source of a person's values, judgments and decisions. This is where individuals believe the authority for evaluating their experiences and self-worth lies. A person finds their sense of worth and makes judgments either internally, trusting their own feelings and values, or externally, relying on others' opinions, standards and approval.

Internal Locus of Evaluation

A person with an internal locus of evaluation has self-worth and trusts their instincts to guide them. They utilise their own feelings, values and thinking to assess their experiences and make decisions. A self-accepting person doesn't need approval from others to feel secure.

Example: "I feel good about my decision, even if others don't agree, because it aligns with my personal values."

External Locus of Evaluation

A person with an external locus of evaluation depends on external sources such as the opinions, approval or standards of others to evaluate themselves and make decisions. They may seek validation from peers, family, societal norms or cultural expectations.

Example: "I need others to praise my work to feel successful or valued."

Why It Matters

Internal locus of evaluation is associated with greater psychological health and well-being because it promotes authenticity, self-confidence and resilience.

External locus of evaluation can lead to feelings of inadequacy, dependency on external validation and low self-esteem.

An internal locus leads to self-trust, while an external locus, often stemming from childhood conditions of worth (conditional love), results in seeking outside approval and causes insecurity.

In Therapy

A key goal in therapy is to help clients shift from an external to an internal locus of evaluation, enabling them to trust their own feelings and judgments rather than seeking constant validation from others.