

# WHAT IS SELF-CONFIDENCE?

HOW TO BUILD SELF-CONFIDENCE

PRACTICING POSITIVE SELF-TALK

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HOW TO APPEAR MORE CONFIDENT TO OTHERS

FOUNDERS HOUSE OF HOPE

## WHAT IS SELF-CONFIDENCE?

Self-confidence is an attitude about your skills and abilities. It means you accept and trust yourself and have a sense of control in your life. You know your strengths and weakness well, and have a positive view of yourself. You set realistic expectations and goals, communicate assertively, and can handle criticism.

On the other hand, low self-confidence might make you feel full of self-doubt, be passive or submissive, or have difficulty trusting others. You may feel inferior, unloved, or be sensitive to criticism. Feeling confident in yourself might depend on the situation. For instance, you can feel very confident in some areas, such as academics, but lack confidence in others, like relationships.

Having high or low self-confidence is rarely related to your actual abilities, and mostly based on your perceptions. Perceptions are the way you think about yourself and these thoughts can be flawed.

Low self-confidence might stem from different experiences, such as growing up in an unsupportive and critical environment, being separated from your friends or family for the first time, judging yourself too harshly, or being afraid of failure. People with low self-confidence often have errors in their thinking.

### How To Increase Your Self-Confidence

- Recognize and emphasize your strengths. Reward and praise yourself for your efforts and progress.
- When you stumble on an obstacle, treat yourself with kindness and compassion. Don't dwell on failure.
- Set realistic and achievable goals. Do not expect perfection; it is impossible to be perfect in every aspect of life.
- Slow down when you are feeling intense emotions and think logically about the situation.
- Challenge making assumptions about yourself, people and situations.
- Recognize that past negative life experiences do not dictate your future.
- Express your feelings, beliefs and needs directly and respectfully
- Learn to say no to unreasonable requests.
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Self-confidence is defined as a feeling of trust in one's abilities, qualities, and judgment. Self-confidence is important to your health and [psychological well-being](#).<sup>1</sup> Having a healthy level of self-confidence can help you become successful in your personal and professional life.

### Benefits of Self-Confidence

Having self-confidence can bring many benefits—at home, at work, and within your relationships. Here's a look at a few of the positive effects self-confidence can have on your life.

- **Better performance:** Rather than waste time and energy worrying that you aren't good enough, you can devote your energy to your efforts.<sup>2</sup> So ultimately, you'll perform better when you feel confident.
- **Healthy relationships:** Having self-confidence not only impacts how you feel about yourself, but it helps you better understand and love others. It also gives you the strength to walk away if you're not getting what you deserve.
- **Openness to try new things:** When you believe in yourself, you're more willing to try new things. Whether you apply for a promotion or sign up for a cooking class, putting yourself out there is a lot easier when you have confidence in yourself and your abilities.

- **Resilience:** Believing in yourself can enhance your [resilience](#), or ability to bounce back from any challenges or adversities you face in life.

Fortunately, there are things you can do to boost your self-confidence. Whether you lack confidence in one specific area or you struggle to feel confident about anything, these strategies can help.

### Stop Comparing Yourself to Others

Whether you compare how you look to your friends on Facebook or you compare your salary to your friend's income, comparisons aren't healthy. In fact, a 2018 study published in *Personality and Individual Differences* found a direct link between envy and the way you feel about yourself.<sup>3</sup>

Researchers found that people who compared themselves to others experienced envy. And the more envy they experienced, the worse they felt about themselves.

If you're feeling envious of someone else's life, remind yourself of your own strengths and successes. Consider keeping an ongoing [gratitude journal](#) to help you focus on your own life and not the lives of others.

When you notice you are drawing comparisons, remind yourself that doing so isn't helpful. Everyone is running their own race and life isn't a competition.

[How to Stop Constantly Comparing Yourself With Others](#)

### Surround Yourself With Positive People

Pay attention to how your friends make you feel. Do your friends lift you up or bring you down? Are they constantly judging you or do they accept you for who you are?

The people you spend time with influence your thoughts and attitudes about yourself more than you think. If you feel bad about yourself after hanging out with a particular person, it may be [time to say goodbye](#).

Surround yourself with people who love you and want the best for you.

[How to Create Truly Supportive Friendships](#)

### Take Care of Your Body

It's hard to [feel good about yourself](#) if you're abusing your body. On the other hand, if you practice [self-care](#), you know you're doing something positive for your mind, body, and spirit, and you'll naturally feel more confident.

Here are a few self-care practices linked to higher levels of self-confidence:

- **Diet:** Eating well comes with many benefits, including higher levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. When you fuel your body with the right foods, you feel healthier, stronger, and more energized, which can result in feeling better about yourself.
- **Exercise:** Studies consistently show physical activity boosts confidence. A 2016 study published in *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment* found that regular physical activity improved participants' body image. And when their body image improved, they felt more confident.<sup>4</sup>
- **Meditation:** More than just a relaxation practice, meditation can help boost self-confidence in several ways. For one, it helps you to recognize and accept yourself. Meditation also teaches you to stop negative self-talk and disconnect from any mental chatter interfering with your self-confidence.
- **Sleep:** Skimping on sleep can take a toll on your emotions, whereas good, quality sleep has been linked with positive personality traits, including optimism and self-esteem.<sup>5</sup>

## Be Kind To Yourself

[Self-compassion](#) involves treating yourself with kindness when you make a mistake, fail, or experience a setback. It's a way of relating to yourself that allows you to become more emotionally flexible and better able to navigate challenging emotions, and enhances your connection to self and others. Researchers have linked the ability to relate to ourselves in a compassionate way to self-confidence.

A 2009 study published in the *Journal of Personality* found that self-compassion contributes to more consistent confidence.<sup>6</sup> So the next time you're in a challenging situation, recognize that being imperfect or falling short at times is a part of living. Do your best to navigate these experiences with self-compassion.

### [Self-Compassion Exercises](#)

#### Practice Positive Self-Talk

Using self-talk that is optimistic can help you foster self-compassion, overcome self-doubt, and take on new challenges. On the other hand, [negative self-talk](#) can limit your abilities and lessen your confidence by convincing your subconscious that you "can't handle it" or that something is "too hard" and you "shouldn't even try."<sup>7</sup>

The next time you begin to think that you have no business speaking up in a meeting or that you are too out of shape to work out, remind yourself that your thoughts aren't always accurate.

Here are a few examples of how to challenge pessimistic self-talk and reframe your thoughts into a more positive way of thinking:

- Instead of telling yourself "I can't handle this," or "This is impossible," try reminding yourself that "You can do it," or "all I have to do is try."
- Instead of telling yourself "I can do nothing right" when you make a mistake, remind yourself "I can do better next time," or "at least I learned something."
- Instead of saying you "hate" public speaking, use a milder word like "don't like," and remind yourself that "everyone has strengths and weaknesses."

#### Face Your Fears

Stop putting things off (like asking someone on a date or applying for a promotion) until you feel more confident. The best way to build your confidence is by facing your fears head-on.

Practice facing some of your fears that stem from a lack of self-confidence.<sup>8</sup> If you're afraid you'll embarrass yourself or you think that you're going to mess up, try it anyway. Tell yourself it's just an experiment and see what happens.

You might learn that being a little anxious or making a few mistakes isn't as bad as you thought. And each time you move forward, you can gain more confidence in yourself, which in the end, will help prevent you from taking any risks that will result in any major negative consequences.<sup>9</sup>

When you face your fears and try difficult things, you'll gain confidence in yourself.

How to Build Self-Confidence  
Preparing Yourself for Success

Self-confident people seem at ease with themselves and their work. They invite trust and inspire confidence in others. These are all attractive characteristics to have.

But it's not always easy to be confident in yourself, particularly if you're naturally self-critical or if other people put you down. Thankfully, there are steps you can take to increase and maintain your self-confidence.

Click [here](#) to view a transcript of this video.

This article explains what self-confidence is and why it matters. We'll explore how to believe in yourself and how to project this belief to others, so that you can be more effective and happier in your life and work.

*Note:*

People who are self-confident perform better at work, so it's important to nurture your team members' self-confidence, too. Our article, [How to Build Confidence in Others](#), discusses how you can do this for co-workers or even your boss.

## What Is Self-Confidence – and Why Is It Important?

Self-confidence means trusting in your own judgment, capacities and abilities. [1] It's about valuing yourself and feeling worthy, regardless of any imperfections or what others may believe about you.

**Self-efficacy** and **self-esteem** are often used interchangeably with self-confidence. But they are subtly different. We gain a sense of self-efficacy when we see ourselves mastering skills and achieving goals. This encourages us to believe that, if we learn and work hard in a particular area, we'll succeed. [2] It's this type of confidence that leads people to accept difficult challenges and keep going in the face of setbacks.

**Self-esteem** is a more general sense that we can cope with what's going on in our lives, and that we have a right to be happy.

Also, self-esteem comes, in part, from the feeling that the people around us approve of us. We may or may not be able to control this, and if we experience a lot of criticism or rejection from others, our self-esteem can easily suffer unless we support it in other ways.

## Confidence and Behavior

Take a look at the table below, which compares confident behavior with behavior that's associated with low self-confidence. Which thoughts or actions do you recognize in yourself?

Confident Behavior	Behavior Associated With Low Self-Confidence
Doing what you believe to be right, even if others mock or criticize you for it.	Governing your behavior based on what other people think.
Being willing to take risks and to go the extra mile to achieve better things.	Staying in your comfort zone, fearing failure, and avoiding risk.

Confident Behavior	Behavior Associated With Low Self-Confidence
Admitting your mistakes and learning from them.	Working hard to cover up mistakes and hoping that you can fix the problem before anyone notices.
Waiting for others to congratulate you on your accomplishments.	Extolling your own virtues as often as possible to as many people as possible.
Accepting compliments graciously. "Thanks, I really worked hard on that prospectus. I'm pleased you recognize my efforts."	Dismissing compliments offhandedly. "Oh, that prospectus was nothing, really. Anyone could have done it."

As these examples show, low self-confidence can be self-destructive, and may manifest itself as negativity.

Self-confident people are generally more positive – they value themselves and trust their judgment. But they also acknowledge their failures and mistakes, and learn from them.

*Tip:*

Take our [short quiz](#) to find out how self-confident you are right now. You'll also discover ways to improve your confidence levels by building self-efficacy.

### Why Self-Confidence Matters

Self-confidence is vital in almost every aspect of our lives, yet many people struggle to find it. Sadly, this can become a vicious cycle: people who lack self-confidence are less likely to achieve the success that could give them more confidence.

For example, you may not be inclined to back a project that's pitched by someone who's visibly nervous, fumbling, or constantly apologizing. On the other hand, you're persuaded by someone who speaks clearly, holds their head high, and answers questions with assurance.

Confident people inspire confidence in others: their audience, their co-workers, their bosses, their customers, and their friends. And gaining the confidence of others is one of the key ways to succeed. In the following sections, we'll see how you can do this.

**How to Appear More Confident to Others** Picture anyone you know that you think of as highly confident – what characteristics do they have that make you think this? It's most likely one or more of these things:

- the way they speak (tone, how they project their voice, words), their energy and enthusiasm, how expert or knowledgeable they are about something.

You can show self-confidence in your behavior, your body language, and in what you say and how you say it. Projecting a positive image to others can help you to improve your self-confidence. It's not simply a matter of "faking it" – if you project with confidence, others are more likely to respond well, and this positive feedback will help you to believe in yourself.

