Building Self-Confidence

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Christine Edwards: Some story highlights

BSEE

MS ECE

MS ABM

PhD
2021!
Pamela Gibbs

Wife, mom of 2 humans & a dog.
B.Sc (2), MBA, D.Sc.
Lover of travel & all things Beyoncé.
My career? I’m paid to be nosey.

“My life is dope. I do dope shhhhh.”
- Kanye West
Yuqing Melanie WU

Education
• PhD. University of Michigan
• BS. MS. Peking University, China

Career
• Pomona College 2015 – Department chair 2017-2020
• Indiana University, 2004-2015

Research
• Database, data representation and management, query language, optimization, ...

Outreach
• ACM-W council
• CRA-WP board

Hobbies
• Traveling, cooking, gardening, ......
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
- Willing to take risks
- Admit your mistakes and learn from them
- Extol your virtues often
- Accept compliments graciously

**Low**
- Govern your behavior based on what others think
- Stay in your comfort zone
- Work hard to cover up your “mistake”
- Wait for others to congratulate you
- Dismiss compliments
Balancing self-confidence

**Under-confident**

- Risk averse
- Fear of failure
- Comfort zones become prison walls
- Stunt growth
- ...

**Over-confident**

- Too risky
- Mistake confidence with competence and fail badly
Confidence varies

- 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
- Pass final defense
- Pass PhD candidacy
- Searching for a thesis topic
- First paper rejection
- First paper acceptance
- Pass final defense
Want to be self-confident?

• Not born with confidence
  – Culture, gender, environment, peers

• The Good News is that self confidence can be learned – and can continually improve

• How?
  – 10 TIPS FOR BUILDING SELF CONFIDENCE
Tip 1: Admit the Problem

Admit that

- No one is perfect – even the most confident-looking people have insecurity.
- Life is full of bumps – we will run into some sooner or later.

Evaluate

- Where are you?
- Where do you want to go?
- What are the major hurdles?
Tip 2: Identify the Source

**Comparison**
- How do you place yourself among your peers on
  - knowledge
  - Intelligence
  - Hard working
  - Luck
  - Personality
  - ……

**Impact**
- How long does a “success” or “failure” impact your feeling about yourself?
  - half an hour
  - a day
  - a month
  - six months
  - forever
Tip 2: Identify the Source

**Decision-Making**

- How do you make decisions?
  - based on facts and analysis
  - by estimating the impact of the decision on your future
  - depends on how others may think about your decision
  - depends on whether __________ approves of your decision
  - ...

(CRA-W Logo)
Tip 3: Establish a Support System

• Find someone safe you can talk frankly to. Make sure they are people you trust and who won’t judge you in the future based on your current state of self-confidence.

• Surround yourself with nurturing friends. Watch out for those who lower the confidence of others to compensate for their own confidence issues.

• Be sure to be there to support others when they need it.
Tip 4: Be Extra Prepared

• 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
• Just beware of perfectionism
  – (or you will never finish)
Tip 5: 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 making that first step
- Set dates but be flexible – the date might change for better or worse
- Maintain a research notebook to mark your progress each day
- Develop a plan for revisions and resubmission
Tip 6: Recognize and celebrate your successes

**Recognize and be recognized**
- Admit your successes to yourself and others
- Gracefully accept congratulations
- Celebrate your successes

**Exercises**
- Make a list of your recent successes -- do not leave it blank
- Read the list (out loud if necessarily) to yourself
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 three different ways to reward yourself
Tip 8: Mind-Body Connections Influence Confidence Level

• “Fake it till you make it” – not exactly

But, self-talk & outward expressions impact how you & others perceive you

• Speak slowly/clearly – your voice matters!
• Stand tall
• Smile

• Deep breathing; squash ANTs

• Don’t fake what you don’t know; confidently ask questions

As a woman thinks in her heart, so is she.

Proverbs 23:7
Tip 9: Be True to Yourself & Others

• Live your values & story – not someone else’s.
• Commit to becoming the best version of you.
• Try new things to discover self & growth areas
• https://blog.learnlife.com/what-is-your-ikigai
• Guard against lapses in judgement.
• Live in peace as much as possible, but absence of conflict doesn't mean peace – choose battles wisely.
• Always be humble & kind – but do it w/ confidence!

“Life is a matter of choices, and every choice you make makes you.”
– John C. Maxwell
Tip 10: Navigate Challenges as Opportunities

• Challenges can be springboard for genuine growth
• Adopt ‘win or learn’ mindset
• Tackling today yields confidence for tomorrow
• Get your hands dirty; much to learn from seeds!

Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet.
–Helen Keller

Source: CAE
Bonus Tip: Experience brings wisdom & resilience

• But, beware of the ‘Imposter Syndrome’!

• All imperfect, works in progress. Embrace diversity.

• Transform broken pieces into source of strength & purpose.

• This too shall pass. Expect change & adapt accordingly.
Parting words...
"Be yourself; everyone else is already taken"
- Oscar Wilde

"the best version of"

"with CONFIDENCE"
Expand!

You are not small. Your foremothers did not do what they did for you to occupy small.

-Malebo Sephodi
Thank you!

Questions? Comments?
Additional Tools and Resources

• How self confident are you? http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_84.htm

• MindTools: Building Self-Confidence http://www.mindtools.com/selfconf.html


• wikiHow: How to Build Self Confidence http://www.wikihow.com/Build-Self-Confidence