

## **Your strategy for developing even more brilliant confidence**

### **Polishing that brilliant confidence to a high shine.**

**3.1 Build your self-esteem.** Self-esteem is just another word for the value you put on yourself and what you do and what you have achieved. Some people don't have much self-esteem because of parental or peer criticism or other environmental aspects. Even people who are very wealthy and/or who have achieved great things in life can feel uncomfortable because they don't give themselves credit for their achievements. If this is one of your issues, here are five things to do to boost your self-worth. Remember, this takes time. Some of the exercises sound strange but they work.

- Visualise feeling comfortable. Visualisation is a strong tool to use in changing something in your life. As American writer Robert Collier said: "See things as you would have them *be* instead of as they *are*". We have already touched on this in section 2.9, but let's expand on it. In addition to visualizing your successful conversations right before going to an event, do it on a regular basis.
- Daily—preferably twice daily—imagine yourself at a social or work event and see the faces of people smiling and accepting you as a fine conversationalist. In your mind's eye see them paying attention to you and responding to what you say. Hear them saying what great company you are, and even visualise people coming over to join you. Make this visualisation as vivid as possible by *hearing* people saying good things, *seeing* their approving faces and, most important of all, *feeling* the contentedness of being at ease and accepted.
- YOU MUST PRACTISE POSITIVE VISUALISATION. I know it may sound silly if you haven't heard of visualisation before, but it is a well-established technique for improving all kinds of human performance. It works because your subconscious mind *believes* the messages you send it. We actually visualise all the time but we just aren't aware of it. It can only help your performance if you put a positive spin on it. One problem for shy people is that they visualise too many negative images that make them feel bad about themselves. Instead of seeing smiling faces, they see rejection. Instead of feeling content, they feel miserable. From today, control the images you make in your head. Swap negative pictures for positive ones and make a concerted effort to deliberately make good pictures.
- **Correct damaging self-talk.** Just as we aren't aware of the negative pictures we make in our head, we also are not aware of all the damaging things we say to ourselves all day long. "Oh how stupid of me" or "That was a silly thing I did" or "I'm just useless" or "I'll never be good at that" are examples of damaging self-talk. From today, for just five minutes first thing in the morning and five minutes last thing at night, say good things to yourself. "I am on my way to being a great conversationalist"; "I know I can fit in

comfortably with any group”; “I am finding out that I am an interesting person that people want to be with”; and “I am beginning to enjoy myself more and more at social and work gatherings”. Just like visualization, this is a mind game. Your own version of positive brain washing. You want to program your subconscious mind with positive messages and break the negative conditioning you may experienced.

- **Prove your worth to yourself.** Please take out a sheet of paper or a notebook and jot down a list of all the skills you have, all the things you have achieved and all the good deeds you do for people. The things you list don’t have to be grand “save-the-world” things, but just ordinary everyday things. Passing school examinations, passing a driving test, speaking another language, helping in the charity shop, paying for your child’s education, visiting an elderly relative once a week and making sure the family is well provided for are just some examples. If you have had some major successes, such as getting a promotion or earning your college degree, add them to the list and continually remind yourself of them. This is not boasting because you are not telling anyone about this—just you and your self worth. You are reminding yourself that you are worthwhile and you do have something useful to say and contribute. Do this often enough and you’ll automatically build confidence.
- **Take responsibility for your decisions and feelings.** This is one of the most difficult lessons for us humans to grasp—but once you do, your confidence grows by leaps and bounds. Here’s what it means. Most people who feel awkward at gatherings do so because they are worried that someone will make them do or say something dumb. Or, someone will say something to them that will make them feel stupid. From today, keep reminding yourself of these two powerful truths.
  - Nobody can make you do anything if you don’t want to. You can always say “no” to anybody. Yes, it may be tough but you can.
  - Nobody can make you feel bad or good unless you allow it. For example, if someone calls you a “bitch” or a “bastard”, you can think for a second and say to yourself, “I can either allow myself to get upset or just laugh it off”. Yes, it’s not easy to let unpleasant words fall off your back, so start practising today. Make it a game: see how many times you can catch your decision and choose which feeling you want. If you practise this enough you’ll soon realise that no one can really hurt you or embarrass you if you won’t let them. You can always be in control and confident.
- **Use an anchor.** This is a variation on the visualising exercise. Sit quietly for about 10 minutes with your eyes closed and bring to mind the last time you felt very confident. Perhaps when you got your high school or college diploma, or when you gave that great speech in the eighth grade. Make a

picture that event and see it in great detail with lots of colour, nice and big. While in a social setting, recreate the feeling you had at the time—how wonderful it felt.

Try to make that feeling of confidence and peace as strong as possible—in your body (stomach and chest and back). Channel it through your ring or a cufflink or any other item (it doesn't matter what it is as long as you usually wear it). Keep that feeling for a full minute and then stop—and start the exercise over again. Do this several times. Eventually the subconscious associates the good feeling with fiddling with the ring. So, whenever you feel anxiousness coming on, just touch your ring and the good feelings come back.

**3.2 Become a more interesting person. Increase your activities and interests.** The more things you do, club activities you participate in, committees you work on, books you read, the more you will have to offer in a conversation and in response to the other person's interests. Keep opening your horizons. Here are some ideas.

- Keep yourself informed on interesting local issues and events.
- Regularly reflect on your list of good abilities, skills and qualities you have.
- Ponder and admire what have you achieved so far in your life.
- Take control and responsibility for yourself, and start developing this feeling now.
- Read a new book every two weeks not in your field and not related to what you do for a living.
- Enrol in college for a course you'll enjoy.
- Take an inspirational trip per year—learn about different cultures, people and places.
- Sign up for some lectures at a university.
- Attend cultural events such as art museum exhibits and symphony concerts.
- Get subscriptions to current affairs magazines.
- Read the newspaper critically.
- Watch documentaries on TV.

**3.3 Develop into an even more pleasant person to be with than you already are.**

- Tell people a little about yourself and your life. The emphasis is on a little—just let little likes, dreams, feelings and ideas slip out, and let others run with that.
- Listen closely.

- Psych yourself up into a happy charming mood.
- Use people's names a few times while talking to them. This shows respect and interest.
- Get enthusiastic about other people's interests
- Be upbeat, cheerful, and enthusiastic about things
- Say the persons' name as soon as possible when introduced.
- Ask someone else what their name is if you forget. Remember it's okay to say, "I'm so sorry, I'm bad with names. It's \_\_\_\_?" (Let them fill in their name.)

### **3.4 Don't be obnoxious.**

- Don't give advice unless you are asked for it. People don't really want it.
- Think before saying any kind of funny put downs of people, politics, events, issues, etc.
- Don't ask for favours.
- Don't be obvious about the fact you are there only to meet someone in particular. That's using people and the event rather than participating in it.
- Let people down easy. If you want to decline someone's request, don't just say "no". Be more indirect, and try a polite "I'm sorry, I'll have to think about that," or "Let me get back to you on that."
- Don't run yourself down by saying things like "I'm stupid" or "I'm terrible at parties."
- If you are wrong admit it and apologize with something like "I'm sorry, I didn't mean it that way."
- Always try to praise or sandwich criticism into layers of nice comments. Genuine praise is always cherished by the receiver.
- Don't ask professional people (doctors, lawyers, stock brokers) for free advice.
- Pay attention and react or respond to what people are saying. See pictures of what they are telling you. Do not keep looking around the room at other people rather than at the person you are conversing with. This is rude, indicates disinterest or boredom and people will notice it.
- If you enjoy being the devil's advocate sometimes, keep it to a minimum. People get weary of it.
- Keep discussions under control. Using strong language in a loud voice to describe a bad situation or negative issue can be disconcerting to others who

may feel your words or tone reflect how you feel about them.

- Don't gossip. People might seem to enjoy it but at the back of their mind they will be wondering if you gossip about them.
- React well to compliments. Just say "thanks". Avoid the need to say something like: "Oh, not really." or "Gosh, you think so? I don't." or "Oh, you're just saying that."
- Be aware of others' feelings. Think about how people might react to what you say, or how you would feel if someone said that you.
- Don't assume things about the other person. You may think you know something about them from the way they talk or the way they dress, but check the facts. Listen first. People don't like it when you assume things about them or pretend to psychoanalyse them and guess what they are thinking.
- Remember people's names with mental reminders (John Smith = John the Baptist).

**3.5 Avoid arguments and debates.** Express differences of opinion in a friendly way. Some people are argumentative and get their joy from winning arguments and showing how clever they are. This may work once in a while, but too much and people will start to steer clear of you. Debates are too much effort. They're afraid to look stupid or lose the point to you too often.

Instead of feeling that you have to argue and defend a position, ask questions such as:

- "Why do you think that?"
- "What's the reason for that?"
- "What would you say if...?"
- "Let's look at it another way".
- "Doesn't that create a problem if . . .?"
- "That's a good point, but what would happen if . . .?"

In other words, you can still get your view across without telling the other person "YOU'RE WRONG!"

In a social setting, it's not whether you win or lose a debate—it's definitely how well you play the game. If someone is pontificating and you don't agree with them, just listen to their discussion and perhaps insert a thought here and there. If you feel the need to correct something, do it in even, neutral tones so tempers aren't inflamed. Try these:

- “From my experience I've found that...”
- “Here's how I see it. I think ....”
- “I believe...”
- “I feel differently about that...”

**3.6 Be a good person.** We all know how to keep our integrity, but sometimes we are tempted to throw away our scruples. Here are some things to remember:

- **Never break a confidence.** This goes back to not gossiping. Sometimes it's tempting to share some news that only you know at this time, but what do people think of you? They may begin wondering if they can share any information with you that won't be repeated to others.
- **Don't lie.** People will catch you out and make it worse. You know the difference between a “white lie” and a lie that will come back to haunt you. If you catch someone else lying or stretching the truth, be very careful about pointing this out. We all try at times to cover up small failings and exposure of it may destroy a friendship or make others uncomfortable. However, if the person is deliberately lying to hurt others or gain some major advantage at the expense of others, you should step in.

**3.7 Learn the balance between assertiveness and passiveness.** Although you probably should leave your strong opinions out of it, a good conversation involves some give and take. People want to hear your thoughts and viewpoints. Understand the difference between getting pushy and just stating your thoughts. If you don't respond with your thoughts, sometimes people may think you don't care.

Remember these points:

- You are allowed to say no to a request: “I'll think about it,” “I'll let you know.” “Let me call you back.”
- Give ideas and alternatives and become involved in the decision making process. This helps make you credible in discussions.
- Don't be a know-it-all. Some people feel they have to let you know that *they* know everything about everything. They can become a bore within minutes because others feel they can't contribute or will say something stupid.
- Remember the rule of asking questions. The benefit of a good conversation is what you can learn from others. Ask questions, listen and discuss.
- It's okay to say “I don't know”. You don't have to be an expert on every subject. If someone asks you something on which you are clueless, it is fine to admit it. This, again, helps people see you as a normal human being who doesn't “fake it” and spout facts for the heck of it.

- Don't interrupt. Sometimes you feel you will burst if you don't insert something into a conversation, but if the other person has the floor, hold it. You may be able to find a pause where you can have your say.
- Don't be sarcastic or crack jokes at another's expense. Some people can take it and some can't.
- Don't contradict someone outright. Let others show their knowledge and skills and, if necessary, insert something unthreatening, such as "Yes, I see your point, but I've done some thinking on that, and ..."
- Don't get on a soap box. You may have strong feelings about an issue, but unless you were invited for that specific reason, avoid lecturing about your opinion. People don't want to hear it.
- Avoid stating strong dislikes, unhappy events, miserable topics and racial statements. These don't help any conversation and just make you look bad.
- Don't feel you have to keep your conversation partner entertained. If you both have a good sense of humor, it will be easy to insert something funny. If you have no idea whether the other person is fun or a wet rag, keep it straight.
- Don't be over-sensitive. In reality, people won't go out of their way to make you feel bad. If you hear a negative comment, don't take it personally. Just continue the conversation and perhaps transition to another topic.
- Don't run down people's excitement and ideas. If someone enthusiastically states an opinion or a plan, stomp on your impulse to refute it outright. You can put a real damper on a good brainstorming session or casual conversation. Even if you think the idea is crazy, keep it to yourself and calmly add your opinion when appropriate.
- Ask people's opinions/views. People almost visibly "puff up" when you treat them like an expert on something. When you ask their opinion, it shows you respect what they think.
- Look for the positive in those you meet. They are dressed oddly, their lipstick is crooked and they eat with their mouth open. Not a good first impression, but try to see what you like about that person. They may have many pearls of wisdom to impart if you'll keep an open mind.
- Refer back to things a person mentioned in previous conversations. That's the highest compliment—showing that you were really listening and are still interested.
- Compliment others. Everyone likes an occasional sincere compliment. Praise their recent speech or comment on their new dress/tie. Just be sure you really mean it because people can sometime see a fake remark a mile away.

- Find people’s hot buttons and then ask them about it. Is this guy crazy about car racing? Ask a few knowledgeable questions. Does this person believe strongly in recycling? See why. You have just made a friend.

**3.8 Big secret – ask for feedback.** Encourage people to give you a critique on something you have done.

Yes, get into the habit of asking people to criticise you. I know this sounds crazy but it works. By stepping up to the plate and asking for feedback, you put yourself in control of the situation. People will be honest, but probably nicer than if they have to come to you. The very act of asking for feedback shows confidence and tells your subconscious you are confident.

### ***Work on your voice and speech***

**3.9 Listen to how others sound.** Have you ever noticed how people in television shows talk with each other? Their voices are modulated. They speak softly, but clearly with strong emphasis. You rarely hear any strident conversations unless a surly guest star comes into the picture!

**3.10 Have you ever listened to your own voice?** If you have recorded a greeting on your phone or listened to a recording of you talking somewhere, you know that the voice you hear in your head doesn’t identically match the one you and everyone else hears. It might be much more nasal sounding, or you may be mumbling.

**3.11 Try these voice tips:**

- Work on your voice: lower the tone but speak so people can hear.
- Just like a professional singer, breathe from the diaphragm.
- Slow down, enunciate words and don’t mumble.
- Keep your hands away from your mouth. If people can see your mouth, they can “hear” you better.
- Put a “smile” in your voice.
- Practice a discreet laugh. Try a chuckle rather than a guffaw.
- Avoid all the fillers such as “You know” “I mean” and “Well, anyway”.
- Don’t eat and talk at the same time.
- Don’t let your voice inflection go up at the end of the sentence as if you are asking a question. It makes people think you are unsure of yourself.
- Consider joining a drama class or taking diction or singing lessons.

### ***Work on self awareness***

Do you have a good idea of who you are and what your values comprise? If you have never done a self assessment on your personality, behaviour style, communication style, etc., you

may have a dearth of information on something you should know everything about. Yourself! It's not that we don't know ourselves, but until taking these tests, we may have trouble articulating who we are. Countless assessments are out there, many of them free online. Try a few and see what you learn.

**3.12 Think about who you are:**

- What do you stand for in life?
- What are your views on important topics?
- What are your main strengths and weaknesses?
- What do you like and dislike.
- What kind of person are you.
- Where do you make your contribution to others at home, socially, at work or in the community?
- What is your purpose in life?
- What are your long-term goals?
- What is your definition of success?

**3.13 It is important to step outside yourself and look objectively at your life.**

Think about:

- What have you really done that is worthwhile?
- Who have you helped?
- What have you achieved?
- What risks have you taken?

Taking a good look at ourselves is at times surprising. When we see things written down, we see we have accomplished more than we thought, we have people who care about us, we have plans and goals, we have a solid place in our environment. Think of ways to increase your own self worth. If you left school early, start studying again and get a degree. Join a charity and help people. Make good friends.

This book has helped with some of the short-term steps you might consider to help your self-confidence, but sitting down to do some hard self assessment will benefit you in the long-term as well.

***Learn to relax.***

Sometimes we get so caught up in our fears that we stress ourselves out. Our self-confidence plummets. Our health suffers. Face your fears. Try the following:

- 3.14 Learn to accept little risks and take them.** Consider what you are really risking—a bit of your ego? Some hurt feelings? That's life. If you don't take the risks, you

may miss a lot of opportunities.

- 3.15 Learn to trust yourself and others.** The world is not a bad place and people are not out to get you. Just as you know the world doesn't revolve around you, remember that most people are thinking of themselves and not giving you a second thought.
- 3.16** Learn how you deal with pressure. Evaluate your stress levels on normal days as well as on hectic days and observe your reactions to pressure. Some people get depressed, start making mistakes or become unpleasant to be around. Once you know how you react, you can find ways to deal with pressure before it overwhelms you.
- 3.17 Don't be a worry wart.** Some people are so laid back they rarely worry about anything. Others worry about *everything*: their kids, their house, their bills, the neighbor's sick dog, etc. Worry doesn't accomplish much, especially if it takes over your life, making you timid and afraid and lacking confidence.
- 3.18 Get rid of bad memories.** Yes, we all have those past experiences that come back to haunt us. Perhaps our mother told us we were hopeless. Maybe we failed mathematics. Oh, and there is the time you forgot the whole end of your speech in high school.

Hypnotherapist Dr. Brian Roet in his book, *The Confidence to Be Yourself: How to Boost Your Self-Esteem*, describes one way to deal with these negative memories that still appear to crack our self confidence. Substitute good memories. Think about the bad experience and then replace that memory with a positive experience relating to the same thing.

Instead of just remembering your mother telling you that you were hopeless, remember the time she bragged about you to her friends. The recollection of you failing mathematics can be substituted for finishing high school in the top 20 percent of your class. That speech you forgot should fade behind the memory of the debate you won the next year. Remember the good times most, and if the bad times come to mind, just remember they are part of the experiences that made you the fine person you are today.

- 3.19 Use visualisation to get rid of guilt.** Another cement block we carry around with us is guilt over something we did in the past that we aren't proud of. Again, we all have these. The guilt we feel for some action in our past can chip away at our self worth. Too much guilt can make you shy and uncertain around others. We think we will be punished and that people don't like us.

Guess what! You are the one doing the punishing by holding on to the guilt. The people around us don't know about those experiences, and, if some of them do, they probably don't recall it or hold it against us. Start today to forgive yourself for past actions that may have

negatively affected you and/or someone else. Next time you find yourself on that guilt trip, jump off, release it and think of the many fine things you have done.

### ***Conclusion: Here's to brilliant confidence!***

*To listen closely and reply well is the highest perfection we are able to attain in the art of conversation.* -- **Francois de La Rochefoucauld (1613 - 1680)**

The art of conversation takes practise. And, it has two parts. First, the talk itself, and second, the talk you give yourself to grant you confidence. If you can think of

any interchange between two people as friendly conversation rather than, for example, a job interview or a first date, you will find life a lot easier. If you listen well, think and respond you have mastered the art of conversation. In this guide, we've tried to help you walk into a social or work gathering and join in.

This guide has not dealt with the extremes of conversation. The best book I have found for all the variations and complexities is *Confident Conversation* by Dr. Lillian Glass. She has sections on talking to foreigners, customs of various cultures, dealing with accents and dialects, speaking to people with speech problems, and talking to deaf and blind people and the physically disabled. She also covers winning in arguments and how to avoid them, talking to people who are mentally ill, terminally ill or grieving, and speaking with doctors, lawyers, waiters and shop assistants. You can learn how to use your voice when attacked by someone, how to flirt and maintain a good relationships by talking, and even what to say when ending a relationship.

While we have provided some good tips for starting and participating in conversations, we tried to also help you get past some of your inhibitions with others. Self confidence is really the name of the game in good social conversation. When you think well of yourself, you will make others think well of you as well.

### ***Some Last Thoughts***

Here are some last thoughts to keep you on that road to better self esteem and good conversation.

- Contribute or join a charity. Give your time genuinely without any expectation of repayment. Being a giver builds confidence.
- Think of those you already help. Think of the contribution you already make to others including your family and friends. Remember the good things you are doing.
- Count your blessings. Think of 20 things you are grateful for, write them down and say thanks for them each day. This builds a subconscious awareness of all the things you have, not lack. Saying thank you makes you feel good.
- Praise yourself for every step you make towards goals and objectives. Switch off the second mind telling you things will go wrong or you are not good enough. Start some affirmations or mantras:
  - I am powerful and loving and have nothing to fear.

- I have no fear and I let go and trust others.
- My life is rich and full and abundance is everywhere.
- Whatever will happen, I will cope.
- Set little challenges for yourself. When you succeed, congratulate and reward yourself. Success builds confidence. Start small and build up.
- Remember the great line from Franklin D. Roosevelt: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” If walking into a restaurant and eating alone scares you,
- fight that fear, Fight the fear, feel the fear—get used to the fact that it will not kill you. Just do it. The more you take on the things you fear, the easier they become.
- See a hypnotherapist. See a list in Appendix 1.
- Start talking more in all settings: parties, classes, conferences and work events. At the next small meeting you attend, make yourself say something—just a sentence or two. Say it and while you may feel the fear no one else will. All they will see is a person with something to contribute.

Just remember, to stand tall, smile, listen and join in!