BUILDING SELF CONFIDENCE

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Self Confidence

A feeling of trust in one’s abilities, qualities, and judgment

- Too little can lead to not taking on enough risk, a lack of success, decreased self confidence
- Too much can lead to taking on too much risk, frequent failure to deliver, letting down colleagues/collaborators
Self Confidence

Defn: A feeling of trust in one’s abilities, qualities, and judgment

- **Two primary contributors**
  - Self efficacy
    - Belief in your capacity to produce an achievement
    - To exert control over your motivation, behavior, and social env
  - Self esteem
    - Your overall evaluation of yourself and **your right to be happy**
How self confident are you?

**High Self Confidence**
- Do what you believe to be right, even if criticized for it
- Willing to take risks
- Admit your mistakes and learn from them
- Extol your virtues often
- Accept compliments graciously: “Thanks, I really worked hard on that paper.”

**Low Self Confidence**
- Govern your behavior based on what others think
- Stay in your comfort zone
- Work hard to cover up your mistakes
- Wait for others to congratulate you
- Dismiss compliments: “Oh that paper was nothing really, anyone could have done it.”
Take The Quiz

• How self confident are you?

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_84.htm
Bandura’s Theory of Self-Efficacy

- **Four sources** (How you see your abilities)
  - **Mastery experiences** – things in the past that you have succeeded at —- continuing evidence!
  - ...

Bandura’s Theory of Self-Efficacy

• Four sources (How you see your abilities)
  – Mastery experiences – things in the past that you have succeeded at
    • Success begets success
      1) Believe that your hard work/effort brought about the success
         – If it comes too easy however, it contributes nothing
         – Take some risk
      2) Believe that you are responsible for it
         – Versus your success being due to luck or fate
Bandura’s Theory of Self-Efficacy

- **Four sources** (How you see your abilities)
  - **Mastery experiences** – things in the past that you have succeeded at ---- *continuing evidence!*
  - **Vicarious experiences** – seeing people similar to you succeed
  - **Social persuasion** – hearing from others that you are capable
  - **Emotional status** – staying positive, managing your stress
Grad Student Confidence Over Time

- Admitted to grad school
- First exam in a grad course
- First PhD candidacy exam attempt
- Searching for a thesis topic
- Pass PhD candidacy
- Pass thesis proposal
- First paper rejection
- First paper acceptance
- Passing final defense
“Every CS PhD student I have seen, including myself, had at least one period during which they are convinced that their dissertation topic is utterly worthless.”

Gerald Estrin, Professor Emeritus, Computer Science, UCLA
The good news is that self confidence can be learned and developed.

It’s something you must work on.
10 TIPS FOR BUILDING SELF CONFIDENCE
#1: Admit The Problem

- **Take stock of where you are**, think about where you want to go, and recommit yourself to getting there.
- **Remember that no one is perfect.** Even the *most* confident people have insecurities and fail often.
- **Accept that life is full of bumps** in the road and have faith that things will be better tomorrow.
#2: Find Support

- Find someone **safe** you can talk frankly to
  - People you trust, who won’t judge you in future based on your current state of self confidence
- **Role-play for upcoming situations**
- **Surround yourself with nurturing friends.**
  - Watch out for those who criticize others to compensate for their own confidence issues – *Micro-aggressions* from Session I!
    - Notice and **stop** yourself when/if you do it to others!
- **Be there to support others when they need it**
  - Let them know that you think they are capable! *Micro-affirmations*!
#3: Establish Reachable Goals

• Make a list of things that will get you moving towards your PhD goals

• Identify the first *small* step needed to accomplish each item on the list and have a plan for *making* that first step
  – For that rejected paper, let the reviews “age” for awhile
  – Then, reread them. Ask yourself what was good about the paper and what needs improved.
  – Develop a plan for revisions and resubmission
#4: Recognize Your Successes

- Do not ever, ever put yourself down
- Try to avoid obsessing about your failures
- Make a list of your recent successes, then read the list (out loud if necessary) back to yourself
  - Think about your strengths and what you’ve achieved so far
  - Give yourself permission to take pride in those achievements
#5: Take A Break

- Take some time off to refresh, reflect, and enjoy
  - Find time to exercise regularly – go for a run, bike, hike, swim, …
  - Shut off all devices for a time
  - Have a nice meal and/or cook with friends/loved ones
  - Treat yourself to something nice
  - Help someone else
#6: Beware Of The “Triple Low”

- **Your experimental results don’t support** your great hypothesis; your great paper was just rejected; …
- **You just saw that person** you have such a crush on with another date; you and your partner had a huge fight this morning; …
- **It’s the first day of your period** and that pimple just erupted again; those 5 pounds are back; …
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- Don’t
  - Make big decisions, do something risky, decide to quit, react
  - At least, give yourself 48 hours

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#7: Exhibit Self Confidence

- **Speak slowly and clearly and loud enough**
  - A person who thinks they aren’t worth listening to will often speak quickly and/or softly

- **Stand tall and proud**
  - Don’t slouch, don’t walk around with your head held low
  - Shake hands with strength and energy
  - Look your conversation partner in the eye

- **Accept greetings and complements gracefully**
  - When asked how you are doing, say with enthusiasm “Just great.” Don’t roll your eyes, groan, and say “I’m just swamped”.

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#8: Be Extra Prepared

- Go the extra mile
  - Study like crazy for that exam
  - Spend more time in the lab running those additional experiments
  - Prepare a few slides for the next group meeting
  - Write, rewrite, rewrite that paper
  - Practice that talk again and again – in front of friends and not-so-friends

- Just beware of perfectionism
  - (or you will never finish)
#9: Take A Risk A Day

- **Challenge yourself everyday**
  - Don’t be afraid to push yourself, a little bit of pressure is good for you
  - Remember: If it comes too easy, it will not contribute to your self confidence

- **Make it a habit**
#10: Stick To Your Principles

- Know your principles
  - The Golden Rule
  - Your passion
  - Your lines in the sand (integrity, honesty, work ethic)

- Then actually *live* them

- If you don’t have something you believe in, you don’t have anything. If you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything. - *Unknown*
Beware of the Imposter Syndrome

• **Regardless** of success achieved or proof of competence, you are sometimes convinced that you do not deserve it
  – Proof is dismissed as luck, timing, or a result of deceiving others into thinking you are more intelligent/competent than you are
  – It is particularly common among successful women and typically associated with academics. It is also widely found among graduate students and first generation college students.
No one will believe in you until you believe in yourself.

“Somehow I can’t believe that there are any heights that can’t be scaled by a [person] who knows the secret of making dreams come true. This special secret, it seems to me, can be summarized in the four C’s. They are **curiosity**, **confidence**, courage, and constancy, and the greatest of all is **confidence**. When you believe in a thing, **believe in it all the way**, implicitly and without question.”

- Walt Disney
Instead… Believe In Yourself

No one will believe in you until you believe in yourself

“I will not be someone other than who I am. I will fight to make my stand. Cause what is livin’ if I can’t live free? What is freedom, if I can’t be me?”

Bonnie Raitt, I Will Not Be Broken
Instead… Believe In Yourself

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And, smile often 😊
Credits

• CRA-Women (especially Julia Hirschberg, Carole-Jean Wu, Esin Saka, Maria Klawe, Janie Irwin, Mary Lou Soffa) presenters at previous Grad Cohorts

• Useful web sites
  – wikiHow: How to Build Self Confidence
    http://www.wikihow.com/Build-Self-Confidence
  – MindTools: Building Self-Confidence
    http://www.mindtools.com/selfconf.html
  – 25 Killer Actions to Boost Your Self-Confidence