4. Social Cognition Determines the Success of Occupational Endeavors

How do people develop a social identity? Bandura (1971) helps to explain this by describing ways in which people learn from observing and interacting with each other, a process he called social learning. Unlike earlier learning theories, social learning acknowledges the thinking process that occurs when people watch the behaviors of others. They do not just imitate mindlessly. They do not only remember images and verbal sequences. They also think about various aspects of the situations they observe, the emotions involved, and the consequences or outcomes. A child in a classroom watches and listens when classmates answer the teacher’s questions. Is raising a hand required, or can students just speak out? How does the teacher respond? What kind of answers gain approval? What happens when the answer is wrong? The child weighs the pros and cons before venturing into the class discussion, then evaluates the response of the teacher and the other students to his or her own new behavior. On the basis of such experiences, the child concludes, “I am smart” or “I am good at reading but not so good in mathematics” or “even when I am wrong, I can still make people laugh.” People, as they develop within social systems, learn to interact and take on social roles, continually trying out new behaviors. Through social interactions, in combination with the performance of occupations, they come to appreciate what they are able to accomplish by watching and listening to the responses of others to their own initiatives. These reflections about their own abilities, and the way other people think and feel about them, influence the characteristics of a social identity. (See Learning Activity 2 at the end of the chapter).

**Table 9-1**

**Ten Questions That Encourage Clients to Disclose Their Social Identities**

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| 1. | How would you introduce yourself to someone you just met  
   a. at work with a new coworker?  
   b. at a neighbor’s open house?  
   c. at a community event or fundraiser?  
| 2. | What are your most important relationships with others?  
| 3. | What social groups do you belong to, and what is your role in each?  
| 4. | Which accomplishments are you most proud of? (Least proud of?)  
| 5. | What do you most look forward to doing today, this week, and this year? Why? (What do you most dread, or like the least?)  
| 6. | If you had to leave your home within 5 minutes because of an emergency (fire, flood, bomb), carrying only a duffel bag, what would you put in it?  
| 7. | What are your life roles? List five.  
| 8. | What are your gifts or talents? List five things you are good at.  
| 9. | What is your life’s work?  
| 10. | Name five things that give your life meaning (people, objects, and activities).  
