

Overcome self-deceit

By S Ramesh Kumar, Last Updated: Jun 21, 2021, 10:56 PM IST

Synopsis: How can one be aware of self-deception? Neel Burton, psychiatrist and author of *Hide and Seek: The Psychology of Self-Deception*, says that self-deception is caused by the contradiction between who we are and who we think we should be or want to be. This conflict is resolved through defence mechanisms, leading to self-deception.

With materialism resulting in lifestyle pressures, we tend to read and hear quotes from philosophers, religious thought leaders and management coaches, on how we need to motivate ourselves towards higher accomplishments. These sources are invaluable during stressful times, Covid included, but we need to ensure that these messages do not create a sense of self-deception, or false confidence.

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What are these defence mechanisms and how can some of these be identified? Inferring from literature on psychology, a little introspection gives us an idea about the existence of self-deception. Are we at fault and blame others even when our mistakes are evident, as observed by people who matter to us (projection)? Do we deny reality when several others clearly perceive it (denial)? Do we behave in a contradictory manner? A spendthrift may advocate the simplicity of material well-being (reaction formation).

Daniel Goleman infers through his book, *Vital Lies, Simple Truths: The Psychology of Self-Deception*, that self-deception can be life-diminishing. So, we may not be able to be perceive the oneness of the deceiver and the deceived. And, here, ignorance is not bliss.