

How to Become More Self-Confident

Signs of Self-Confidence

Let's explore the meaning of self-confidence by taking a quiz. Read the list of statements below and check which ones, in your opinion, are signs of self-confidence.

1. Admitting when you are wrong.
2. Being flexible when change is needed.
3. Talking about your accomplishments.
4. Describing negative events in positive terms. For example, "We didn't make our target, but we sure learned a lot."
5. Dressing to please yourself without worrying what others will think.
6. Using a strong handshake.
7. Using casual language in an effort to avoid sounding too "corporate." For example, "You guys did a cool thing."
8. Speaking very fast.
9. Smiling often.
10. Learning new skills.
11. Putting yourself down in order to sound humble.

Compare your answers to those on the bottom of page three under "Quiz #1."

Low Self-Confidence

Part of defining self-confidence is thinking about what low self-confidence is, what it looks and sounds like. Test yourself now. Circle the statements that convey a lack of self-confidence.

1. "I may be wrong, but I think the answer is ten."
2. "Thank you for the compliment. We're very proud of our work."
3. "That was really stupid of me."
4. "I forgot my business cards. I left them in the car."
5. (Responding to a compliment) "Oh, I've had this dress for ten years."
6. "I would have gotten into the program, but they don't like to take people with my background."
7. "That sounds like a challenge. I'm sure we can figure out how to solve it, though."
8. "I'm sorry to interrupt, but I wonder if I could have a minute of your time."

Compare your answers to those listed at the bottom of page three under "Quiz #2."

Where Does Self-Confidence Come From?

Self-confidence is not something people are born with. It results from a combination of factors:

1. **Learned skill:** Self-confidence is a combination of skills, not just a single quality. People are not born with it or without it. It can be learned.
2. **Practice:** Self-confidence comes from practice. It may appear to be spontaneous, but it isn't.
3. **Internal locus of control:** Self-confidence results from what psychologists call an internal locus (central point) of control. This means that people who are self-directing, who accept responsibility for their own results, have greater self-confidence.

Eight Self-Confidence Builders

There are many concrete, specific things you can do to feel more confident in challenging life situations. Make note of those that will help you develop your own sense of self-confidence.

1. **Follow your strengths.** Self-confidence comes from being the best "you" possible. It doesn't come from trying to be someone else. It is the result of following paths like these:
 - Do what comes naturally.
 - Develop your talents.
 - Follow your convictions.
 - Express your own style.
2. **Plan ahead.** Many people are surprised to hear that self-confidence comes from something as ordinary as planning. But think about it; let's say you are going on a job interview, almost always an anxiety-producing experience. When you are prepared, you feel more confident.
3. **Take action.** Confidence comes from taking action. Break your challenge down into small steps and take that first step, no matter how small it seems.
4. **Study.** The more you know about your subject, the more confident you will feel. In fact, the lack of self-confidence almost always stems from a lack of information. We've all had that sick feeling that we don't fully understand what we are talking about.
5. **Act the part.** The following tips will help you begin to present yourself in a positive way.
 - Find a role model. Look for someone who is already successful in your field. Observe him or her and identify for yourself what behaviors convey self-confidence.
 - Look and act powerful. Watch people who create a powerful impression. It could be a TV anchor, a character in a movie, or a coworker. Imagine yourself behaving in a similar way. For an example, watch the movie *Top Hat*. Fred Astaire exudes confidence.
 - Be aware of nonverbal behavior that detracts from presenting yourself with confidence. Ask for feedback from a trusted friend or watch yourself on videotape.
6. **Rehearse for success.** One of the most important ways to boost your self-confidence is by rehearsing important conversations and presentations. You can

never be too prepared. These ideas will help you practice so that you really understand your subject:

- Manage your anxiety. Feeling anxious is normal when you are in a challenging situation. The key is learning to manage anxiety so it doesn't paralyze you or diminish your effectiveness.
 - Get organized. When your materials are prepared and well-organized, you will feel better about your ability to access them. Having information scattered in too many places makes you feel out of control and undermines your self-confidence.
7. Persist. Self-confidence is the result of a lot of hard work. The process takes time. It has been said that success is 99% persistence and 1% talent.
 8. Enjoy your success. When you reach your goal, don't forget to give yourself credit for working hard. Be proud of what you've accomplished. Here are some ways you can do this:
 - Look in the mirror and say to yourself, "Good work. I'm proud of you."
 - Think of a way to reward yourself.
 - Tell others about your success.
 - Write yourself a letter or explore your accomplishment in your journal.
 - Draw a picture expressing your achievement.

Answers to Quiz #1

Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, and 10 are generally signs of self-confidence. The others could be seen as self-sabotaging behaviors.

Answers to Quiz #2

Items 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 communicate low self-confidence. (Of course, there are no 100% right answers, since many of the statements depend on context, tone of voice, cultural interpretation, and other factors.)