



The Dunning-Kruger Effect: You Don't Know What You Don't Know

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It's likely that each of us either has met or will meet someone who seems to have an inflated sense of EGO. The kind of person who, by any OBJECTIVE measure (i.e. considering and representing fact), is truly inept at a given task yet thinks he or she is near expert level! Knowing that we are bound to run across this in our lifetime, we then must ask the question: why? Why do people think they are better at a task or skill than they really are? Well today, we are going to talk about this bit of psychology known as the DUNNING-KRUGER EFFECT.

What are we talking about today? (Dunning-Kruger effect)

What word relates to considering or representing fact? (Objective)

What does objective mean?

A person who thinks he or she is an expert might have an inflated sense of ___.
(Ego)



<https://i.ytimg.com/vi/vFphKNaRcfM/maxresdefault.jpg>

Coined in 1999 by then-Cornell psychologists David Dunning and Justin Kruger, the EPONYMOUS (i.e. named after someone or something) effect is a cognitive bias whereby people who are INCOMPETENT, or unskilled, at something are unable to recognize their own incompetence. And not only do they often miss the

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fact that they are not skilled, they're also likely to feel CONFIDENT that they actually *are* competent.

What year was this term developed? (1999)

How long ago was this? $2018 - 1999 = 19$ years)

Name one of the researchers.

What word describes being named after someone. (Eponymous)

Can you think of something that is eponymous? (McDonald's, Heimlich maneuver, Asperger's, etc.)

An unskilled person could be described as ___. (Incompetent)

Professor Dunning and his team chose to look into this phenomenon by administering tests of humor, grammar, and LOGIC (i.e. reasoning based on truth or validity) across four different studies. For example, in one study CORNELL undergrads took a 20-item grammar test and were then instructed to estimate how their ability to "identify grammatically correct standard English" compared with others.

The tests took place across how many studies? (4, four)

What is one area tested in these studies? (Humor, grammar, logic)

What is logic? (Reasoning based on truth or validity)

Where were the students from? (Cornell University)

What were the students instructed to do after the test? (Estimate their ability compared to others)

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<https://i.imgur.com/XcCe6qc.png>

As you'd expect from our discussion thus far, students with the lowest test results were those who GROSSLY (excessively) overestimated their abilities. Students who scored at the 10th percentile (i.e. they scored higher than only 10% of others) self-rated their grammar abilities at the 67th PERCENTILE. In essence, their actual grammar ability was quite poor, but they thought they were in the TOP THIRD of people.

Students with low test scores __ overestimate their abilities. (Grossly)

What might be a good antonym for this term? (reasonably, moderately, temperate, modestly, etc.)

Where did students subjectively rate themselves? (In the 67th percentile, top third of people)

How large was the difference between the student's actual percentile scores and their self-ratings? ($67-10=57\%$)

It's not just college students, though, that fall victim to this effect. One study of high-tech firms discovered that 32-42% of SOFTWARE ENGINEERS rated their skills as being in the top 5% of their companies. In a classic study of FACULTY, or staff, at the University of Nebraska, 68% rated themselves in the top 25% for teaching ability, and more than 90% rated themselves above average (which I'm sure you'll notice is mathematically impossible). Even everyday drivers consistently rate their skill as above average (88%, in fact).

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Tell me one example of the Dunning-Kruger effect I mentioned.

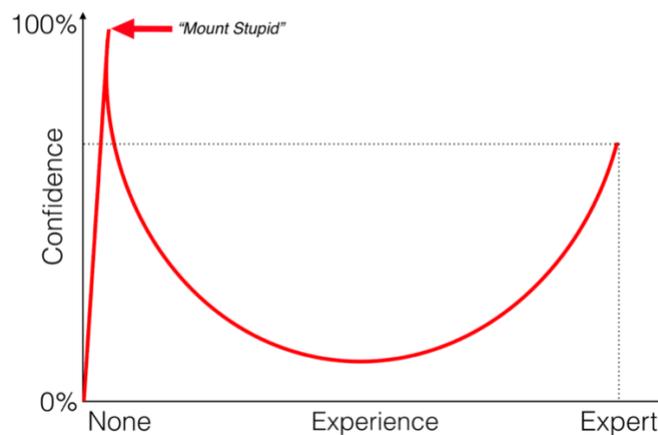
___ at high tech firms rated themselves in the top 5%. (Software engineers)

What percentage would actually represent being “above average”? (51% or higher)

What amount of drivers rate themselves as above average in skill? (88%)

Dunning-Kruger Effect

Unskilled and unaware of it: how difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-assessments
Kruger, J., & Dunning, D. (1999)



<http://karendendergrass.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/karen-Pendergrass-paleo-journey.png>

This is known as ILLUSORY SUPERIORITY. People with objectively measurable, poor skills in areas like LOGICAL REASONING, financial management, emotional intelligence, or chess tend to rate their EXPERTISE almost as favorably as do actual experts in these areas!

This idea is known as ____. (Illusory superiority)

Give your own definition of this term based on our discussion and context.

What's an area that people may overrate their skills in that I mentioned? (Logical reasoning, finances, emotional intelligence, chess)

People with poor skills often rate their __ almost as favorably as actual experts. (Expertise)

So, does this mean that the majority of people are egotistical, RECALCITRANT (defiant) jerks? Interestingly, the assumption that some people are just “full of themselves” doesn't realistically apply, and this is due to a CURIOUS aspect of the

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Dunning-Kruger effect. In summarizing the findings of their studies, Dunning noted, “Poor performers—and we are all poor performers at some things—FAIL TO SEE the flaws in their thinking or the answers they lack.”

What’s a word for defiant I mentioned? (Recalcitrant)

Which idea doesn’t apply due to the DK Effect? (That people are full of themselves/egotistical)

Poor performers ___ their flaws in thinking or lack of answers. (Fail to see)

We all share this problem, in that we all have “POCKETS OF INCOMPETENCE” that remain invisible to us. We each require a certain level of knowledge and intelligence to be ADEPT at a given task; however, we need those same qualities in order to recognize that we are *not* PROFICIENT. Without these traits, we are bound to remain IGNORANT (unaware) of our lack of ability.

What remains invisible to us? (Pockets of incompetence)

We need a certain level of intelligence and ___ to be adept at tasks. (Knowledge)

What is one thing we need to be adept at a task? (Knowledge, intelligence)

In addition to helping us be skilled, these qualities also help us recognize when we are not ___. (Proficient)

What does it mean to be ignorant? (Unaware, uneducated, uninformed, etc.)

Peculiarly, even experts are not immune to inaccurate self-perceptions of their APTITUDE (natural ability). They tend to be PUNCTILIOUS (attentive to detail) in their assessment of their knowledge, but lose track of how exceptional their skills are in relation to others. They then make the mistake of assuming everyone else is as knowledgeable as they.

A natural ability is ___. (Aptitude)

What does it mean to be punctilious? (Attentive to detail)

Let’s use it in a sentence.

What is the mistake that experts often make? (Assuming others are as knowledgeable as they)

Like most aspects of the human mind, our ability to change this is flexible. Most people, when given education and training, recognize the DISPARITY, or difference, between their trained vs. untrained performances and willingly admit

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to their previous mistakes: ego did not affect their perception, but DISCERNMENT (ability to judge well) of skill did. This may explain why individuals with MODERATE amounts of knowledge often have less confidence in their self-ratings: they know enough to understand there is a lot they don't know.

What is one thing that can help a person recognize their skill needs? (Education, training)

What word did I use to describe a large difference? (Disparity)

What affects a person's perception here? (Skill discernment)

Tell me about people with moderate amounts of knowledge.

Let's do a summary of this paragraph.

Regardless of whether you are an expert, INTERMEDIATE, or beginner in any subject, Dunning and Kruger suggest two means for MITIGATING (lessening) the effects of our inevitable self-perception errors. Firstly, always keep LEARNING! The more knowledge you have, the less likely you are to fall into an invisible hole in your competence. Secondly, ask for and consider CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK, even if the information may be hard to hear.

To mitigate is to ____. (Lessen)

We should always keep ____. (Learning)

What should we do or consider in order to help us more accurately judge our skills? (Constructive criticism)

Creative Writing:

Let's consider the quote from Confucius: "Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance."

What level of learner do you think this would apply to: beginning, moderate, or expert?

What would your quote be that would encompass the concepts we talked about today?

Pretend you are talking to your younger self. What piece of constructive feedback would you say regarding your own perception of your ability?

What area(s) do you consider yourself an expert in? Are there areas where you feel you can/should learn more?

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Resources:

https://ed.ted.com/lessons/why-incompetent-people-think-they-re-amazing-david-dunning?utm_source=TED-Ed+Subscribers&utm_campaign=c83f453924-2013_09_219_19_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1aacced48-c83f453924-50507817&mc_cid=c83f453924&mc_eid=36455d316c
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-psychology-of-the-breath-takingly-stupid-mistake/>

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