

## Self acceptance in David Levithan's *Every Day*

**Detta Ramadhani**  
**Rahmi Munfangati**

*English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

[dettar97@gmail.com](mailto:dettar97@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This research is entitled "Self Acceptance of the Main Character as Reflected in David Levithan's *Every Day*: A Psychological approach". The objectives of the research are self acceptance of the main character, the mindfulness techniques, and the effect of main character's self acceptance. The subject of this research is the novel entitled *Every Day* by David Levithan, and the object of this research is self acceptance. In collecting the data, the researcher uses a documentary study by reading and observing the novel, visiting the library, reading sources, writing the data, categorizing the data, and searching the internet to get more information. Since the study uses library research, it uses a descriptive qualitative method. After gathered, the research revealed self acceptance of the main character in the novel *Every Day* analysed by using the theory of the psychological approach. Some of the important research findings are presented as follows: first, self acceptance of the main character named "A" can be seen from his ability and willingness to let others see his true self and his capacity to do appropriate self evaluation. Second, the mindfulness techniques of the main character are observing new distinctions, contemplating puzzles and paradoxes, and considering alternative understanding of problematic aspects of self. Third, the effects of the main character's self acceptance are : 1) accepting A's peculiar life, 2) living happily, 3) enjoying every moments, 4) feeling more "ownership" to his life.

**Keywords:** self acceptance, mindfulness techniques, psychological approach

### INTRODUCTION

Life is a complex process to live. It is a journey not destination. It may feel joy, delighted, flustered, sad, or even annoyed. Life will not always come in everything we thought. Life is full of surprising things. It can be good or even will make us feeling bad. Life sometimes become something that we never imagine

before. Human can not choose what kind of life they will live for. All they can do is how to control the reaction through it. Here self acceptance is taking place.

According to Shepard (1979), self-acceptance is an individual's satisfaction or happiness with oneself and it thought to be necessary for good mental health. Self-acceptance includes self-comprehension, a realistic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of one. It results in the sensation of an individual about himself, that he is of "unique worth".

Hurlock (1974) divided self acceptance into two categories. *First*, person that having self acceptance can look into themselves, know the good and bad inside them. This kind of human is having self confidence and self esteem. They will feeling free, enjoy, and comfort in developing self. Their potential will expose in easily way. *Secondly*, social adjustment. Self acceptance usually followed by acceptance in other people. Person that have self acceptance will feeling safe to accept others. They will show the sympathy and empathy to other person. It will give chance to meet people with same interest and being happy because of them.

Every day is classified by American author David Levithan as a young adult romance and fantasy novel. It was released by Knopf Books for Young Readers on August 28, 2012 and suggested for ages 14–18. Every day is a bestseller of the New York Times. *Every Day* movie has filmed and release on February 22, 2018.

*Every Day* by David Levithan is tell about the character named 'A' that wake up every morning in different body. He always follow the flow, doing anything that his body has routine. He never do what he wants to do. 'A' never being loved for who he is since then. Until 'A' wake up in Justin's body and meet Rhiannon. 'A' obviously had a crush on her. Every day he find out a way to stay close with Rhiannon. Spent time with her such a precious chance for 'A'. Rhiannon gives different energy for 'A' to continue his life and through for it meaningfully.

Self-acceptance become crucial in A's life because A live in different way of life every day. It is not easy as teenager to accept such a different life. it may hard at the first place but time flies and A start to have a deal with his life. When A start accept his life, something good continuously happen. Everything simple can bring happiness to him. Finally A can start to enjoy his different life for sure.

Self acceptance is essential for mental health. The absence of capacity to accept individual in unconditional position can lead to several emotional problems, such as uncontrolled rage and even depression. The individual who has self-evaluation rather than self-acceptance may also be in great need of impressing others. One of the easiest and most natural ways to reduce self-evaluation to self-acceptance is to assume a mindset of mindfulness rather than mindlessness (Langer, 1989:29).

One important aspect of self acceptance is the ability and willingness to let others see one's true self (Langer, 198:31). Living mindfully is a kind of life that

there is no faking in every aspects of life. There is also no problem for the individual who lives consciously that others will judge one negatively. Have the capacity to be in the moment and enjoy the situation merely.

Another important aspect of self acceptance is appropriate self-evaluation (Langer, 2005:33). Every individual has a distinctive set of experiences and memories. Evaluation is essential to how people and their world make sense. It will always has good points and bad points to each aspect of each individual depend one how to decide to view each of their own traits (Langer, 2005:34). For example individual can labeling self as flexible or even unpredictable.

Mindfulness is kind of process to achieve self-acceptance. Mindfulness is important to help individual to see through themselves and deal with it. There are the techniques for increasing mindfulness in oneself based on Carsen and Langer's opinion (2004:40):

- a. Observing new distinctions  
Observing the new differences increase interest in events, objects, behaviors, or situations. As active mental exploration, feeling judgement-free will automatically enhance self-acceptance in someone.
- b. Thinking as a "work in progress"  
Individuals can replace rigid words ( such as "I'm not good, etc) becomes "may and could be". It will make a differences and open up more individual's possibility to achieve it.
- c. Contemplating puzzles and paradoxes  
Life is a complex things. It is full of paradoxes. Thinking actively about paradoxes increase one's ability to tolerates ambiguity in society.
- d. Adding humor to the situation  
Humor already becomes the act of mindfulness. When individual notice humorous aspects of themselves or situation, it will directly leads individual to the self-acceptance.
- e. Viewing situation from multiple perspectives  
People that stuck in some thoughts will hard to accept some aspects of it. One way to become mindful individual is to open up the mindset to see problems through different individuals.
- f. Considering alternative understanding of problematic aspects of self  
In some situations, all issues can be seen as helpful. Realize that adverse elements in individuals usually lead to self-acceptance
- g. Keeping catalog of moments of joy  
Collecting moments of joy and happiness should be good for someone. Keeping the catalog handy and open it often will make the difference in individual. Research indicates that remembering positive events will make the new idea. It will help to solve some problems because self is accepting and grate for what they have.
- h. Starting a mindfulness journal  
Making certain points to start or end each day by writing down the important events will open up the way people see around. It will help

individual to having ability observing new thing and practice the events mindfully.

For millennia, individuals have been concerned about the nature of happiness and healthy life, and the concept that what lives is not just living, but living well has been essential to Eastern and Western thinking (Kesebir and Diener, 2008:121). Enjoy every moments and feels happy is a must in life. There is relationship between happiness and well being (Ghasempour, 2013:26). It starts with a process to accept every aspects that may occurs in life. Healthy individual find it to accept themselves without chagrin or complain, for that matter, even without thinking about the matter very much (Maslow, 1954:155). Mindfully person will have many beneficial to change bad habits or traits.

They feel more "ownership" of their life when people recognize that they have control over their own life. When people take careful control of their life, they can recognize their lives ' previous and present conditions. They understand they have the capacity to see their own life from many angles, and depending on the present context, they can alter that viewpoint. When people are mindful in this way, they can unconditionally accept themselves (Langer, 2005:42).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research is categorized into a library research method. In general, one of the qualitative research which is done based on the libabry collection and other from electronic source or internet. The data of this research are divided into two, namely main source (primary) and supporting (secondary) source that explained as follows:

1. Main Source

Main source is the important data that related to the study that being analyzed. The main data is the novel entitled *Every Day* by David Levithan and published by Alfred A. Knopf in 2018.

2. Supporting Source

The function of supporting source is to help the main source. The supporting source from this research can be taken from books, the internet sources, journals and other sources that are relevant to get more information about literary works which are telated to the topic of discussion in the novel.

In analyzing this research, the subject of the study is the novel titled *Every Day* written by David Levithan and published by Alfred A. Knopf in 2018. Meanwhile, the objects that will be analyzed in this research is the self acceptance of the main character.

The data collecting method is documentary, the data are collected from some sources of the research and the researcher does some steps as follows:

- a) Visiting Library

The researcher visits some libraries, read the main source and looking for the supporting sources and write down in notes.

- b) Reading Sources

The researcher reads the novel carefully, repeatedly, and record it as a data.

c) Writing Data

When visiting libraries, looking for the main and supporting sources then write in down in notes.

d) Categorizing Data

The researcher categorizes it into a library research, since the researcher get the data sources from libraries and analyzed it using descriptive qualitative method.

In this descriptive qualitative research, the method were developed in the social science to enable researcher to study social and cultural phenomena. It is related with data which is usually not in the form of numbers (Wahyuni, 2015:1). It means that the data are given by the researcher using some statement, sentences, quotations, or description.

In this research, the researcher using psychological study. The result is to find out self acceptance of the main character named "A" as reflected in *Every Day* by David Levithan.

In analyzing and validating the data, the researcher makes the consultation with some sources as the consultant or lecturer. With descriptive qualitative method, it is intended to describe self acceptance of the main character named "A" in the novel *Every Day* by David Levithan.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The researcher presents the research findings about self acceptance of A, the mindfulness techniques, and the effect of self acceptance for A.

### **A. Self Acceptance of the Main Character**

Self acceptance is essential for mental health. The absence of capacity to accept individual in unconditional position can lead to several emotional problems, such as uncontrolled rage and even depression. The individual who has self-evaluation rather than self-acceptance may also be in great need of impressing others. One of the simplest and most natural methods of reducing self-evaluation into self-acceptance is to assume a mindset of mindfulness rather than mindlessness (Langer, 1989).

#### **1) The Ability and Willingness to Let Others See One's True Self**

One important aspect of self acceptance is the ability and willingness to let others see one's true self (Langer, 1989). Living mindfully is a kind of life that there is no faking in every aspects of life. There is also no problem for the individual who lives consciously that others will judge one negatively. Have the capacity to be in the moment and enjoy the situation merely. Living in that kind of life will make any differences to reduce the negativity and automatically leads to gladly and worthy life.

The main character named A wakes up in different body every day. It sounds peculiar for some people but this phenomenon should be through by A in his entire life. See the quotation below:

I wake up. Immediately I have to figure out who I am. It's not just the body—opening my eyes and discovering whether the skin on my arm is light or dark, whether my hair is long or short, whether I am fat or thin, boy or girl, scarred or smooth. The body is the easiest thing to adjust to, if you are used to waking up in a new one each morning. It is the life, the context of the body, that can be hard to grasp. Every day I am myself—I know I am myself—but I am also someone else. It has always been like this. (Levithan, p.1)

Every morning means different life for A. A always need to find out the gender, body, skin, and the memory of the person which he 'borrowed' that day. Then he needs to live on the daily routine of that person, following the flow depending on the owner of the body. Everything remains the same until the moment he met Rhiannon.

That morning, A is waking up as Justin, the usual high school student that having relationship with Rhiannon. A just doing Justin's routines and he thought that everything is well. That was the very first time A met Rhiannon at school and A feels something unusual about her. It can be seen on the passage below:

Her name is Rhiannon. And for a moment—just the slightest beat—I think that, yes, this is the right name for her. I don't know why. I don't know her. But it feels right. This is not Justin's thought. It is mine. I try to ignore it. I'm not the person she wants to talk to. (Levithan, p.4)

From the quotation above, A feels something about her. The unusual feeling he never felt before. After having several times together, It seems like A has an interests on her. When every day just live based on the body he lived that day and now it's different. A wants to talk personally with her, for who he is, not as Justin, the body he is in that day. A tries to open up about himself to her. It can be seen on the passage below:

I know she's just being nice. Irrationally, I also want there to be some kind of recognition. I want her to be able to see behind this body, to see me inside here, to know that it's the same person she spent an afternoon with on the beach. (Levithan, p.55)

The quotation above shows that A wants to be seen by Rhiannon. A wants her see the real him. He wants Rhiannon recognized him as A, not Justin.

“Every morning, I wake up in a different body. It's been happening since I was born. This morning, I woke up as Megan Powell, who

you see in front of you. Three days ago, last Saturday, it was Nathan Daldry. Two days before that, it was Amy Tran, who visited your school and spent the day with you. And last Monday, it was Justin, your boyfriend. You thought you went to the ocean with him, but it was really me. That was the first time we ever met, and I haven't been able to forget you since." (Levithan, p.93)

The quotation above shows that A dying to make Rhiannon understand about phenomenon that happened in his life. It might be hard to understand by her, so A make constructions to make everything make sense. A tells her the story since the first time he met her as Justin and the other person followed after him. A keep looking for her because he cannot forget her since the day they spending time together, the moments they go through together.

"Because I think you are remarkable. Because I don't want to keep meeting you as different people. I want to meet you as myself." (Levithan, p.94)

The quotations can be interpreted that A wants to meet her everyday as a person. He wants Rhiannon to recognize him as A, not the person he lived that time.

From that explanation, living without any concern for the opinion of others is a kind of life that will have no falsehood in all aspects of life. There is also no problem for that individual that others are negatively judging one. Feeling satisfied and grateful for everything happened in life. Having ability to be in the moment and just simply enjoy the current situation.

## **2. The Capacity to Do Appropriate Self Evaluation**

Evaluation is essential to how people and their world make sense. It will always have good points and bad points to each aspect of each individual depend on how to decide to view each of their own traits (Langer, 1989, 2005). Appropriate self evaluation means that individual can find something they are good at and even something that not being their capacity. Self evaluation makes individual accept everything in self.

Self acceptance will followed by the appropriate self evaluation. Self-acceptance causes people to look through themselves and find something good or even bad in them. It can be seen as the passage below:

I have gotten very used to the fact that most mornings in most homes are exactly the same. Stumbling out of the bed. Stumbling into the shower. Mumbling over the breakfast table. Or, if the the

parents are still asleep, the tiptoe out of the house. The only way to keep it interesting is to look for the variations. (Levithan, p.30)

Waking up in the different body everyday means that A will live in same routine but just with different body. It begins when he woke up as Leslie Wong, an ordinary school girl that craving for peace in her life. A starts Leslie's life as usual as other family do. Waking up by her mother, take a shower, having breakfast with family, those are everything A did for his entire life. Sounds boring for most people but in the end of the sentences A could evaluate his life to make some various on it to make it still interesting for him. A always trying to find the good things through his unusual life.

Life always gives balancing between good and bad. Life shows individual something that they like it the most and also there is a part of life that will be bad things in it. It cannot be separated in every individual life. Self evaluation will give ability to individual to find each of those aspects and have a deal with it.

Waking up in different person every day will always unpredictable for A. What kind of person he will live that day, the character, and also the habit of that person. Each person will lead A to do different behavior in that day. It means that sometimes, there is a routine that A should do as a new experience in his whole life. See the quotation below:

I know how to play most sports, but I've also learned my limits. I found this out the hard way when I was eleven. I woke up in the body of some kid who was in the middle of a ski trip. I thought that, hey, skiing had always looked fun. So figured I'd try. Learn it as I went. How hard could it be? (Levithan, p.49)

The quotation shows that by the fact A is not a professional ski player, it would not easy for him to do Skylar's routine. Being Skylar for one day and trying to play ski, that actually it is not A's capacity to do that sport, it become something dangerous activity for him and also dangerous for Skylar's life.

I broke the kid's leg in three places. The pain was pretty bad. And I honestly wondered if, when I woke up the next morning, I would still feel the pain of broken leg, even though I was in a new body. (Levithan, p.49)



That passage shows that doing something that not in his capacity will causes damage in his life. knowing the fact that it is not A's own life sounds not good to do. A will blame himself for that kind of mistake.

But instead of the pain, I felt something just as bad—the fierce, living weight of terrifying guilt. Just as if I'd rammed him with a car, I was consumed by the knowledge that a stranger was lying in a hospital bed because of me. (Levithan, p.49)

That quotation tells that make other's body being hurt is automatically makes A blame himself. A cannot accept the reality that doing something new for him, will causes a damage in someone's life.

So I'm careful. Soccer, baseball, field hockey, football, softball, basketball, swimming, track—all of those are fine. But an equestrian, and once, recently a gymnast. I've sat all those out. (Levithan, p.49)

That passage shows that finally A can realize that it is important to taking care the body he is live that day. He would skip some activities that not in his capacity.

Having an ability to do self evaluation will also make someone find the good things that might be existed in individual's self. Every human being is created for the bad and also the good things in self. A evaluate himself as someone that good in several aspects. See the passage below:

If there is a thing I'm good at, it's video games. It's a universal presence, like TV or the internet. No matter where I am, I usually have access to these things, and video games especially help me calm my mind. (Levithan, p.49)

That quotation appears when he lives as Skylar Smith. That day, A brings some friends at home after soccer practice and playing video game with them. A really enjoy that moment because he is know how to play with it. He is also love the moment when he can have a talk with others.

From explanation above, we can conclude that evaluation is central to the way individuals make sense of themselves and their world. Self evaluation will lead individual see within themselves and found every aspect that may exist in it. Individual can see the good or even bad in self and have a deal with it. Knowing self limit will prevent the risk of being hurt mentally or physically. Knowing the good within self will increase the ability to make around even happier and automatically will lead to worthy life.

## **B. The Effect of The Main Character's Self Acceptance**

The nature of happiness and the good life preoccupied people for millennia, and the idea that what matters is not just to live, but to live well has been central to both Eastern and Western thought (Kesebir and Diener, 2008). Enjoy every moments and feels happy is a must in life. See the passage below:

Eventually I came peace with it. I had to. I realized that this was my life, there was nothing I could do about it. I couldn't fight the tide. So I decided to float along. (Levithan, p.107)

The passage shows that A already accept his life even it is seems peculiar for some people. A realize that every human being's life could be different. The differences could be seen by many aspects and often come with unpredictable one. By having self acceptance in daily, he finally can live in happily. See the passage below:

Then I log in to Justin's email and find out there's a party tonight at Steve Mason's house. Steve's address is only a Google search away. When I map out the distance between Nathan's house and Steve's, I find it is only a ninety minute drive. It looks like Nathan might be going to a party tonight. (Levithan, p.66)

The passage shows that A lives his unusual life by the moment he love the most. He knows what he likes and choosing that and makes him even happier than before. He finds a way to come to the party and meet someone there. He makes a connection with Rhiannon and feels more alive by then.

"Let's switch the topic, okay? This isn't good party topic. I liked it more when you were singing to me." (Levithan, p.72)

The quotation shows A is enjoying his current moment. He is focus on something that happens in front of him. He is trying to live his life as same as the other teenager around him. He came to the party, simply enjoy the moment by talking with Rhiannon is such become a happiness for A.

When individuals realize that have control over their own lives, they feel more "ownership" of their lives. See the passage below:

I have to imagine my mind as something physical, something that can control the body. I have to picture my mind holding the body down. I read another sentence. Then another. (Levithan, p.63)

The passage shows that A is fully controlled the body he lives that day. That represents the ownership of the that body, at least on that day.

Having good ability in self acceptance in daily will automatically increase the quality of individual's life. For no reason, life can being tough sometime. Every human being is realizing that. Here A can be a good example for the rest of people. A is have a deal with his peculiar life and finally peace come to him. Also another good situation will come to him afterward. A could enjoying the moments by having fun with some peers, have a talk with someone will automatically increasing his happiness level.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the previous chapter, the researcher would like to draw some conclusions as follows: 1.) Based on the discussion in chapter four, the researcher conclude that the aspects of self acceptance of the main character named A are the ability and willingness to let others see one's true self and the capacity to do appropriate self evaluation. It can be seen when A can open up about his peculiar life to Rhiannon and self evaluation reflects when A realizes that he is not good at everything especially sport, 2.) The mindfulness techniques of the main character that already mentioned in chapter four are observing new distinctions, contemplating puzzles and paradoxes, and considering alternative understanding of problematic aspects of self. reflects when A can see everything in many perspectives depend on the body he is live that day, dealing that he is the only one who leave so there is no tomorrow for him, and know exactly what he is face right know and being okay with that. It can be seen that he is feeling peace with his unusual life, he is controlling himself even in different body, enjoying moment when it is party time, and do not talking about something that can ruin that moment.

## **REFERENCES**

- Abrams, M.H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literarry Terms/ Seventh Edition*. Massachusetts: Heinie & Heinie
- Carson, S., and Langer, E. (2004). Mindful Practice for Clinicians and Patients. In L. Haas (Ed.), *Handbook of Primary Care Psychology* (pp. 173-186). London: Oxford.
- E. Bernard, Michael (2013). *The Strength of Self Acceptance*. Australia: Springer.
- Holman, C.H. (1985). *A Handbook to Literature*. Indiana: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.
- Hurlock, Elizabeth B. (1974). *Personality Development*. New Delhi: Hill Publishing Company.
- Kasebir, P., and Diener, E. (2008). In Pursuit of Happiness: Empirical Answer to Philosophical Questions. *Perspective on Psychological Science*, 3(2), pp 117-125

- Langer, E. (1989). *Mindfulness*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley
- \_\_\_\_\_, E. (2005). *On Becoming an Artist: Reinventing Yourself Through Mindful Creativity*. New York: Ballantine Books
- Levithan, D. (2018). *Every Day*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and Personality*. Oxford: Harper and Row.
- Subhan, B. (2012). *Understanding English Poetry and Prose*. Yogyakarta: LLPPDMF.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2015). *A Guide to Literary Criticism*. Yogyakarta. LLPPDMF
- Robinson, J. (2006). *Elements for Analyzing Fiction*. British Columbia: Douglas College
- Wahyuni, S. (2015). *Qualitative Research Method: Theory and Practice*. Jakarta: Penerbit Salemba Empat
- Wellek, R. and Warren, A. (1949). *Theory of Literature*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

**Internet Sources:**

- <<http://www.davidlevithan.com/about/>> Retrieved on December, 19 2018 at 15.45 pm.
- <[https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/11664.David\\_Levithan](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/11664.David_Levithan)> Retrieved on December, 15 2018 at 22.05 pm.