

HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR SELF-CONFIDENCE

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THE MARVELS OF CONFIDENCE

Confidence is, first and foremost, the reflection of a positive self image. To have confidence in yourself, you have to like yourself. To inspire confidence in others, you have to learn to have confidence in yourself.

To convince others, you first have to be convinced yourself. Why do charismatic persons have absolutely no trouble finding people to rally behind them? Because they are already convinced that what they're doing is right.

By learning to appreciate yourself, by adopting the attitude that success will come to you as your right, since you are just as intelligent, competent and careful as anyone else, you increase your potential for success astronomically.

Self confidence, however, is extremely volatile. It comes and goes without our knowing exactly why, at first glance.

Note: I said "at first glance." Why?

Because a few minutes of introspection is usually enough to resolve the mystery of why your self confidence suddenly disappears.

CONFIDENCE BREEDS SUCCESS

When you were in school, you probably shared some of your apprehensions about exams with your parents, and they probably said something like, “Well, if you don’t think you can do it, then obviously you won’t be able to do it!” Or something along those lines.

As simple as it sounds, this principle should stay with us throughout our lives, like a guardian angel. Because confidence breeds success which, in turn, breeds more success. Lose your confidence, and you will experience failure after failure.

To acquire self confidence, the kind that radiates from magnetic personalities, which is a basic ingredient of charisma, you have to be persevering. But it’s not as difficult as you may think.

For example, do you remember the first time you rode a bicycle, or the first time you put on a pair of skates or skis? You were probably shaking with fear, like most people do. Yet today, riding a bike, skating or skiing, seem like the most natural things in the world.

Do you remember when you were learning to drive? After finally mastering the arcane mystery of moving forward smoothly out of first gear - with gritted teeth and sweat pouring off your brow - you learned to maneuver in traffic, park, start up a hill, and so forth. Yet today you drive almost mechanically, without any trouble at all! You have complete confidence in your ability as a driver, and your success comes automatically.

HOW TO ACQUIRE THE CONFIDENCE YOU LACK?

You are going to follow a progressive method which consists of two phases, each of those being subdivided into numerous steps.

First, you'll learn how to recognize your own worth and remain aware of it. Then comes learning how to affirm yourself, i.e. the practical application, in day to day life , of your newly acquired confidence. I. Recognize your personal worth

Step one: Build a file of your successes

Methodically enumerate your strong points, as well as the occasions on which you've put them to good use. Here are a few questions which may guide you in case you get stuck: - In which areas do you possess special abilities? They may be professional abilities, or hobbies, sports, etc.

. . .

- WHAT TANGIBLE THINGS have you accomplished (academic or professional success, educating your children, success in your marriage or personal life, in sports, and so on)?

- ON WHICH OCCASIONS have you experienced the pleasure of success? Search through your memory, going back as far as you can - right to your childhood.

- WHAT DO people you know appreciate about you?

- AND SO ON. Don't underestimate yourself. In terms of self confidence, it's just as important knowing how to collect stamps as it is to change a sparkplug in your car, or maintain a happy household.

READ and re-read the list of your successes. Keep it with you, and add to the list from time to time. Savour it, and impregnate your mind with the positive image it portrays, because that positive image is you!

Step two: be optimistic

We all fail at some time or other. Even the most charismatic persons will sometimes fail in their endeavours. But unlike such persons, our reactions to failure can be catastrophic.

Many people brood over setbacks and disappointments and finally allow them to dominate their entire lives! Are you one of those people?

If so, you have to change!

Confident people count their successes and not their failures

Confident people count their successes and not their failures. They forget the past and concentrate on the present and, of course, on the future. All their words and actions are illuminated by the light of optimism.

Now here's a little test which will help you determine whether you have a tendency towards optimism or pessimism. If you answer the questions honestly, you'll really be able to put your finger on the single most important concrete manifestation of your lack of self confidence.

Test: Are you an optimist or a pessimist?

1. Someone places a glass containing water, wine, juice or any other drink you like in front of you. The glass is half filled. Your first thought is:

☐ a) This glass is half empty

☐ b) This glass is half full

2. You pass a beautiful house, one that comes very close to being the house of your dreams. The first thing you think is:

☐ a) I'll never be able to afford a house like that.

☐ b) I hope the people living there appreciate their good fortune.

3. You learn that someone at work is going to be promoted, but you don't know who. The first thing that comes to your mind is:

☐ a) Well in any case it won't be me.

☐ b) There's a chance it could be me.

4. Before going out this morning, you noticed that the sky was overcast.

☐ a) You take your raincoat and umbrella along, just in case.

☐ b) You tell yourself that it will most probably clear up as the day goes on.

5. You're waiting for someone at the train station. The train arrives, but your friend isn't there. Your first thought is:

☐ a) He (or she) must have had an accident on the way to the station.

☐ b) He must have missed his train. I'll call his home in case he left a message and wants me to wait for the next one.

RESULTS

1. If you chose b) for all the questions, then you know all about being an optimist. You're like a ray of sunshine to those around you.

Everyone appreciates your optimistic attitude, and many people probably envy you for it.

Don't change! You've found one of the keys to happiness, health, wisdom, and - what is most interesting in the context of this book - to possessing a charismatic personality.

2. If you gave a) answers to three, four or five questions, then it's high time you took a good look around you. Your life is probably dull and disorganized. You're a defeatist, a pessimist, and you're totally lacking in self confidence. You worry over nothing. And you're probably one of those people whom everybody else finds a little depressing.

If you chose an a) answer to one or two questions, then you're on the right track, but you still have some progress to make.

It isn't possible to get rid of a pessimistic attitude that you've been carrying around your whole life in just a few days. However, if you do your part, you'll soon realize that it doesn't take much to tip the scales in favor of an optimistic approach.

A few days probably won't be sufficient, but in a few weeks you should notice a significant improvement.

Do the following exercise for eight weeks:

Exercise: Self Analysis

1. Get a notebook (agenda format) and a pen and take them with you wherever you go.

2. For the first two weeks, every time a negative thought enters your mind (like "I'm sure to catch a cold in this weather..." or "I know the heat is going to break down as

soon as it gets cold..." or "I know I'm going to ruin the casserole because we've got guests coming...") write it down in your notebook, next to the date on which it occurs.

Note: You'll probably notice that as you approach the end of the first two week period, you find yourself making many more entries than at first. Don't worry, this isn't because your state of mind is deteriorating, but simply because, as you get into the habit of writing down your negative thoughts, you become more aware of them, and fewer escape detection. The process of self-analysis is working!

3. For the next two weeks, ignore your negative thoughts. Concentrate exclusively on your positive thoughts, and write them down in your agenda under the appropriate date (things like, "The weather's so beautiful, I'll be able to work in the garden this weekend..." or "I think my new coat looks great on me..." etc.).

4. When these two weeks are over, sit down somewhere quiet and take a look at your notebook. Count your negative thoughts, and then your positive thoughts. In principle, an indication that your state of mind needs brightening up is that there are more entries on the negative side than on the positive.

5. Now look at each of your negative thoughts, and one by one replace them with a positive one. For example, if you wrote: "What a drag, it's raining today. I won't be able to play tennis..."

You can replace this negative thought with something like: "Well, it's raining! I'll be able to try out my new raincoat." or... "It's raining - great! The garden really needed it!" or... "Raining? A perfect day for cleaning up my stamp collection."

6. The following week, start all over again. Keep at it for

at least two months. If you've been honest with yourself and made a real effort to write down your thoughts, the difference between the number of positive and negative thoughts should diminish. At some point, you'll start having more positive thoughts than negative ones. And a few days later, you'll realize that your negative thoughts have all but disappeared.

In this way you will eliminate the fears and doubts that are undermining your self confidence, and are making you worry about events that never actually happen.

This exercise is essential to your success.

Stop reading and start the exercise right away. (If, for example, you don't believe the exercise will work, write down any doubts that come to mind.)

Step Three: Changing Your Attitude Towards Failure

The English language is equipped with numerous sayings, which are the fruit of popular experience: Here are two, which you should always keep in mind: "No risk, no gain." "Fortune smiles on the courageous" (Fortune is here used in its etymological sense and refers to "luck.")

Actually, failure can only happen to someone who takes risks, who dares to try. If you've faced failure, it means that you dared to act, that you ran a risk, and that you possess the quality of initiative!

But it's only by trying that you succeed. So put yourself on the line, accept the risks, and you'll soon see the Goddess of Luck smiling down on you from above.

Consider whatever you undertake as a game. You lose some and you win some - no failure can diminish one iota of your worth as a person. On the contrary, it proves that you

tried, that you showed courage and initiative, that you were dynamic.

Step Four: Stop seeing failure everywhere

How can a person see failure when it isn't there? You'll soon see.

Sort and file your failures

1. It's time to clean out your failure file. You're going to make a list of your personal, professional, athletic and social failures.

2. When the list is complete, analyze each of your failures individually. It's very probable that in nine out of ten cases: - What you consider to have been YOUR failure was totally beyond your control - it had nothing to do with you at all; - What you consider to be a failure wasn't really a failure, but simply dissatisfaction.

For example, some people feel badly about having failed their children in some way, for not encouraging them enough to get a good education, because these children would rather spend time out on the beach windsurfing than going to college. If you're one of those parents, then you'd

better realize that your child's life belongs to him (or her), and that he's free to do what he wants.

If he's happier windsurfing than calculating logarithms, that's his business. And you are not responsible! You did everything you could to make your children happy and well balanced. That's all your role as a parent requires. 3. When you've dissected the list of your failures, calmly and slowly tear it up into a thousand pieces. Do it as a kind of ceremony, as if you were performing an extremely important symbolic ritual.

Afterwards, you should experience a sense of rebirth - you have been purified.

AFFIRM YOURSELF

Now that you are convinced of your own personal worth, now that you've stopped underestimating yourself and envisage the future with a sense of growing optimism, it's a good idea to start applying your new self image to everyday situations. Self affirmation requires two fundamental abilities:

Knowing how to refuse

Knowing how to ask

Phase one: Learn how to say NO!

Why are we afraid to say no?

We run into people all our lives who try to boss us around and manipulate us, who try to get something from us or use us, or who simply try to completely dominate us, both psychologically and physically.

It's up to us to make these people understand that we are in control of our own vital space, of our mental and emotional integrity, our free time, our money, etc.

Have you ever found yourself saying "yes" when you

wanted to say no? Be honest. Most of us are afraid of saying no.

Why?

Fear of rejection

Psychologists attribute this reflex to a fear of being rejected. We think that if we refuse someone we will suffer disastrous consequences, the least of which is losing that person's friendship or affection.

Well, that may be true, you say, but when you buy a pair of shoes or a life insurance policy because the salesman or broker is relentless, is it still out of a fear of being rejected? After all, you hardly know the person!

Maybe so, but psychologists have discovered that most people can't stand being rejected by anyone, even by people they don't like or don't know. Interesting, isn't it?

People who never say no are also ashamed of being considered (horror of horrors!) selfish - if for example, they dare refuse entertaining twenty five guests for Christmas dinner, or refuse to be their children's chauffeur, or refuse to work overtime on a regular basis for no extra pay to please the boss.

What is the result of this attitude?

Are you accumulating resentment?

If you've never learned to say no, then you've certainly accumulated a toxic dose of resentment. You surely have the feeling you're being exploited, that you're the person "everybody asks, because you always say yes..."

Well, it's time to get rid of those toxins!

Charismatic people don't let anyone walk all over them. People like Napoleon, Roosevelt, Washington and Gandhi, to name just a few, were definitely not pushovers. It took a lot to convince them, and they certainly knew how to affirm themselves. Why not imitate them!

How to refuse

First, make sure to avoid all demonstrations of displeasure - sighs, shouts, tears etc. Saying no doesn't mean you have to bring your fist crashing down on the table. What you do need to be is firm. 5 golden rules for saying "No"

Here are a few golden rules - you'll soon realize how effective they are. 1. Listen to the request attentively, and take time to think it over before answering.

For example, if someone calls you up and asks you to go shopping with them, and you're not sure whether you feel like going, you could politely answer: "I have to think about it. I'll call you back in a few minutes." 2. Make sure you tell the truth.

No lame excuses, no invented pretexts which you'll forget, no lies to make your life more complicated. 3. Get your message across tactfully and considerately.

Refusing someone doesn't mean beating them to death. If you're asked to come to a meeting, for example, it would be more diplomatic to say: "Thanks for thinking about me, but I don't think I'll have the time..." rather than: "I don't want to go. It would be a complete waste of time for me." 4. Don't make the mistake of arguing, especially when the other person gets aggressive.

Stay calm and keep smiling. They are your best weapons against those who pretend to be shocked by your sudden refusal to comply with their wishes. Avoid getting into any kind of discussion about your refusal. You don't have to provide superfluous explanations.

Just smile and say, "No."

Let's look at an example: your spouse comes home from work and announces that he (or she) has invited a colleague over for dinner on Saturday night. He knows that you've

been looking forward to going out on Saturday, to a movie or the theatre, and so he's going to try and get you to change your mind.

If you really feel like going to the movie or the play, then there's no reason why you shouldn't go.

Don't get involved in a long, drawn-out discussion, which could very well turn into a fight, during which both of you will probably say things you'll regret. Simply repeat, as politely and calmly as possible, your desire to go out on that night.

Your spouse can entertain his guests on his own. "Well," I hear you saying, "he's going to have to explain my absence somehow."

That's his problem, not yours. 5. Don't excuse yourself

There's no reason why you have to invent some excuse because you've said no to someone. It's your absolute right as an individual.

By offering excuses, you place yourself in an inferior position, you reveal your fear and give the other person the impression that he can break through your defenses and get you to change your mind. A discussion will follow, and you'll probably end up giving in just to have a little peace. Too bad!

Here's some good news: according to specialists, the first "no" is the most difficult. When you realize that this first refusal has not resulted in any cataclysmic disaster, then it becomes easier to refuse a second time. So what are you waiting for?

Phase two: learn to ask**WHY DO YOU HAVE TO ASK?**

Because affirming yourself requires more than negative responses.

Affirming yourself also means knowing how to ask for things. Another proverb will illustrate the point: “Giving is sweeter than receiving.”

Everybody likes to give. It inflates the ego, it makes us feel worthy, it creates a deep feeling of satisfaction in us. But if you don’t ask for anything, you risk being overlooked.

Other people can’t always guess what you expect of them. And in fact they are under no obligation to try and figure out what you want.

Even your spouse, your parents and your closest friends cannot know exactly what’s going on inside your head, at the precise moment you desire something.

Do you want to have a party on your birthday? Let people know about it. Your friends and family will be only too glad to organize a little surprise for you!

On the other hand, if you keep telling everyone that birthdays really don’t mean anything to you, that you’ve stopped counting, and so on, then don’t be surprised if your spouse forgets to give you a present!

Let’s imagine that a job opens up at work that you’re very interested in. Don’t wait until it’s offered to you. Go and talk to your superior and let him/her know what you want. Explain how you would handle the job, and why you think you’re especially qualified.

Perhaps self sacrifice and modesty are Christian virtues, but you can be sure that they never gave Napoleon a crown, or Ronald Reagan two terms in the White House, or made Bill Cosby the wealthiest performer in history!

What demands do you find most difficult to make? (In your family, social, professional and sexual life, etc.)

Number them according to degree of difficulty.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____

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16. _____

17. _____

18. _____

19. _____

20. _____

NOW PRACTICE FORMULATING THESE DEMANDS, starting with the easiest and working up to the hardest, in the first person ("I") First write them down, and then read them over from time to time.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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19. _____

20. _____

LEARN TO TAKE

Once you've obtained what you want, the moment arrives when you have to accept it graciously.

You must recall how certain people reacted when you had the pleasure of giving them a beautiful present: "Oh, you're crazy! You shouldn't have spent so much money! I really didn't need this..."

What could be more depressing?

Not only do you feel ridiculous and hurt, you feel like an idiot for spending so much on something that won't even be appreciated, and that you can't take back.

Now take some time to examine your own conscience, and think about the times when you reacted this way to something someone gave you, or did for you:

You need as much generosity to take as to give

If someone makes an effort to give you something, or to do something for you, show how much you appreciate it. You'll make that person happy, he or she will want to do things for you again, and your esteem will grow by degrees.

SUMMARY

This method help you discover what you can do to increase your self confidence. After pinpointing the ingredients that confidence is made of, you drew up a list of your successes which you now keep close at hand, periodically making additions.

You learned how important the element of optimism is to a charismatic personality. If you feel you have certain tendencies towards being pessimistic, correct them right away. You'll be happier, healthier, and more charismatic.

Also, you know that acquiring the magnetic personality you dream of having requires knowing how to affirm yourself. And affirming yourself is primarily a question of knowing how to say no.

You are now aware of why it is so difficult to say no: fear of being rejected or of appearing to be selfish. There are ways to say no without hurting anyone - you have to be diplomatic and sensitive, while remaining firm and concise.

But self affirmation also has its positive side: you also have to learn how to ask for things. No one can guess exactly

what's going on in your mind. Don't wait for others to try and figure out what you want. Ask, and you will receive.

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