

## CONFORMITY: DON'T BE LEFT OUT!

*The opposite of courage in our society is not cowardice, it's conformity... Rollo May*

*Be neither a conformist or a rebel, for they are really the same thing.*

*Find your own path, and stay on it... Paul Vixie*

### WHAT TO KNOW!

- ❖ Conformity occurs when a person gives in to group pressure or majority influence
- ❖ When people conform, they:
  - ❖ want to be accepted, fit in, or be liked
  - ❖ want identification as a member of that specific group
  - ❖ think the group is correct and agree with their beliefs
  - ❖ fear being alone, rejected, or left out
- ❖ There are three different types of conformity:
  - ❖ **Compliance** is when a person hopes to achieve approval and inclusion; they will accept the group's influence even if they disagree
  - ❖ **Internalization** occurs when a person's own belief system agrees with the group; they then change their behavior to match the group
  - ❖ **Identification** happens when a person accepts the identifying characteristics of a group in order to meet role expectations such as a police officer or teacher
- ❖ Conformity can occur through subtle influences as in advertising and commercials, through social pressure as in social media, or in direct pressure such as fear and threats
- ❖ People also conform to groups to seek guidance because they lack knowledge
- ❖ There is less conformity in cultures that value independence and self-sufficiency
- ❖ Counterconformity occurs when a person takes a position that is the opposite of what a group believes and is often motivated by anger or a need to rebel
- ❖ Classic studies on conformity include:
  - ❖ In 1936, Muzafer Sherif conducted the Autokinetic Effect experiment where participants were shown a small dot of stationary light. They were then asked to estimate its movement. Over the course of the experiment, subjects changed their initial estimates to conform to the group estimate despite it being a stationary dot.
  - ❖ In 1951, Solomon Asch conducted an experiment asking participants to match one line with a standard line shown to them. Except for one test subject, all participants were confederates of Asch and specifically gave a wrong answer. A high number of the actual test subjects changed their answers to conform to the group. The more confederates there were, the higher the degree of conformity of the test subject
- ❖ How much a person conforms can be affected by the number of members in a group, its status, its opinions, its attractiveness, its celebrity membership, and its political beliefs

### WHAT TO DO!

- ❖ Consider whether you want to be an independent or be identified as a member of a group that may or may not act or think like you do
- ❖ Assess yourself to determine whether you can be self-sufficient or need to belong
- ❖ Evaluate your social media use: how many groups do you follow, how many contacts do you need to have, and how many groups you join just to belong
- ❖ Seek professional help if you think you are too dependent, have difficulty making independent decisions, and need to be part of a group to feel important or wanted

### WE CAN HELP!

Call us at **954 755-2885** or email us at [DrKimmel@KimmelPsychology.com](mailto:DrKimmel@KimmelPsychology.com)

**Joel I. Kimmel, Ph.D. P.A. and Associates**  
**5551 N University Drive, Suite 202**  
**Coral Springs FL 33067**