

Building Self Confidence

What is Self Confidence?

Self-confidence is having the belief in oneself to be able to handle most situations in your life. It is about trusting yourself and having a sense of self-reliance. Confidence is much more than just a positive feeling - it's an attitude and an approach to life that leads to success, motivation and new possibilities. It is about being true to yourself.

When you are confident you will think you can succeed. It gives you the ability to tackle whatever comes up and not to be put off by setbacks. If you are confident at work it will mean taking on new challenges with a sense of excitement. A lack of self-confidence will hold you back from success. If you don't believe in yourself, why should others believe in you? Self-confidence feeds into others, if you demonstrate faith, they will have faith.

When you make mistakes and come up against problems, if you are self-confident you don't give up. You learn and try different methods, secure in the belief that eventually you will work through the obstacle. If you lack confidence you think you can't and then prove yourself right. If you have self-confidence you see any setbacks as part of learning and developing, rather than using them as an excuse for giving up.

Confident people focus on their strengths and have a keen sense of what they want, however this shouldn't be at the expense of others. They have a balanced desire to succeed and achieve, so that they attract the outcome they seek. It is identifying, knowing and using the strengths, that they will bring to a given situation. Informing themselves of previous successes and experiences, so that they can attract success again.

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Self-assurance is vital for your effectiveness – it leads to presence - you need to be noticeable. This means being prepared to go out on a limb and having the courage of your conviction. If you have self-confidence and belief, you can carry out actions and be decisive in your attitude and manner.

Be happy with who you are and comfortable within your own skin. If you lack confidence, then any failure will reinforce any negative perceptions and you will see yourself as powerless. If you become powerless performance will drop and others will lose respect. It is also very important to be wary and aware of the opposite, extreme self-confidence is arrogant and brash. This means you are being delusional in your approach to yourself and others. Self-confidence is about projection, charisma, inspiration and enthusiasm.

If you lack self-belief you are more likely to give up when challenged or shy away when there is any risk involved.

Building self-confidence for positive impact

Confidence is not a steady state, it can vary and some times and situations, you may have more confidence than at others. The more you concentrate on building up your confidence in any area, the more access you will have to it when you are challenged.

It is important to identify what makes you feel more confident in some situations than in others. Identify and be aware of how you behave, talk and act when you are in the confident situation and then use these skills when you are in less confident situations.

Focus your attention on the positive and then manage any weaknesses. Be wary of dwelling on your weaknesses, as that will enhance any lack of confidence. Focus on what you are good at, what is valuable about yourself and where you have succeeded before, you will generate good feelings and these will expand.

Most people with confidence issues find focusing on their good points hard. They have usually got into the habit of fixing on the negative aspects of themselves and their abilities. To build your self-confidence you have to do the opposite.

The Benefits of Self Confidence:

- Believe that you will succeed - and you do!
- Achieve your true potential
- Approach challenges and tasks with a positive, can-do attitude.
- Have the vigour to take on and tackle new challenges.
- Have the courage not to worry about the consequences of failure. Fear of failure can hold you back from tackling new challenges.
- Make use of your natural talents and capabilities.
- Go beyond your perceived limits.
- Be more creative and innovative- you are more likely to learn and try different methods and ways of achieving your goals.
- Have the desire to persist and not give up.
- Create confidence, trust, and faith in other people in your team and outside your team.
- Pass on a can-do attitude to others which inspires them.

Identify the positive

Build your confidence, by regularly identifying the positive and good things about yourself and keep adding to it. These lists will serve to remind you that you are valuable, capable and appreciated, and that you can be proud of your achievements.

You will learn that you are more confident than you previously realised and that having achieved things in the past, you have the capacity to do so again and again!

Ask yourself:

- What are my strengths?
- What do other people value about you?
- Think about what friends, family and colleagues have said in your praise. You don't have to agree with what they say, but acknowledging the good opinions other people have of you is important.
- What do you like about yourself?
- What have been your most major achievements?

Review the way you respond to compliments/praise

Learn to accept compliments and praise, gracefully and with a "thank you". Don't dismiss or ignore them. It's disappointing to the person who praised you and you will reinforce your belief that you are not deserving or wanting of their praise.

Focus on what has been good about today

Another confidence booster is to assess the day that has passed from a positive perspective. What you did well, rather than what you did badly. Look back on your day to see what you have managed to achieve, rather than focusing on what remains to be done. Making a list afterwards of what you have done has a similar beneficial effect.

Often your day can be planned out, but additional tasks crop up demanding your attention and time. It is possible to get to the end of a really productive day yet feel you failed because what you accomplished didn't materially shorten your to-do list. Ensure that you are flexible in your plans to ensure you look at the positive, be realistic in reallocating tasks and alter your to do lists to reflect your priorities.

Recognising and listing what you have achieved allows you to identify that you are effective and still in control.

Develop yourself

An additional powerful way to build your confidence is to develop a new skill or technique or tackle a challenge. Action breeds confidence. If you act as if you are confident, even if you don't feel it 100% - something changes. You will feel your confidence rising and notice that people are reacting to you differently.

The power of words

It is important to recognise the words we use, and how these can have a huge impact on our self confidence levels. One is how you see yourself and the other is how we direct the communication towards others. Both these areas reflect our confidence, causing it to be high or low. What we tell ourselves creates feelings and attitudes and what we tell others reflects our internal dialogue.

If we use negative, powerless words to describe ourselves or a situation, our self-confidence will plummet. The words and phrases we use about ourselves have a major impact on how we think and subsequently how we behave. The actual words we tell ourselves have power. Choosing more suitable words can overcome obstacles and improve our confidence in the process.

Self-talk or positive inner dialogue is the way we talk to ourselves. Sometimes we are advisors, criticisers, judges, appraisers, blamers, one part is speaking to another. To improve confidence, we need to converse with ourselves in an impartial manner and ensure that we look for the positive and help ourselves.

Negative and limiting words

Do you recognise any of the following negative and limiting statements?
Do you ever use any of them?

- "I never have enough time"
- "I can't do that, I'm not good enough"
- "No doubt it will all go wrong"
- "I'm expecting the worst"

Try to prevent yourself from using these statements and change them into more positive statements.

- "I am going to make time"
- "I can do it and if it goes wrong, then I will learn for next time."
- "I know this may be difficult, but I have dealt with similar situations in the past, and I have succeeded."

Pressure words

Certain words are known as pressure words, as they create pressure to do or refrain from doing something. They imply there is a rule rather than a desire. They take our choices away and prevent us from being creative, innovative and using the thinking process.

A word often used that saps confidence is “but”. It is a word that immediately qualifies or even negates what has gone before. It is better replaced with “and”. For example; instead of “I agree with you, but I think you should also consider this point”, say “I agree with you and I think you should also consider this point”. Another way you can deal with “but” is to switch the order of the two statements, i.e.; rather than “I will try to do it, but it will be difficult”, say instead “It will be difficult, but I will try to do it”. This simple change can make a big difference to your self-confidence.

Ask yourself the right questions

To increase your self-confidence, it is important to ask yourself the right questions- ones that will always help you find solutions rather than keep you in a problem.

Look at the difference between the following two questions:

- “Why is my performance at work so poor?”
- “How can I improve my performance at work?”

Questions involving the word “how” concentrate your mind on finding ways to improve your performance, whereas the use of “why” can keep you blocked with the problem.

Asking yourself good questions is a skill that can be developed with concentration and practice. The right question should aim to remove barriers, unlock hidden information and surface potentially life-changing insights. It should have the following characteristics:

- It's simple
- It has a positive purpose
- It influences without being controlling

These techniques take time and practice. Focus on an area at a time and that will help build your confidence over time. Create a list of the positive things that you have accomplished and that have happened to you, making sure you update it and review it on a regular basis.