Constructing confidence: building belief in yourself and your abilities

We all know and envy those people who seem to ooze confidence. They look good, hold their head up high, and succeed at everything they set out to do. However, behind that confidence is probably some conscious effort. On the other hand, there are those who don't have a drop of self-doubt but for most of us, confidence is something we learn and build upon.

We could all use a little help to feel better about who we are and what we do—some, of course, more than others. But by making a few simple changes to your mindset and lifestyle, you can give your self-confidence a major boost. Be sure to:

Take stock. A lot of insecurities come from the perception that you *don't* have enough of something—whether it's money, good luck, or positive personality traits. You need to learn to step back, reflect, and appreciate what you *do* have. Regularly write down anything that makes you feel good about yourself, focusing on your unique skills, loving relationships, or achievements. You'll be amazed at how much you actually have going for you and can always refer back to your list when you need a pick-me-up.

Tune out the negative. Find ways to turn off or least minimize the negative self-talk that picks away at your confidence. If you catch yourself saying, "I'm out of shape and lazy," or, "I don't have the right skills for that job," flip it around and zone in on the solution. How can you change those negatives? What do you need to do to move forward in your position?

Set and achieve small goals. People often make the mistake of shooting for the moon and when they fail (inevitably), they get more discouraged and less confident. Instead, strive for something you know you can achieve and do it. When you reach that goal, stop to reward yourself and then keep setting new ones. Little by little your successes will start to pile up and before you know it, you'll be setting bigger goals and reaching them too.

Look the part. Regularly exercise, follow a healthy diet, take pride in your personal appearance, get plenty of sleep, and try to smile. If you don't look and feel your best, it changes the way you carry yourself and interact with others.

Remember that no one is perfect. Absolutely everyone—no matter how flawless they may seem—makes mistakes. The more you strive to be perfect, the more frustrated you'll be when you discover it's not possible. Realize that life is full of ups and downs and bumps in the road and try to not only forgive yourself for your errors, but to learn from them. Stop comparing yourself to everyone else and start judging you by your own standards. You'll literally feel the pressure release.

Do things for others. It's so easy to get wrapped up in your own little world, focus too much on yourself, and forget the needs of others. By sharing some of your time, company, and whatever talents you have with other people, you'll worry less about your own little "flaws."

Find things you enjoy. Whether it's playing guitar, yoga, knitting, or swimming, developing and exceling in your hobbies is a great way to boost your self-esteem. Doing something just for the pleasure and challenge will make you feel accomplished and capable.

Fake it. Although it sounds a bit silly, acting confident—even if you don't feel that way—might actually make you believe it. Wake up in the morning as a completely confident version of yourself and carry this feeling on throughout the day. Try this a few times and see how you feel. This mindset alone will never make you the self-assured person you want to be but—coupled with the above tactics—it can help you start to exude confidence you never knew you had.

It's entirely normal to feel down about your abilities, appearance, or accomplishments from time-to-time. But, the way you see yourself affects virtually every part of your life including your job, your relationships,

and your health. Don’t let insecurities limit what you can achieve. Slowly work on changing your perception of yourself. It will not only make you feel better, but will also increase other people’s confidence in you.