



Confidence and Self-Esteem

Having confidence can be your vital passport to a fulfilled life and influences your success at work, your social relationships and activities.

Confidence enables you to take on new challenges in your professional and personal life, trusting yourself in difficult situations, enabling you to try new things, make full use of your talents and gives you the courage to not worry too much about the consequences of failure.

Having confidence enables you to concentrate on what you can do rather than worrying too much about what you can't do.

Individuals who lack in confidence and self-esteem don't reach their full potential, are often less adventurous and are often susceptible to a number of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance abuse and stress. Low confidence is also related to poor parenting and family break-up, relationship-issues and general aimlessness in life.

When confidence has been lost the individual gets caught up in a negative cycle of self-doubt that becomes increasingly difficult to break.

Here are 7 top tips to improve your confidence and self-esteem, helping you to break the cycle of self-doubt:

1. Remember when you felt confident without having excelled at anything or receiving any positive input.

Practice self-acceptance. We often have a tendency to rate ourselves against certain criteria (such as comparing ourselves with celebrities, successful friends/work colleagues...) and this results in a harsh estimate of our personal worth leading to negative perceptions of ourselves. This leads to undervaluing ourselves which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy which means that we will start to collect evidence supporting our misconceptions whilst dismissing any evidence that fails to support it.

2. 'Never allow someone to be your priority while allowing yourself to be their option'- Nina Potts-Jefferies.

Be aware of toxic friendships which are emotionally draining and affect your self-esteem. A relationship is essentially unbalanced if the individual only takes from you, but never gives back.

3. **Confident self-talk**

Use language that helps you to feel better and try to avoid phrases that contain 'should', 'must', 'ought', 'supposed to' and their negations. These infer fixed rules which limit your options.

Change your self-talk to 'I want to/don't want to', 'I prefer/prefer not to', 'I choose/choose not to...' and stop generalising e.g. 'I always..',' I never...',' you always/never...'

Just because you have made a few mistakes does not mean that you are a failure. Someone treating you badly doesn't mean that everyone dislikes you. Become aware of your black and white thinking.

4. **Practise assertiveness**

Not asserting yourself and failing to establishing personal boundaries can have a serious impact on you self-esteem and confidence.

If somebody has been disrespectful towards you, challenge this person immediately. Try to question the person's behaviour/comment. For instance 'Why did you say that I am(insult)?' , 'What did you just say?' , 'What do you mean by... .'

Challenging the 'offender' straight away shows that you won't tolerate disrespectful behaviour and this sets the standard of how you would like to be treated by others in the future.

5. **Take a calculated risk and move out of your comfort zone.**

Take action now! The action of confidence comes first, the feelings of confidence come later. The doing it comes before feeling better about yourself. When you move outside your comfort zone (for instance by practising a new skill) your fear will diminish and confidence grows and will continue to do so.

Think of an action you would like to take, what are the benefits of taking the action and what are the risks. What would happen if you wouldn't take any action? Would you have any regrets later on in life?

6. **Don't be afraid of failure.** Here are some interesting facts:

- Richard Brandson has many successful ventures but also many failures such as Virgin Cola, Virgin Money, Virgin Vision, Virgin Vodka, Virgin Wine, Virgin Jeans, Virgin Cosmetics and Virgin Cars.
- Michael Jordan was cut from his High School basketball team because of a 'lack of skill'.
- Thomas Edison tried more than 9000 experiments before creating the first light bulb.
- Marilyn Monroe was dropped by 20th Century Fox one year into her contract because the producer thought that she was 'unattractive and cannot act'.
- Oprah Winfrey lost her job as TV presenter and was told she wasn't fit for television.

Confident and successful individuals have the tendency to perceive their failures as outcomes or results, not failure. More importantly they don't perceive themselves as a failure! The worst response is to see failure as forever determining your future. Treat failure as an opportunity to learn:

- What was the mistake?
- Why did it happen?
- Am I entirely responsible for the failure or did others contribute?
- How could it have been prevented?
- How can I do it better next time?

7. **Absorb yourself in whatever you are doing, - the key to peak performance is being totally engaged in the task.**

Do you enjoy playing a musical instrument, paint or practice sports and don't feel self-conscious, don't experience unhelpful self-talk about our performance or distractions, you are focussed and time flies by? Then you are in what psychologists call 'a state of flow'. Being in a flow state not only yields optimum performance, it has other benefits as well, it is pleasurable and fun! Individuals who experience more flow states also experience more confidence, self-esteem, happiness and meaning in life.



.... and finally

It's official the bumble bee can't fly!!!!

According to the theory of aerodynamics, the bumble bee is totally unable to fly. Laboratory experiments prove this conclusively. The size, weight and shape of the bee's body in relation to the size of its wings makes flying impossible.

The bumble bee, being ignorant of the theory flies away!

(Adapted from David L. Preston, 365 steps to self-confidence)

Article written by Judy Leicht, a Registered Counselling Psychologist at the Craigie Partnership.

We hope you will find these tips to be helpful. If you would like to make an appointment with Judy Leicht or one of our team, then contact the Craigie Partnership on 0131 215 1066 or email info@craigiepartnership.co.uk

This article is part of a series of self-help articles written by Psychologists at the Craigie Partnership. The full series includes:

- Anxiety
- Anger
- Confidence & Self-Esteem
- CVs & Interviews
- Depression
- Sleep Issues
- Stress

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