Stage 1

Young women/women who are in stage one of developing their self-esteem tend to define who they are with external things. Their self-worth is dependent on their “petals” — such as pleasing other people, getting good grades, looking good, not making mistakes and doing everything so that it is outstanding and without flaw. Sometimes young women/women like to add more petals such as being skinny, being disciplined in physical activity, excelling academically, or seeking the approval of their friends and peers.

Petals can become very important to young women/women and they want them to be perfect. Some young women/women think that their petals determine if others would be attracted to them or like them, so they work very hard to keep them as special as possible. They panic anytime one of those petals is pulled off (for example, if someone got mad at them, or they didn’t look good, or a friend didn’t invite them somewhere) because they have nothing in their center. Consequently, if something happened to this young woman/woman that caused her to lose these external sources of worth, she was left with a scary void in her life.

Instead of trying to define herself apart from what she did or how she looked or how others thought she should be, she does the only thing she knows how to do — she tries to be more attractive… she works harder at being perfect. Often, a young woman/woman in this stage can get very scared and think no one would really like her if they knew who she really was, so she keeps adding more and more petals, hoping this would make her special enough that people would notice her and care about her.

Stage 2

As young women/women enter stage two, they begin to become aware of their internal strengths. In a real flower, the petals are very beautiful and very important, but only because they attract bees and point them to the center. In the center is the source of new life. It is where the seeds come from and also the source of nourishment for the flower. Long after the petals wither and drop off, the center remains, for it is in the center that the essence of the flower is found.
Young women/women, then, can ask themselves what would make them unique and what could they contribute to other people if they looked at themselves apart from their achievements or their appearance. In other words, if you, as a young woman/woman, looked at yourself naked, stripped of your petals, what would remain? Sometimes young women/women are terrified with what they see—they see that their center is empty.

So who are you? To find out you must learn to recognize what is already there without passing judgment…simply stating “WHO AM I”, independent of my looks or achievements.

**Stage 3**

Of course, it is important to know yourself and fill your center, but a flower looks a little strange without petals…are petals bad? No, not at all. The flower in Stage 3 has beautiful petals surrounding its center, but the difference is that these petals are expressions of who you are rather than the determinants of your self-worth. For example, if you are creative (center) you will be full of new ideas (petals), if you are intelligent (center) you will thirst after learning (petals), if you are a good listener (center) you will attract others (petals).

Your petals attract people to your center, to the real you, because they are expressions of who you are. If you lost your petals tomorrow, you would not lose your identity or self-worth because you could simply find other ways to express your real self and blossom other petals. So your petals may change color or shape at different points in your life as you grow and change or when you encounter new circumstances. When you know who you are (your center) you can always find new ways of expressing yourself (your petals).

True meaning in life and joy comes from sharing of feelings, hopes, fears, struggles and expressions from the center of your flower. Knowing that your worth is not determined by your petals is a wonderful feeling. It frees you to think about other people and to love them instead of worrying about how you are coming across to them and if they will love you.