

Get and Show Off Your Confidence

What is confidence? It seems that for some people their level of self-doubt is almost non-existent, especially in comparison to the rest of us on planet Earth. Where does it come from? Is it genetic, like a chiseled jaw line? Or, something more random than that, a trait that some people have but others don't? Just the luck of the draw? What if confidence isn't inherited or the whim of fate? Can it be fostered and grown? Is there something you can do to create or build and grow confidence? Is there a formula?

I have a friend who, for as long as I have known her, just exudes a level of boldness and inner self-worth that leaves me in utter awe. She is a marvel. Nothing seems to shake her, make her question herself or waiver—even when being challenged. After several years of friendship, and a few glasses of wine, I broke down and asked her, “What is your secret? How are you so confident and sassy? Do you not truly care about what others think about you?”

Her answer was simple, clear, concise and confident (naturally).

“Of course, I care what others think about me, who doesn't? But, I care more about feeling good than pleasing others.”

Great perspective, right? Isn't this the point of view we all want? Most of us “know” that this way of seeing the world is powerful and freeing, and we want it for ourselves, but why is it that when it comes time to live it, everything changes? It seems like at that moment when we want to choose ourselves and be bold, we cave and choose to please others, look good, or just hide out. I see choosing yourself over others as a move of confidence.

Then, I think, there are two questions: Can we grow confidence and self-esteem? And, if we can, how?

Confidence = the familiarity of repetition.

Confidence = the power of habit.

Confidence = feeling and living your best self.

Repetition is one way to build confidence. Being persistent, practicing consistently, and not accepting “no” are key to the confidence building strategy that Dr. Ivan Joseph shares in his TED Talk, “The Skills of Self Confidence.” Just like anything else we are good at, being confident takes practice. Nothing comes overnight. It takes dedication, discipline, and consistency to build a new skill or behavior. Think about learning a new language—whether that be French or HTML—you can’t really cram for it. It’s the slow and steady, daily attention to learning new vocabulary and grammar, and then practicing using it, that wins in the end.

“We can use decision-making to choose the habits we want to form, use willpower to get the habit started, then – and this is the best part – we can allow the extraordinary power of habit to take over. At that point, we’re free from the need to decide and the need to use willpower.” -Gretchen Rubin

If you’re not already familiar with Gretchen Rubin she is a the thought leader on happiness and habit. Rubin has studied how habits are formed and also how they are maintained. It’s not just about just desire, although it starts with there, it’s actually about what makes it stick.

The New Year is a time when many of us think about and make resolutions for new ways of being or new habits. I started to think about what I want most in this new year and it’s not all the material things or the possessions or more shoulds. I want to do things that are fun and exciting, things that make me feel amazing. Having goals and making New Year’s resolutions

are not about setting unrealistic and rigid expectations for the future that you may never meet, failures that make you feel like shit. They are about bringing a new way of being or a new lifestyle into your life, moment by moment, changes that increase your joy, your aliveness, your presence.

We often think too radical—that change happens all at once. Sure, we may have an “aha” moment that immediately opens up a new perspective, but moving it from an insight into a new way of being, forming a new habit or a new neural pathway, is a slow and consistent process. Confidence isn’t talent, genetics or a special secret knowing, it’s simply the result of starting and building a habit, skill or knowledge.

“Women applied for a promotion only when they met 100 percent of the qualifications. Men applied when they met 50 percent. Evidence shows that women are less self-assured than men—and that to succeed, confidence matters as much as competence.”

Katty Kay and Claire Shipman talk about women and confidence in their book *The Confidence Gap*. They discuss how women have more self-doubt whereas men’s level of inner self-talk seems to differ.

Confidence is where your deepest desires and strengths meet. Confidence is really about feeling amazing and not being so hard on yourself—having compassion for your weaknesses while you focus on what you are great at.

What if you gave up fear, doubt, and those negative internal thoughts for belief, power, fun, and whimsy? What if you were able to be in your dream—to own it, revel in it, and build it—not allowing what others think to affect how you live your life or make your decisions? What if you allowed yourself to feel good and enjoy? How much goodness can you stand?

What could 2015 be like for you if you resolve to be your most risky and awesome self? I think true confidence is about faith. Faith and belief in ourselves enough to trust our

intuition and creativity and to live a life with awe and wonder.