

Network to Work Meeting – July 2022
RESOURCE DOCUMENT –
FINDING THE CONFIDENCE TO ACHIEVE PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

ACTIVITY – Self Confidence Quiz

The quiz below will give you some insight into your current level of confidence. Read each statement and circle A if it is true for you most of the time; B if it is true for you some of the time; and C if it is not usually true. Then total the number of your “A” responses, the number of your “B” responses, and the number of your “C” responses.

1. I have a realistic sense of my strengths and weaknesses. A B C
2. I am willing to take risks for something I believe in. A B C
3. I plan and prepare for new experiences. A B C
4. I have ways to cope with fear and doubt. A B C
5. I take time to remember my past successes. A B C
6. I recognize failure as a part of life. A B C
7. I can cope with unexpected changes. A B C
8. I am comfortable asking for help and support. A B C
9. I know what I value in life. A B C
10. My actions generally line up with my values. A B C
11. I don't give up easily. A B C
12. I realize not everyone will like or approve of me. A B C
13. I have a sense of my inherent worth. A B C
14. I understand setbacks are normal and to be expected. A B C
15. I don't beat up on myself when I go through a rough time. A B C
16. My thoughts don't paralyze me when I try something new. A B C
17. I don't diminish myself by using negative qualifiers when I express myself.” A B C

Totals: Number of As: ____ Number of Bs: ____ Number of Cs: ____

Here's how to interpret your score:

Mostly A's: Your confidence is on solid ground. You're doing a great job of not allowing obstacles to get in your way of meeting valued goals.

Mostly B's: You're right in the middle, sometimes recognizing your accomplishments and other times, focusing on where you're falling short. Your answers indicate you may fall prey to common pitfalls that undermine self-confidence.

Mostly C's: Your self-confidence is a little shaky, but that's OK. Remember, there is no one with "total" self-confidence all of the time. You may need to ease up on yourself, notice your accomplishments, and find ways to handle setbacks.

Adapted from The Self-Confidence Workbook: A Guide to Overcoming Self-Doubt and Improving Self-Esteem. Copyright © 2018 by Barbara Markway and Celia Ampel.

Why People Have Low Self Confidence

How often in your life have you wanted to share your opinion with others but second guessed yourself and kept quiet? Perhaps you felt your views weren't important. Maybe you preferred to avoid the spotlight. Maybe you routinely minimize your opinion with qualifiers such as "I'm not really sure if. . .", or "I don't know if. . .", or "maybe . . ." or other statements that serve to put yourself down. Regardless of the reason, diminishing or withholding your contributions in an interview, at work or in your training means you miss the chance to influence decisions, build up your credibility and help solve problems.

When new to a job or lacking in experience, it can be natural to have low confidence. Studies show that women especially struggle with confidence in their careers and are less likely to promote themselves compared to men. Many other factors, however, often come into play. Understanding these factors and causes are the first step in boosting confidence.

- **Our genetic makeup** affects the amount of confidence boosting chemicals (serotonin and oxytocin) that our brains can access.
- **Our temperament** may be the kind to inhibit our behaviors. A person who is naturally cautious and reserved may naturally also have lower self-confidence.
- **Anxiety and depression.** These go hand in hand with self confidence issues.

- **Negative life experiences** such as trauma, abuse, demeaning treatment by our family of origin, bullying, and harassment are just some factors that serve to diminish or squash self esteem;
- **Gender, racial and cultural background, and sexual orientation.** Recipients of discrimination may internalize negative, untrue messages about one’s potential and ability to “belong”.
- **Perfectionism.**
- **Media messages.** Advertisers often try to make us feel we have a problem in order to get us to buy their products. Social media often paints false images of perfection in the lives of others.

Steps for Building Confidence

Despite all these factors that contribute to low self-esteem, the good news is that low confidence isn’t an inherent flaw. It doesn’t have to define us. Confidence can be learned and practiced. **“It begins with becoming more self-aware, changing your mindset, and learning to bring your full self to work – or wherever you go.”**

Here are some helpful steps to building up your confidence:

Step 1: Connect with Yourself.

There is no one way to be. What may seem normal for you may be new to another person. Each of us is unique with valuable perspectives, knowledge, skills and points of view to share. You just need to believe that. Start by taking the time and space to think about all the things that make you the special person you are. These include your background, experiences, skills and traits that have shaped you and your unique way of thinking.

ACTION: Complete the exercise on the following page, **“Find The Unique You”**, (copyright Harvard Business Review) to reflect on your own life and to start to appreciate the value that your uniqueness – and your unique voice – hold.)

EXERCISE: Find The Unique You

What are your unique stories, experiences, and traits that combine to create your valuable point of view? The following prompts will help you flesh out your personal story and what makes you unique. It should give you additional clarity – and confidence – about what you bring to the workplace.

Write out in detail your answers to the three following prompts, and don't be concerned as there are no right or wrong answers!

- 1. Describe your background.** (Consider: family, where you grew up, type of neighborhood, ethnicity, language(s), heritage, education, personal identity, religion, and more.)
- 2. Identify experiences that shaped you.** (Consider: childhood events, work experience, volunteering, hobbies, victories, failures, learning opportunities, relationship moments, and more.)
- 3. List your notable traits.** (Consider: personality, habits, personal style, communication, tendencies and more.)

Here are some helpful steps to building up your confidence, continued:

Step 2: Focus on Building Confident Behaviors.

Building confidence also requires changing behaviors. Here are some pointers:

- Set small goals
- Deliberately practice the changes you wish to make. (Such as speaking your point of view without demeaning qualifiers. E.g. "I would like to add on to that thought . . .", or "I've been thinking about a new strategy . . .")

- Be patient. It takes time to learn a new, confident mindset and behaviors. However, with commitment changes can happen. With practice and tweaking, your new behaviors will become more natural.

You have an important voice that deserves to be heard, and valuable skills that deserve to be shared. By practicing confident behaviors, you will begin believing that. Here are some things you can do.

ACTION: Review this list of activities to “*Practice Confident Behaviors*”, (copyright Harvard Business Review). Get comfortable with each activity and then move to the next one. Depending on your comfort level, these activities could take days, weeks or months to work through.

ACTIVITY – Practice Confident Behaviors

Activity #1 – Greetings. *Be intentional in how you greet people.* Smile, put warmth in your voice, use positive body language (such as eye contact, standing tall, uncrossing your arms, keeping your head up), and bring positive energy into the interaction.

Activity #2 – Language. *Catch yourself if you do any of these self-deprecating behaviors.*

- Speaking very quietly or hesitantly, or apologizing for speaking.
- Using qualifiers such as “I may be wrong” or “What do I know” or “I just got lucky”.
- Using up speak or a high intonation of your voice at the end of a sentence that can make it sound like a question.
- Using diminutive language to describe yourself, such as calling yourself “just a rookie”.

Activity #3 – Prepare Comments. *Commit to making one comment or asking one question in your upcoming meeting.*

- Start with a low-pressure meeting, such as a brainstorming meeting.
- Write down one comment or question you can ask (if you know the agenda in advance). Practice saying it out loud in front of the mirror a few times.
- Have a trusted friend become an “accountability peer” to help you follow through.

ACTIVITY – Practice Confident Behaviors, continued

Activity #4 – Introduction. *Script out how you would introduce yourself when meeting someone new.*

- Write two to three sentences that describe who you are and what you do. Focus on your strengths and ambitions.
- Practice your introduction with people who will give you honest feedback.

Activity #5 – Reach Out. *Take more initiative.*

- Identify a person you would like to connect with (e.g. a speaker at a presentation, a potential mentor, a colleague, a decision-maker on a project).
- Write out a message you'd like to send them, and follow through.

Some Final Strategies for Believing in Yourself

To succeed in life, we have to believe in ourselves and our abilities. Our inner faith creates our external results. To quote automotive pioneer Henry Ford, “If you think you can or you think you can’t, either way you are right.” All too often, life’s setbacks lead us to lacking confidence.

Here are 6 strategies for believing in yourself:

1. Accept Your Current Situation

The first thing you need to do is to accept your current life situation. Make peace with how your life looks at the moment and what led to your current situation. Resistance is pointless. Only when we accept our circumstances will we have the energy we need to change our situation and our beliefs.

2. Let Yourself off the Hook

In addition to accepting your present, you need to forgive yourself for any failures or mistakes you made in the past. Stop living in the past, be compassionate towards yourself, and look to the future.

3. Think About Your Past Success

When feeling down, remember a time in your past when you felt strong, capable and amazing. Put yourself in that past and think about the awesome things that you used to do. Then remember that you can do it again. Rather than focusing on bad times, use your past to your advantage by focusing on times you were successful.

4. Trust Yourself

We all have energy, power, courage, strength and confidence within ourselves; the opportunity is to trust that it is there and allow yourself to access it. Meditation and journaling are good tools for doing this.

5. Monitor your Self Talk

The beliefs we choose to hold each day, and the way we frame things in our mind, make an enormous impact on how confident we feel. What messages do you give yourself daily? Can you talk to yourself in an affirmative, approving and supportive way?

6. Adopt an Attitude of Gratitude and Positivity

Be thankful for what you do have and strive to see the good in the world. When you are feeling positive about things, it is harder to feel negative about yourself.

Sources:

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