

Building Your Self-Confidence

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This e-book is published by Mind Tools Limited, of
2nd Floor, 145-157 St John St, London, EC1V 4PY.

Version 2.1

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Building Your Self-Confidence

Introduced by Mind Tools CEO, James Manktelow



If you've ever watched a successful athlete prepare for his or her event, you'll have seen true confidence in action. They are determined, and believe without a doubt that they will make the shot, run their fastest, jump their highest, achieve victory – they will be their best.

They know they will succeed. They also know that if they don't make it this time, they will learn from it and get better. That's confidence.

But confidence not only helps you succeed, it has its own magnetism. It attracts success to the person who has it. In other words, the more confidence you have, the better you perform. And, of course, the better you perform, the more successes you enjoy and that builds your confidence even further.

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This is the kind of ride everyone should be able to get on. When you're confident, you're attractive and alluring. Other people want to be around you. It's a necessary quality for leadership. Because people gravitate to those with self-confidence, when you have it, your ability to influence and inspire soars.

Clearly, any characteristic with these benefits is worth developing. And this is the good news: Even if you weren't born with confidence oozing from your pores, or you've allowed life to plant wily insecurities within yourself, you can build and strengthen your confidence.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Manktelow". The signature is fluid and personal, with varying line thicknesses and some decorative loops.

James Manktelow, CEO,
MindTools.com

Assessing Your Self-Efficacy

When it comes to building your self-confidence, A good place to start is to look at how effective you believe you are in handling and performing specific tasks. This is termed 'self-efficacy,' and it plays an important part in determining your general levels of self-confidence.

Albert Bandura is one of the leading researchers into self-efficacy. His self-efficacy theory explains the relationship between the belief in one's abilities and how well a person actually performs a task or a range of actions. Bandura says that 'self-efficacy' and 'confidence' are not quite the same thing. Confidence is a general, not a specific, strength of belief. On the other hand, self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to achieve something specific.

If people have high self-efficacy in an area, then they think, feel, and behave in a way that contributes to and reinforces their success, and improves their personal satisfaction. They're more likely to view obstacles as challenges to overcome, so they aren't afraid to face new things. They recover quickly from setbacks, because they view failure more as a result of

external circumstances than internal weaknesses. In general, believing in your abilities affects your motivation, your choices, your toughness, and your determination.

Therefore, self-confidence – by way of self-efficacy – often affects how well you perform, and how satisfied you are with the choices you make. This is why it's important to understand your current level of self-efficacy, particularly in the context of your belief in your ability to perform in a variety of situations. In so doing, you will be able to identify areas where you can improve, and make a plan to do so.

So, how strong is your sense of self-efficacy? Take our self-test below to find out!

Instructions:

Take this test online by visiting http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_84.htm or on paper by printing this page and checking your answers to the questions below in the column that most applies, and then adding up the numbers you've checked. If you take the test online, your results will be calculated for you automatically.

Statement	Not at all	Rarely	Some times	Often	Very Often
1 I tend to do what I think is expected of me, rather than what I believe to be "right."	5	4	3	2	1
2 I handle new situations with relative comfort and ease.	1	2	3	4	5
3 I feel positive and energized about life.	1	2	3	4	5
4 If something looks difficult, I avoid doing it.	5	4	3	2	1
5 I keep trying, even after others have given up.	1	2	3	4	5
6 If I work hard to solve a problem, I'll find the answer.	1	2	3	4	5
7 I achieve the goals I set for myself.	1	2	3	4	5

Statement		Not at all	Rarely	Some times	Often	Very Often
8	When I face difficulty, I feel hopeless and negative.	5	4	3	2	1
9	I relate to people who work very hard, and still don't accomplish their goals.	5	4	3	2	1
10	People give me positive feedback on my work and achievements.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I need to experience success early in a process, or I won't continue.	5	4	3	2	1
12	When I overcome an obstacle, I think about the lessons I've learned.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I believe that if I work hard, I'll achieve my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I have contact with people of similar skills and experience who I consider successful.	1	2	3	4	5
Total =						

Interpreting the Results

Score	Comment
14-32	You probably wish you had more self-confidence! Take a closer look at all the things you've achieved in your life. You may tend to focus more on what you don't have, and this takes time and attention away from recognizing and using your skills and talents. Complete the rest of this workbook and start building your self-confidence today.
33-51	You're doing an OK job of recognizing your skills, and believing in your abilities. But perhaps you're a little too hard on yourself, and this may stop you from getting the full benefit of your previous successes (see below). Work through the exercises to find out how to improve your self-confidence.
52-70	Excellent! You're doing a fabulous job of learning from every experience, and not allowing obstacles to affect the way you see yourself. But you need to nurture your self-confidence, so use the exercises below to ensure that your life remains full of validation and success.

Building Self-Confidence

You can learn to believe in yourself and be your own best cheerleader. And this workbook will show you how to start. You've got to drive the insecurities away and start focusing on what you do really well. Here, we've brought together four great exercises that will help you uncover the talents within you, and learn how to translate those into an abundant source of confidence that you can dip into whenever you need a boost. You'll practice:

- Reminding yourself of previous successes.
- Envisioning a successful future for yourself.
- Reframing past misses.
- Setting self-confidence building goals.

Celebrate You!

Self-confident people have one key ingredient others don't: They know they can do whatever they set out to achieve. They don't talk negatively to themselves, they don't berate their performance, and they don't compare themselves to others – they simply believe in their own talents.

They believe they are great just the way they are. They know they can be even better if they

try. And they do try, again and again. They don't give up because they celebrate everything they do – with gusto!

Wouldn't it feel awesome to know you had your own personal cheerleader who could provide a continuous stream of accolades and pick-me-ups that fueled your drive to the finish?

Just think about what you could accomplish, if you could just dislodge that monkey sitting on your shoulder, scoffing at your attempts at success! All it's doing is keeping you down!

Banish the Monkey

The best way to get rid of something you don't want is to replace it with something you do. In this case you have to replace your negative thinking and self talk with positive affirmations of your successes and worth.

Action: Using the table below, list successes you've had in your life. List a few in each category. The magnitude or duration of the success is not important. I want you to focus on the things that you've accomplished and been proud of at the time.

Area of Your Life	Describe Your Past Success
Education	

Area of Your Life	Describe Your Past Success
Career	
Family	
Hobby/Sports	
Citizenship	

Now, look over your list of successes and accomplishments. Take a moment to let the

breadth and depth of what you've achieved sink in.

Too often, we come to believe we have limited strengths. We focus our energies on a small section of life where we do have a bit of confidence and don't venture beyond. That's a dangerous place to be. When life demands you step outside your comfort zone, you panic and, if you're not careful, you make choices that damage your confidence later on.

Having completed the above exercise, you should have a better appreciation of all your talents and abilities. But, to kick that monkey out once and for all, you need to be able to quickly remind yourself of how great you are. Just like cheerleaders are there to get the crowd roused, you have to rouse your mind to believe in your personal greatness. You do this by using personal affirmations.

Personal Affirmations

A personal affirmation is a statement you create that affirms your worth. You tell this to yourself

I am a person who is

and who

and who

and who

and who

and who

and who

Repeat this statement to yourself at least three times a day until you truly believe everything you say.

Envision Your Success

Visions are important on so many levels. When you see yourself succeeding, you are fast-forwarding to achieving that success. You know that, with every success, your confidence builds, so visualizing your future is a means of

repeatedly, as way reinforcing the message and driving it in. Eventually your body will catch up to your brain, and affirmations will become a natural aspect of your self-talk.

To create an affirmation statement, keep in mind the following:

- Use "I" statements. "I am _____", rather than "It is _____"
- Use present tense. "I am smart", rather than "I will be smart".
- Use positive language. "I am smart", rather than "I am not dumb".

Action: Thinking about the talents and successes you just recalled, write an affirmation statement about yourself that will boost your confidence and help you feel great about yourself and your future success. Describe things like the qualities you exhibit, the actions you take, and the attitudes you possess.

building on successes you have yet achieved but know you will.

In many ways, your mind will interpret a vivid vision in the same way that it does a real experience. That's why personal affirmations work and when supported by crystal clear images of a successful you, confidence boosts enormously.

Action: Read this exercise first and then complete it. Close your eyes and imagine

success in a personal or professional endeavor that's important to you. Examine your five senses and describe to yourself what things taste, smell, sound, look, and feel like in your successful future. Who is there with you? What are you doing? How are people reacting to you? How do you feel emotionally?

When you have more time you might want to come back to this exercise and do what we call Treasure Mapping. This is where you use images cut from magazines and other sources to build your vision. To learn more about Treasure Mapping click here: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/new_CT_94.htm

When you have a strong image in your mind, create a graphic representation of your image in the box on page 10. If you're not related to Van Gogh, that's OK! The objective is to create a visually stimulating picture. You may choose to draw a scene, use shapes and colors to convey your image or even arrange single key words on the page. This is *your* vision, so capture it the way that suits you best.

My Vision

Reframe Past Misses

Now that you've built up your confidence using your achievements and proven talents, it's time to move on to the second aspect of high self-confidence – knowing you can rebound from attempts that fall short of their mark.

Having confidence is about being able to get through the tough times. Holding your head high and not becoming dissuaded from your goal is critically important to success. No one can "win" all the time. You've got to be resilient and be able to see setbacks as opportunities to

improve. As Benjamin Franklin said, "I didn't fail the test, I just found 100 ways to do it wrong."

A failed attempt is really a whisper telling you to try again. Your misses serve as guideposts for the rest of your journey. They are how you know which paths to avoid in the future and they are what cause you to back up and start heading in the right direction.

There is not much victory in a success that came too easy. Sure you can set really simple goals for yourself and achieve them. It's when you set the bar high and suffer a few bumps and bruises that success builds your confidence and affirms what you already know – that you can do ANYTHING with enough work, dedication, and conviction.

Embracing your failures as readily as your victories is a sign of deeply embedded self-confidence – the kind that won't be eroded in the face of setback and the kind that will inspire you and those around you to be the best you can be.

Action: Think of a recent setback or time where you did not achieve what you intended, or which damaged your self-confidence. Then ask what feelings or beliefs about your self and your abilities does this conjure up for you?

Briefly summarize the incident below. Follow that with a statement of what you need to reframe in order to turn this incident from negative to positive. For example, "I failed to get a report submitted on time. This causes me to believe/feel I am disorganized."

Incident Summary:

This causes me to believe/feel

Now, think of a more useful, positive or beneficial way to think about this incident and your role in it. Rather than believing you are disorganized, a better way to approach what happened is to tell yourself you need to develop a system for managing your workload.

Being disorganized is a character flaw that is hard to change. Developing a workload management system is a task that can be

worked on and accomplished quite readily. That's the reframe. Thinking of the incident in a way that empowers you to make changes and emerge stronger and more capable and confident than before.

Action: Write your reframed statement below and notice how you feel after you've written it. Make a note of your emotional reaction.

Incident Reframe:

Emotional Reaction:

Action: Reframe your behavior and beliefs in two other ways. Identify two other ways you could improve the situation and your reaction or response. By looking at the situation from a few

different angles you can see many opportunities for growth and development. These all lead to better understanding of how to build your confidence and achieve success.

Incident Summary 2:

Incident Reframe 2:

Incident Summary 3:

Incident Reframe 3:

If you're pushing yourself hard, you will fail sometimes. However, it's what you do with failure that counts. If you can learn from it, failure can get you that much closer to success, and that's how confidence is built.

Set Confidence-Building Goals

You're probably familiar with goal setting as a great way of organizing yourself for achievement. However, setting and achieving

goals (and taking the time to celebrate their achievement) is a powerful way of building self-confidence. After all, if you've worked hard to achieve these goals, you've earned the confidence that comes with success!

Think again about the multiplying power of goal achievement. You need to supplement all your hard work building your confidence, with satisfying the goals you set for yourself. The more goals you achieve, the more confident you are, the more confident you are, the greater the chance of achieving your goals, and so on, and so on, and so on.

Your goal setting should be two pronged. First, you want to set goals that will get you further on your success journey. The ones that you will use to achieve the vision of yourself you created in Step Two. These life goals are extremely important as they set you in the right direction and they allow you to achieve successes along your journey. For ideas on developing these goals you can see the Mind Tools article on goal setting located here:

<http://www.mindtools.com/page6.html>

The second set of goals is meant to complement your life goals and build your confidence specifically. These goals have a short-term focus and are intended to help you feel good about what you are doing on a daily basis. They provide a source of recognition that you need to persist and to keep believing in yourself.

Many times these goals will come out of the reframing exercise you just completed. That exercise looks at specific incidents that require improved skills. Creating goals to address these missed targets provides a steady supply of goals and accomplishments you can rely on to build your confidence and self-esteem.

Action: For the three reframed statements you developed for yourself, create specific, short-term, achievable goals that you can begin working on immediately.

Goal 1

Goal 2

Goal 3

Key Learning Points

Self-confidence is vitally important for your success. Without it you'll struggle to persist, and you won't get what you want. Some people seem to be born with an abundance of self-confidence, however, thankfully, this isn't a genetic predisposition – it's something that has developed in them, and can develop in you. There are many things you can do to improve your level of self-confidence, the first of which is start believing in yourself.

Then start your own fan club. As president of the club you get to decide what to focus on. Affirm your talents and wonderful attributes on a

regular basis and build a grand vision of your successful self. Even before you feel confident your mind will take over and help you act with the confidence you need.

Throughout this process recognize that you will make mistakes. These are opportunities, not failures. By reframing these experiences you create more opportunities to achieve goals, improve your skills, and step closer to your dream vision. Building self-confidence is like climbing a spiral staircase. Start climbing, keep going, and walk step-by-step to the top!

Further Reading

Mastery Experiences

As we discussed earlier, the more success you experience, the more success you're likely to enjoy in the future. But if success comes too easily, it probably won't contribute to your self-confidence. Mastery experiences are those achievements where you know that it was your hard work and effort that brought about success.

To enjoy these types of experiences, work on motivation, toughness, and determination.

Motivation and self-confidence are connected. When you have more of one, you'll probably have more of the other. You can generally increase your motivation by doing the following:

- Thinking positively.
http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_06.htm
- Developing effective goals.
http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_06.htm
- Creating a motivating environment.

To examine your motivation level, and learn specific ways to improve your self-motivation, take our quiz **How Self-Motivated Are You?** here:

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_57.htm

For a great general discussion about resiliency and determination, read **The Breaking Point** http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_93.htm by emotional intelligence expert Bruna Martinuzzi.

Another area to examine is your locus, or central point, of control. To develop self confidence as a result of past successes, you must believe that your effort led to your success. As such, you need to believe generally that you're responsible for your success – not some outside force, like luck or fate. Learn more about this in our article on locus of control:

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCDV_90.htm.

To begin to develop mastery experiences, do the following:

- Ask for assignments that will be challenging, but that you can succeed in.
- Assess your skills and abilities. A personal SWOT analysis is a useful tool. http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05_1.htm
- Improve your problem solving skills http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_TMC.htm and decision making http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_TED.htm skills. This will help create a general feeling of confidence in the choices you make.
- Commit to personal and professional development to stay current and informed.

Read Building Self-Confidence <http://www.mindtools.com/selfconf.html> for more tips on developing a strong belief in yourself.

Observe Others

An interesting part of Bandura's theory is the idea that seeing other people's success improves your belief in yourself. If you view yourself as similar to someone else, and you see his or her accomplishments, you're likely to apply that to yourself, and believe that you can achieve similar success.

The more alike you think you are, the greater the influence. So, if your boss has a similar education and work background, it can improve your confidence. If you see others working hard and succeeding, that can also motivate you and build your confidence.

The opposite may also be true. If you see people make great efforts and not achieve anything, that can hurt your confidence – especially if you think your talents and abilities are similar to theirs.

Try the following tips:

- Network, and surround yourself with accomplished, successful people. <http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/ProfessionalNetworking.htm>
- Seek a mentor who has a background similar to yours. http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCDV_93.htm
- Learn from those around you. Note what they do that's successful.

Manage Stress

When stress takes over your life, the results can be harmful. Being good at managing stress, however, can be a source of confidence: if you believe you can handle anything you might reasonably face, this can give you energy and a feeling of power. You can build this kind of positive emotion when you learn how to control the sources of stress in your life.

If you let stress control you, chances are you'll feel very negative. You may interpret the stress as failure, which can lead to more stress and negative thinking.

To be confident, you must be positive. Face stressful situations directly, and learn strategies for managing them.

To manage stress better, try these ideas:

- Be optimistic.
http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_72.htm
- Discover whether you're a positive or negative thinker by taking our quiz http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_89.htm. Then make the changes you need.
- Learn key stress management techniques http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_89.htm to understand your stress, and protect yourself against it.

Have you found this e-book useful?

If so, here are a few ideas for your next steps...

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2) [Subscribe](#) to our free weekly email newsletter, and get new career development tools delivered straight to your inbox. (Plus, you'll get a copy of our Personal Development Planner as a welcome gift.)

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James Manktelow, CEO, MindTools.com

