Building Self Confidence

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Self-Confidence – Definition

- **Oxford Dictionary**: A feeling of trust in one’s abilities, qualities, and judgment.

- **Merriam-Webster**: confidence in oneself and in one's powers and abilities
How self confident are you?

**High**
- Do what you believe to be right even if criticized for it
- Be willing to take risks
- Admit your mistakes and learn from them
- Accept compliments graciously
- Advocate for yourself

**Low**
- Govern your behavior based on what others think
- Stay in your comfort zone
- Work hard to cover up your “mistakes”
- Dismiss compliments nervously
- Wait for others to congratulate you
Want to be self-confident?

• No one is born with confidence
  – Culture, gender, environment, social enforcements, peers …
• The good news is that self confidence can be learned – and you can continually improve this skill

• How?
  – 10 TIPS FOR BUILDING SELF CONFIDENCE
But what am I good at?
Tip 1: **STOP comparing yourself to others**

- Be conscious of unconsciously comparing yourself with others.
- “They have their story, I have mine …”
- You cannot control for an infinite number of variables to ‘truly’ compare
- Power, success and influence are not pies!
Tip 2: “Hard work betrays none”

- Go the extra mile to be prepared
  - Study your butt off 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

THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR HARD WORK.

-THOMAS EDISON
Tip 3: Embrace Failure

- The power of “Mindset”. Are your traits carved in stone? Or could they be cultivated with effort?
- Failure is information!
- The moment of failure sucks, but is it a direct measure of your competence and worth?
- Shift our concern from “being judged” to “improving”
Tip 4: Establish a Support System

**Please DONT**
- Assume you can get through it alone
- Be afraid to talk about issues
- Assume everyone thinks the same thing
- Complain

  Be sure to be there to support others when they need it

**Please DO**
- Find someone **safe** to talk to
- Aim for “comfortable spots” first
- Get advice from multiple people
- Ask for clarification and advice with “I’m confused by …”
Tip 5: Beware of Imposter Syndrome

Know how it starts

- Dunning Kruger effect
- The generalized other
- Internalized critique

Recognize and celebrate your successes

- Admit your successes to yourself and others
- Gracefully accept congratulations
- Celebrate your successes
- Make a list of your achievements, keep a log! Read it often (out loud if necessary)
Tip 5: Beware of Imposter Syndrome

“Imperfect men have been empowered and permitted to run the world since the beginning of time. It’s time for imperfect women to grant themselves permission to join them.”

~ Abigail Wambach
EXERCISE CONFIDENCE ACTIVITY

- Hear from yourself that you are capable

- Let’s spend 2 minutes thinking quietly about your journey and select three things you are proud of

- Then, put it in sentences starting with “I am proud of myself because …”
Tip 6: Set Reasonable Goals

- Make a list of activities that will get you moving towards your goals
- Identify the first step needed to accomplish each item and have a plan for *taking* that first step

**Use Divide and Conquer**

- Set dates but be flexible – the date might change for better or worse
- Maintain a research notebook to mark your progress

*Move items from your TO DO LIST => DONE LIST*

- Expect to revise and improve your plan
Tip 7: Take a Break

A balanced life boosts your creativity and productivity

• Improve your physical well-being: exercise regularly
• Improve your emotional well-being: enjoy some quality time with family and friends
• Reward yourself

Exercises
• Think of three non-academic activities that you enjoy
• Think of at least three different ways to reward yourself
Tip 8: Fake it Until you Make it

Speak slowly and clearly

A person who thinks they aren’t worth listening to will often speak quickly and/or softly

Stand tall

Don’t slouch - walk with your head held high

Accept greetings and complements gracefully

When asked how you are doing, say with enthusiasm “Just great.” Save your "I'm swamped!” responses for confidants, and ask for help when you need it.

Be gracious and interact with others

Arrogance and aloofness are often used to shield lack of confidence
Tip 9: Be aware of the “triple low”

**Research Disappointments**
- Your experimental results don’t support that hypothesis you were so hyped about;
- Your paper or proposal was just rejected

**Interpersonal Disappointments**
- You saw the person you have a crush on with someone else
- You and your partner had a recent argument

**Personal setbacks**
- It’s the first day of your cycle and you had an acne breakout before your oral presentation
- Those 5 pounds you lost are back with a vengeance

Don’t lose confidence!! Move on!
Grad School Confidence Rollercoaster

Admitted to grad school
First exam in a grad course
First PhD candidacy exam attempt
Searching for a thesis topic
Pass thesis proposal
First paper rejection
First paper acceptance
Pass final defense
Pass PhD candidacy
Pass thesis proposal
First paper acceptance
Pass final defense
Pass PhD candidacy
Pass thesis proposal
First paper acceptance
Pass final defense
Tip 10: Stick to Your Principles

• Stand up for what you believe
  – don’t assume that is the way it has to be

• Decide what/when it is really important
  – pick your battles to fight
  – be prepared
  – enlist help from others

• Sometimes you don’t win the battle
  but over time you gain respect and win
  the war

• Sometimes it is better to speak up and
  lose than to say nothing
Avoid the LOSE-LOSE Conundrum

• “Of course you didn’t do well, this is something that women do not excel at!”

OR

• “Of course, you were selected, they had to select some women.”

Remember: Numerous studies have shown that women have to over-perform in order to receive “equal” recognition
In closing ... Believe in yourself

No one will believe in you until you believe in yourself.

“I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.” - Michael Jordan

Think about what is important to you and where you want to go ... and then go for it!
More Information

Various 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
Let’s keep the conversation going!

Twitter

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