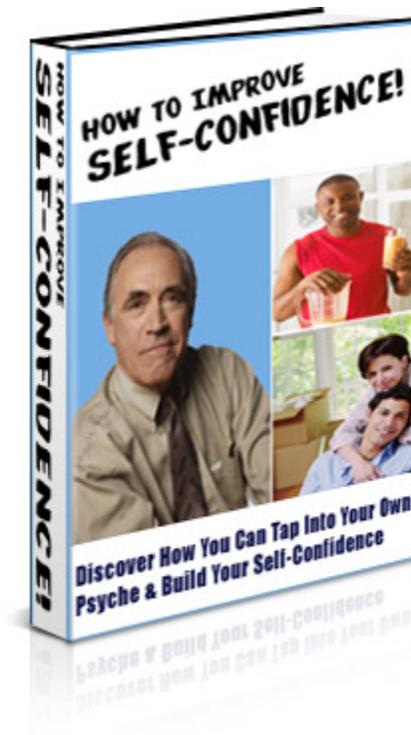


How To Improve Self-Confidence!



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CHAPTER 1: What is self-confidence?

How to gain self confidence

Today is one of those days when your group has to make a presentation to a client. This is an important occasion because it is an opportunity to get your boss' attention. It could mean a raise or a promotion if you could just muster the courage to stand there in front of these people and present your proposal. The problem is, your shyness gets the better of you, and you are relegated to the background.

You sat there mesmerized, as your colleague Elena made a winning presentation of your proposal. She stood there, dressed in a simple gray suit that spelled confidence! "Why can't I gather enough courage to present my work to these people when I know this project like the back of my hand," you ask yourself.

Self confidence. This is what you lack, and this is what your colleague Elena has. But what is self confidence? Is it the ability to speak in a loud voice so you can get people's attention? Is it about power dressing?

Self confidence is an attitude that is characterized by a positive belief that one can take control of one's life and of one's plans.

People who are self confident are those who acknowledge their capacity to do something and then proceed to do these things. They do not rely on the approval of other people in order to affirm their existence. It is enough that they know they have the capacity and the potential to do something, and the guts to do it no matter what others may say. People who are self confident take advantage of the opportunities that comes their way.

Factors in gaining self confidence

While the process of attaining self confidence starts from childhood, an adult can still gain self confidence through his determination and through the support of his family and friends.

Parental support and acceptance

People begin to develop confidence while growing up. The role of parents in instilling self confidence in their children is very important. Parents who are always critical of their children without acknowledging the latter's strengths unknowingly dampen the development of their self confidence.

On the other hand, parents who are always willing to give support while encouraging their children to take a step forward will most likely rear self confident children. Parents who make their children feel loved and accepted despite their imperfections will most likely encourage self confidence.

Lack of self confidence is not proportional to a person's abilities. In fact, there are people who are extremely talented and able but they lack self confidence to show these abilities.

If you are wanting in self confidence, then you must continuously do things that will help you gain confidence.

Identify your strengths and weaknesses and capitalize on that. Make full use of your strength and gather positive points. This will help you gain self confidence. Do not expect everything to be perfect because you are bound to do something wrong along the way. Nobody is perfect and everyone is culpable of making mistakes.

Acknowledge your abilities and talent and take stock of them. Do not underestimate yourself. Try to recognize every little thing you have done which has become successful. Try to learn a new skill, and try to learn new things as this will make you a better person.

Look for things that make you feel good about yourself. It can be photos of past achievements like when you won a race or won a debate; it can be a poem you wrote which was published in a book. Concentrate on things that you have

achieved and take it from there. This will give you more confidence to do other things in life.

Developing self confidence is not easy especially if you do not think highly of yourself. If you want to be self confident, avoid things that will discourage you from gaining confidence. Do not dwell on past mistakes or failures because it will make you feel insignificant. Being a defeatist will not give your confidence a boost.

Better yet, concentrate on the positive things that you have done and accomplished and make them your inspiration. In time, you will have more faith in yourself, and hopefully, more confidence.

In the upcoming chapter we will narrow our focus, look at the specifics and come up with definitive ideas and suggestions that you can put to work in your life to achieve increased confidence in all you do.

CHAPTER 2: What are the natural enemies of self confidence?

Fear: The Natural Enemy of Self Confidence

Self-Confidence is generally described as the ability of an individual to have faith and believe in his/her abilities. According to psychiatrists when one has self-confidence it normally results in having great self-esteem.

Self-esteem is defined as the "worth" that one can place on himself. It is his measurement of his own value as a person, in agreement to his behavior.

In addition, it is referred to as the respect and adoration in which one holds himself based on ones belief of what and who he is as a human being. This greatly affects one's feelings about himself, about his life, about his relationships, and eventually determines his actions or how he accomplishes things.

The progress and growth of self-confidence correctly starts with self examination. The mind should be thoroughly inspected so that detrimental inclinations are checked, weaknesses are eliminated, and a right pattern of thought and behavior are established firmly.

According to studies fear is man's enemy hindering self confidence. These studies stressed clearly that "fear thought" is an illness that can be detected and identified. It largely arises from corrupt mental pattern, wherein the mind is

allowed consistently to dwell on doubtful thoughts, inefficiency and failure. This power will become great, when freely allowed, affecting your life to a less or greater degree in virtually every undertaking.

Ignorance is the basic and prime cause of fear, that when one is not aware of his "true nature". A study showed that when one was convinced or has encountered his indestructible infinite "soul-nature", then one would never feel fear. However, there are those who cannot or do not accept this, thus they feel separate, vulnerable, susceptible and isolated.

Fear of one's self is demonstrated in several ways. You can experience shyness, diffidence, bashfulness, timidity and a need of "self-confidence".

Here are some factors that contribute to one's fear:

1. When we feel separated, fear increases. A fact is that one does not fear those he is familiar with (people and surroundings). Fear arises when there is a certain feeling of estrangement, which exhibits overall sense or impression of suspicion.

2. Attachment to individuals as well as material things associated with one's security cause one to fear that one might lose them, so one will do everything in order to protect one's relationships, possessions or his self-image.
3. Strange surroundings and unfamiliar people bring about fear. Unfamiliar situations threaten one's security and usually one reacts with extreme caution and at times, defensive behavior.
4. One's negative memory of past experiences where one had either suffered or witnessed loss, harm or death aggravates fear. The subconscious retains memories of the past and at certain circumstances, these are ignited.
5. Imagination at times can create or invent images of trouble, suffering or pain outside physical truth or reality. Note that Imagination is never negative, however when misused and abused, it can bring so much fear in oneself.

Combat fear by developing self-confidence. Here are few guidelines:

1. Emphasize your strengths. Focus on what it is that you are capable of achieving and praise yourself for your strength and your struggle than focusing on the results. Beginning on a foundation of things that you are capable rather than what should you be doing will help you live and work within your limitations.

2. Talk to yourself. Examine yourself and practice how to handle situations as well as counter negative ones. Know when to stop when you catch yourself in a negative assumption.

For instance, when you find yourself demanding perfection, tell yourself that everything can not result perfectly. This will allow you to believe in yourself at the same time that you are striving to get better.

3. Evaluate yourself. Practice how to independently evaluate yourself. This will let you avoid the persistent sense of confusion that results when you are relying completely on the opinions and judgment of others.

4. Take those risks. When you face and accept experiences as instruments for learning than possibilities to lose or win, new opportunities can be unlocked and this can develop your self awareness and acceptance.

Remember, self-confidence can be developed, not inherited; and fear can be overcome because you have the trust and the faith in yourself to do so.

CHAPTER 3: Fear of rejection

Fear of rejection can lead to a vicious cycle of rejection.

Fiona, a marketing specialist of one of the biggest malls in town, offered her hand to her client and then she stood up and walked out of the room with her head held high. She was feeling so victorious after closing a million-dollar deal with a mall sponsor who agreed to shoulder the advertising expense for their new world campaign. She can already hear her voice singing as she got inside her car and started the ignition.

To an onlooker, Fiona is a successful woman of the world, who would stop at nothing to get what she wants. Of course he is right. However, the description would not have fit Fiona if it was made ten years ago, when she was still just out of college and pleasing everyone due to her fear of being rejected.

Yes Virginia, there are skeletons in Fiona's closets but those are skeletons she would rather hang out in the open for everyone to see so that they may learn from her experience.

You see, Fiona was barely out of college and she had this unreasonable fear that she was not doing the right thing and that other people would not accept her for

what she really is. Deep inside, Fiona felt she was talented and beautiful but when faced with all the girls who were more experienced in life and career, she began to feel insecure and resorted to mimicking whatever they were doing or even what they were wearing.

The fear of rejection may have haunted each one of us at one time or another, It may be caused by our fear of being and living alone, too much dependence on other people's perception of us, lack of confidence and inability to control our own life.

Fear of rejection is a state of mind that makes a person feel inadequate, helpless and worthless. It inhibits a person from doing or saying things because of the fear that other people might not accept him or disapprove of his actions and words.

A person who is so concerned about what others may think of him could make his own life miserable because he can no longer speak his own mind nor do things that he would normally do on his own. The fear of rejection can paralyze a person and discourage him from being productive.

A person's uniqueness disappears the moment he puts primary emphasis on what others want him to be. A person too caught up with pleasing others will

start to emulate other people from the way they dress and the way they behave in society.

This usually happens to young people who crave attention and acceptance but do not yet have enough basis for self acceptance. This is detrimental to a person's growth because there is no more room for self expression, only of self denial and the thought of pleasing others.

A person who fears being rejected can be characterized as:

1. A person who acts without confidence - A person who is not sure of himself will tend to imitate others and keep himself from trying new things. Such lack of confidence will ultimately make such person unhappy and bitter.
2. Keeps opinion to himself - A person who is not vocal about his perception of things may be having trouble with rejection. He may keep from voicing out his opinion for fear of being criticized.
3. Usually depressed - A person who does not have the freedom to speak for himself and to express his wants will soon become depressed and will no longer have a love for life. He will tend to act like a remote-control robot that can not make his own decisions.

4. Confused about his true identity- A person who has fears of being rejected will end up confused about who he really is. This will lead to an identity crisis and will make him angry at himself and at other people for no reason at all.

5. Lack of self esteem and self worth-A person who gives more importance to what others may think of him does not have much faith in himself to start with. This lack of self esteem may have resulted from feelings of rejection instilled in him by his family or friends.

A person who fears rejection will ultimately be rejected by the people he wants to please and who love him dearly. A person who has the tendency to please other people will soon get sucked into a difficult cycle of rejection. His behavior will keep the people he cares about alienated from him. He sees this as a rejection and then the cycle goes on and on.

CHAPTER 4: Fear of losing a friend or loved one

How to deal with the fear of losing someone

Jennifer woke up in a sweat, with the memories of last night's dream still fresh and surreal. She was having those darned nightmares again. But those

nightmares could not have been mere nightmares because they were haunting her even during her waking hours.

This one was like all the other dreams where she was running after a familiar person who would later on fall from a deep ravine. And in all dreams, she was the one hero who was doing everything to save the same person from falling. The funny thing is, she could not see his face.

Psychologists would interpret Jennifer's dream as something which speaks of her inner fears in life. One such fear which came out in the open was her fear of losing people near to her, people whom she loves dearly.

The fear of losing someone you love is normal for most people. This stems from your fear of being alone in this world and your fear of not being able to bear the thought of being the one who was left behind.

Thinking about the possibility of losing someone you love is devastating, not to mention hurtful. You may have invested too much of your time and feelings for that person and so just the thought of losing that person would leave you in a state of panic.

There are different categories of people with whom a person can have deep affections. The fear of losing any one of these people can be traumatic for a person, especially if he or she has just experienced a heavy loss, like divorce or death of a loved one.

A person can fear losing his spouse, his parents, his children, his relatives, his friends, or any person who is close to his heart. This fear can be caused or influenced by several factors such as:

1. Divorce or separation - A person who recently went through divorce or separation proceedings can easily be haunted by separation anxiety due to the stress accompanied by the divorce process. It is not easy for a person to live with a spouse for a period of time and to separate with that person. Divorce proceedings are usually hostile and confrontational so such proceedings will always leave a bad taste in the mouth. In the same manner, a person who is about to undergo a divorce or separation will also be subjected to stress.

2. Empty nest - A fulltime mother can easily feel depressed when she realizes her children are growing up and are slowly becoming independent. This anxiety stems from the thought that for several years, she was needed by her children and now that they can manage on their own, then she will no longer be needed and useful. A mother who experienced this fear of losing her children should try

to immerse herself back into society by finding a business or a useful hobby that will keep her occupied. The feeling of uselessness is natural but you have to find a way to combat this fear by making yourself useful in some other ways. Also, why not look at the situation in another way? Why not accept the fact that you have reared your children so well and that you have prepared them to live their own lives? And now, it is time for them to try to walk alone without mommy's help.

3. Death in the family - A death in the family or in your circle of friends will always make a person realize how fleeting life can be. This realization will manifest itself into the fear of losing someone you love due to illness or sudden death. Death is inevitable and it would do you good to make time for people you love. If you are already spending enough time with them, then you can always improve the quality of time you spend with your loved ones.

The fear of losing a loved one is always in existence. One can never get away from this fear because there are situations that will make a person think of the possibility of being separated from the people they love. But the possibility of losing someone is one of life's facts and no one can prevent his from happening.

However, one can always soften the blow of being left behind by preparing for such an eventuality.

CHAPTER 5: Fear of failure

Failure is success in disguise

Juris, a surgeon, was only three years old when he learned that one must fail in order to learn and to strive for more. However, such philosophizing was not known to him then as he was still too young. He only began to realize it as such when confronted with failure in his personal life and career.

His realization came hazily as his memories of such a tender age were faded by time. What he can remember though, is that he was always striving hard to learn how to bike. His mom and dad bought him a bike too big for his age and so he had difficulty in using the pedals.

Juris practiced his biking skills everyday, sometimes falling because he could not even reach the ground. While his bicycle had a handbrake, he could remember using his feet to stop his bike whenever he feels like it. Finally, his frustration has borne fruit because after weeks of daily practice, he has learned to stroll around the neighborhood with his bike.

Such a simple lesson from a child but every adult can learn so much from it. Our society has placed so much emphasis on success that failure has become a dirty and much-avoided word.

Others rely on positive thinking to keep failure at bay. While it helps, it also lulls a person into believing that nothing can go wrong, thus creating a false sense of security.

Failure may be a bitter pill to swallow but everyone must fail at one time in their lives. However, as Juris' experience has taught us, it is not the fact that you have failed that is important but the manner in which you have accepted and risen from such failure.

A person can either allow himself to be thwarted by failure, or he can use such failure to build up his determination to climb more mountains. What is important is that the experience of failing was not for naught, because the person who failed learned something from the experience.

Those who fear failure should know that most successful people have failed one or more times in their lives. But what made the difference is how they learned from the failure and how they used failure to succeed in life. The real failures are

those who fail once and then refuse to try anything ever again for fear that they might fail again.

The fear of failure creates anxiety due to the fear of not knowing and not being certain of what will happen next. Most often, this results in a small problem being blown out of proportion. The more a person thinks about the possibility of failing, the more he will jump to conclusions on the possible scenarios.

Unknowingly, his fear of failure has made a small problem bigger and more complicated.

A person who fears failure can become too competitive. It forces him to treat every person and every opportunity as a threat. This takes the joy out of doing something that should have been simple and without pressure. Such a person becomes nervous and anxious. The feeling of being pressured to do more and to exceed what is normal forces a person to be erratic and weary.

Fear of failure is normal. How you deal with it can make the difference. The best thing to do when confronted with fear of failure is to take inspiration from the reliable bamboo tree which bends when confronted with a strong wind, to keep itself from breaking, and to rise again when the wind has stopped.

First, a person must accept that he is not a perfect being, in fact nobody is. A person has a right to err and to fail so you have to give yourself another chance and another day to fight your battle.

Always have a support group to lean on when the going gets rough so that you will not feel alone and rejected. Most successful people rely on their families and friends when they are at their lowest point in their life. Others rely on their dreams of making it to the top.

Whatever you do, do not keep the feeling of bitterness inside you because it will just build up and ruin you. Talk about your fear and your frustration because it is the only way to get it out of your system.

Whoever said that failure is success turned inside out must have experienced failure at one or more times in his life. Or else, how would he have known that failure is just success in disguise?

CHAPTER 6: Fear of people

Rising above one's fear of people

Hannah possesses a voice that can lull even angels to sleep. She has that quality of voice that soothes the tired senses, and makes one feel relaxed and at ease. However, her audience has yet to hear Hannah sing as she does not have the guts to do it in public.

She tried it once, when she was still in high school but it caused her shame and pain. She can never forget that incident as she stood on the stage, holding the mike, without any voice coming out from her. She was ready all right, but the sight of all those people looking at her made her voice disappear.

Ever since that humiliating experience, Hannah has never had the chance to sing in front of people again. Not that she lacked opportunities; it's just that she could not do it, not in front of an audience. Her fear of performing in public has incapacitated her for life, or so she thought.

Fear is a strong emotion which is often caused by the knowledge of a lurking danger. It is actually a person's reaction to an actual or perceived danger to one's self. Sometimes, a person's fear serves as a defense mechanism.

It is believed that fear is usually hereditary, as in the case of a child who may have inherited certain biological traits from his parents. Such traits may have an effect on how a person's brain chemicals regulate a person's moods and how he reacts to stimulations that may cause fear. A person's present fears will also depend on her parents' behavior particularly on how cautious they were, or how they reacted to danger.

Fear can be classified into many degrees but the most popular and common are phobia, panic and terror. Phobia is an irrational and exaggerated fear of a particular situation or object. Panic is usually characterized by a hysterical reaction to a certain stimulus. Terror, on the other hand, is the greatest degree of fear, usually causing a person to become immobilized.

A person's fear of other people is called Anthropophobia while fear of people in general or fear of society is called Sociophobia. A person who regularly experiences anxiety or discomfort in the presence of other people may have this phobia. People who have this phobia are still able to lead normal lives but they tend to avoid social events. It is also commonly manifested in what we call stage fright or fear of performing in front of an audience.

A person who becomes frightened will have sweaty palms, feel butterflies in his stomach, experience a drying of the throat and mouth and start to have panic attacks. Such fear can have serious effects on a person's family life and career. A person who is frightened, and who has no control over his fears, loses his freedom to act.

Fear of people may be a manifestation of a person's shyness or lack of confidence in meeting other people. A shy person avoids meeting people because he feels he is inferior to them. A person who has no confidence in himself may fear meeting people whom he perceives are greater or more able than him.

There is a semblance of normalcy in fearing other people. It is normal to fear people who have more power in their hands, or people who may have moral ascendancy over you. It is also normal to fear performing in front of an audience especially if you are not used to being the center of attention.

While most of these fears are normal, a person should not let these fears take over his personality. A person should acknowledge that he has these fears, and should do things to overcome such fears. Or else, he will forever be incapacitated by his fears.

If you fear meeting people in general, then try going out in public more often. Try the malls, they offer people from all walks of life. Try to talk to the sale ladies or to other customers who seem friendly to you. Talk about anything, comment on the weather, the recent news or other community affairs.

You can also start relating to people in your community because you will be more comfortable talking to them. Try to talk one new person each day until you develop the habit of greeting people you encounter in the streets. A simple good morning is enough to help you combat your shyness. Take little steps and gradually experiment on speaking with groups of people.

DO not let your shyness overpower you. You may have fears but other people are not exactly fear-less. What is important is you acknowledge your fears and you do something to overcome them.

CHAPTER 7: Stand up straight

Stand Out with Self-Confidence

Body language speaks of a whole lot of things, including a person's self-confidence. Self-confidence or the lack of it can be manifested in many ways, one of which is through body posture.

Body posture is the way one carries himself. It can be a basis for making first impressions which generally dictates the image of person in the eyes of another. Making good first impressions can be very beneficial. Take job interviews for example, most final interviews end within 20 seconds. Of course, the interview itself can take an hour or so, but the verdict has been made seconds after the applicant enters the room. He is generally evaluated through his gestures, body language and posture.

When one stands tall, he portrays an image of self-confidence. Having a good posture is a quick and sure way of building a good impression.

So what is a correct posture? It is a conscious effort to keep the body aligned against the body's center of gravity. It is a posture where there is musculoskeletal balance. A person with poor posture can easily be spotted, he's the one who slouches, with shoulders drooping and head bowed down as if looking for a long-lost coin.

There are many probable causes of poor posture. There are people who are born with back problems but the other causes of poor posture can already be considered as social norms. Young children are already at risk of developing poor posture as soon as they step into schooling. Day-in and day-out they are forced to bring heavy loads of school items like thick books and notebooks. Adults are

also prone to worsening their postures by carrying heavy luggage and briefcases to work. People of almost all ages who spend most of the day in front of a personal computer and/or television are most likely to develop poor posture.

What can one do to be able to fix his posture? He must first remember that just like anything else, having a correct posture requires a conscious effort and dedication. Here are some tips on how to have a correct posture.

At work

-One must utilize an ergonomic chair which fits the back perfectly whenever possible. A good chair will definitely help in posture correction and it will most definitely give the best comfort for a long day's work.

- Make sure that you are seated with your back against the seat and your knees at your hip level. Your shoulders should be parallel to your hips.

- Do some stretching every once in a while, just make sure your boss is not looking.

Carrying baggage

-Unless it's absolutely necessary, try to leave some of the usual things that you bring during trips to lessen the weight of your baggage.

- If you're using a backpack, make sure that you put the heavier items close to your back. This will result into better support and less back aches.
- Make sure that the handles and straps of your bags and backpacks are padded and wide. This will give extra support to your shoulders and back.
- The weight of a backpack should never exceed 15 percent of the person's weight.
- Use backpacks which have hip straps

Everyday Living

- Avoid shoes with heels, the shorter the heels of the shoes, the better it is for your posture. Flat shoes are great for a person's posture since heeled shoes can alter a person's center of gravity which could result into a worsened body posture.
- Exercise regularly. There is no alternative to stretching and doing some cardio-vascular training every now and then. Exercise will help the body become stronger and build much needed back support.

Sleeping

- Avoid sleeping on your stomach. Sleep on your back or on your side.
- If you prefer sleeping on your back, you can opt to put a pillow under your knees to help align your spine. This is also good for blood circulation in the legs.
- If you prefer sleeping on your side, hug a pillow between your legs.

-Avoid those fluffy, over-sized pillows. They can be the cause of early morning neck pains.

Developing a good posture requires an alteration of the common things that one does everyday. However hard it may seem, it is still worth it, not only does it add up to one's self confidence, it also a healthy physical practice.

CHAPTER 8: Walk faster

Walking with Confidence

People walk all the time, but the fact is, most people are afraid of walking.

People would tend to look at the street (literally) rather than put their heads up and look at the people who are walking along with them. Some would stare at big billboards and advertisements, take out their phones from their pockets and pretend to call someone and do other stuff while walking. These are common signs of poor self-confidence and these are all manifested in walking.

So, how can one's self-confidence be portrayed in walking? Self-confidence is one's own view about himself and his capabilities. Walking is one of the most basic human tasks and usually won't require a conscious effort, therefore, walking takes the focus off his fancy clothes and equipments and tells a lot about

his personality. Walking depicts a person's ability to carry oneself in any kind of situation.

Walk Faster to Build an Image

Walking faster can improve one's self-confidence in a variety of ways. It has been found by surveys that people who walk faster are seen as important people. Walking a bit faster would make an impression that one is busy and is involved in significant tasks. It is all about making a self-image for others to see.

When walking faster to communicate a message of self-confidence, one must not overdo it to the extent of panting and looking exasperated. It's just a matter of carrying a bubbly and comfortable self.

Walk for the Benefits

Leaving a good impression through walking is a whole different thing from getting the actual benefits of walking. Image building can be temporary, but the benefits one gets from walking will last a lifetime.

Studies have shown that walking briskly would equate to burning at least five calories per minute. Another factoid- If one walks a mile, he burns 20% less calories than if he had run. This may look disappointing and may encourage one to run rather than walk but this should be taken in the context of everyday life.

People usually complain about having too little time to exercise, that's why walking to our destinations whenever possible is recommended.

When one exercises regularly, he will eventually feel the benefits of exercising. He would feel more relaxed, his breathing becomes better and his muscles stronger. Exercising also makes the mind stay sharp. Walking, as a form of exercise, involves the whole body coordination and thus, it gives what people might consider as a whole body exercise. Walking also makes the mind stay sharp because through walking, oxygen is delivered more efficiently to the brain, and blood flow is improved. Maybe this is the real reason which would explain why walking faster can boost someone's self-confidence. More than building an image for other people to see, walking also makes one feel better, thus boosting his confidence.

Walking as a form of exercise not only gives multiple benefits to person's physical attributes, it also adds to one's happiness since exercising would make person release more endorphins which are "happy" hormones.

We've discussed the benefits of walking and how it improves one's self-confidence. Here are some tips on how to properly walk with a goal towards improving self-confidence:

Faster!

Again, walking faster enhances the benefits of walking. One must consciously try to increase his walking speed by at least 10% until such time that he can walk at increased speeds without too much conscious effort. Walking too fast will make someone look stressed and full of negative thoughts. It implies an image of impatience and unpredictability.

Look Up!

When walking, one should not stare at the road or at the floor you must hold your head up and maintain it at eye level. This will create opportunities to make eye contact with other people. It's a non-verbal method to say "hi, how are you?"

Sway Away

When one is walking, the natural swaying of the arms should not be restricted nor enhanced. Restricting this natural motion will make someone look stiff (if not looking for the nearest comfort room) while swaying too much will look funny.

Mind Your Things

Arrange your hand-carry in such a way that they will allow you to walk comfortably. Carrying too much will cause someone to lose that much needed "snap" in walking.

Walking doesn't require much effort however; walking with confidence requires practice and devotion. Walking can deliver numerous benefits in different levels to the person especially in terms of self-confidence. Walking tall is being tall amidst all the challenges in one's life.

CHAPTER 9: Shake hands firmly

Shake Hands to Improve Self-Confidence

Body language portrays a person's self-confidence. Shaking hands is a big part of a person's body language. First impressions are based partly on how a person does his handshakes.

Handshakes are traced back into Ancient Egypt, around 2,800 B.C. During those times, the right hand is the hand which carries weapons. When a person offers a clean, unarmed right hand to another person, it is a sign of peace and goodwill. Handshakes have endured the test of time and it is still widely accepted as a form of social greeting in our modern times.

If someone thinks of it, the gestures of a proper handshake are not difficult to do. They are fairly simple and can be considered as no-brainers. However, as stated above, handshakes are more than simple gestures since they embody the

portrait of a person's self-confidence. Handshakes can go extremely wrong because of nervousness or excitement which can then lead into missed opportunities or moments of awkwardness, to say the least.

There are several well-known forms of handshakes which people should avoid doing. Here are some of the most popular ones:

1) Palm Crusher

The palm crusher is a kind of handshake which tends to give pain to the other person's hand. Of course, this is not usually the intention of the initiator of the handshake but is a consequence of over-excitement or anxiousness to make an introduction.

2) Sloppy Joe

This kind of hand shake can be described as lifeless. It depicts lack of interest and sincerity in doing the gesture. It instantly kills the intention and the general purpose of a handshake.

3) Hand Sanitizer

A handshake is a "hand sanitizer" handshake if someone: makes minimal contact with the other person's hand; or if he overtly wipes his hand after the handshake. This kind of handshake is a dreadful one and instead of building

connections and acquaintances, it reverses the purpose of handshaking and instills feelings of anger and hatred.

So how is a proper handshake done? Listed below are the simple steps in making a handshake:

- Approach the person whom you want to shake hands with
- Make eye contact with him/her
- Give him/her a warm smile
- Extend your right hand towards him/her at a comfortable angle
- When he/she extend his/her hand, grasp it until the webs of the palms meet
- Shake a few times
- Make an introduction or a greeting
- End the handshake after 3 to 4 seconds

When someone approaches you and offers a handshake, it is a courteous thing to stand up before shaking his hand. If the right hand is disabled or is carrying something which cannot be put down, shake his hand using the left hand. If both hands are occupied, a simple nod and apology can be done.

In a cocktail party, one must hold his drinks with the left hand, making the right hand fairly available throughout the event for introductions. The right hands

should always be clean and dry when making handshakes. If a person has sweaty hands, he may opt to put some antiperspirant (no scent, please!) before going to an event. He may also keep a handkerchief in his right pocket so that he may quietly slip his hand in the pocket to wipe it off before engaging in the gesture. Of course, someone can also wipe his hand at the sides of his pants but this should be done in a discreet manner.

Handshakes can be employed in almost all kinds of social gatherings. Come to think of it, there is no social event that is exempted from the handshake.

Handshakes are exchanged in business deals, dates, renewing old acquaintances, job interviews, social engagements and even in Church.

There are few instances when initiating a handshake is not the preferred option. In the business world, when someone faces a person of much higher ranking, it is better not to offer a handshake, especially if the person has nothing important to say to the higher ranking official. The other instance is when both of your hands are carrying stuff which you cannot put down at that moment.

A handshake is more than a simple gesture. It is a simple gesture which builds connections and can leave an impression of a person. Practicing good handshaking can take a person to higher levels, in his career and in building relationships.

CHAPTER 10: Make Eye Contact

Improving Self-Confidence through Eye Contact

It's a cliché to say that the eyes are the windows to the soul, but in more ways than one, they are. The eyes are also the mirrors of self-confidence. A person can easily assess another person's self-confidence by engaging in eye contact. People with low self-confidence hate making eye contact. They would tend to look at the ground as if they are looking for a lost coin.

The eyes are the first things which are noticed in the human face and they leave a long-lasting impression to the beholder. It's fairly normal to hear someone say "I like girls with beautiful eyes," when he is being asked about his idea of an attention-grabbing face. The eyes can make statements at a glance like no other part of the body can make. Imagine a short film which is entirely composed of a shot of a human face with the eyes slowly pouring out tears.

Even with no words, the eyes can reveal a lot about someone. A person who is trying to hide his unhappiness can never really pretend to be happy without people noticing it. The eyes can tell stories that are never meant to be told. They

can decipher thoughts and insecurities which are engraved in the deepest holes of one's souls.

The eyes also act as a meter to one's self-confidence. The eyes play a big role in making relationships, building careers and in portraying sincerity and competence, in general.

Girl in a Bar

Making eye contact can start relationships. For example, if a man finds a likable girl in a party or a bar, he would look at her when she is not looking, once the girl looks back, the man would try to hold his stare for a few seconds then he would turn away. He would repeat this set of moves for a few times while prolonging his stare after every move. He would then make his move towards the girl or back away permanently. What happens here? In making eye contact, one can convey interest towards someone else. The man's stare definitely should get the message across to the girl. Once the move is done, the reactions of the girl are assessed. Making eye contact is a give and receive thing. One must not only convey but he must also listen to the response through his eyes. Holding the right length of eye contact will set the move for introducing oneself. Holding eye contact too long may get someone accused of being a maniac or a freak, while not holding it at all will portray someone as a shy person with a low self-esteem and a lot of insecurities.

Job Interviews

Interviews only last a few seconds long because more often than not, the verdict will be made through first impression. Making eye contact with the interviewer will make him see one's seriousness in getting the job. A lousy applicant will avoid eye contact because of fear. This is not a very good thing to do because interviews are primarily done to test someone's ability to handle pressure.

Interviews are also meant to display someone's ability to express him or her self and what better way to instantly express one's personality than through eye contact?

Speaking in Public

One of the main factors that can make or break the delivery of a presentation to an audience is eye contact. Eye contact helps take the fear away from the speaker by getting the audience closer to him. Stress is mainly a result of being with the unknown and uncontrollable. Eye contact gives the speaker a picture of the reality that is the audience. It also helps in getting the attention of the audience. People in the audience would like to feel noticed and making eye contact with them makes them feel that the presentation is being delivered at the personal level.

Making eye contact is an essential tool in expressing oneself and getting responses from others. The eyes can tell the story of someone's life in one glance. People should not be afraid or feel awkward in making eye contact as long as it is done in a courteous and proper manner.

CHAPTER 11: Changing your self talk

Change Your Self-Talk For a Better Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is one's belief in oneself. It refers to one's confidence in his actions, beliefs and competencies. Having self-confidence is the key towards a successful and fulfilling life.

Self-talk can be described as that little voice inside one's head which can either be beneficial or detrimental to one's self-confidence. This inner voice usually critiques, give comments, or praise one's deeds and actions.

There are different views about self-talk in relation to building self-confidence. Some people may associate self-talk to the obstacles towards attaining true confidence in oneself. This can be true in the cases of people who have no drive to take the pessimism out of their heads. This can later become a vicious cycle

where a person is perpetually trapped in a downward spiral of self-esteem decline.

There is also a school of thought which believes that self-talk is an important tool in developing self-confidence. The inner voice can be seen as a teacher, a mentor, a critique who gives constructive comments and a friend. Self-talk has been employed by successful people in their careers in fields such as sports and show business.

Here are some few helpful tips on how to utilize self-talk towards developing a healthy self-confidence:

1) Listen to your inner voice

This is the first step in making good use of self-talk. Identify the inner voice in you and listen to what it is saying. Ask questions like, regarding the contents of the thoughts, the situations which brought about these thoughts and the other factors which could have aggravated the situation.

Remember that this is to be done under the general goal of building self-confidence, so try to be as honest as possible.

2) Thoughts Assessment

After the thoughts have been identified, it is time to assess them. What are these thoughts saying in general? What attitude towards the self is being projected by these thoughts? How have I responded to these kinds of thoughts in the past? What have these kinds of thoughts instilled in me throughout the years? Have they been helpful to me and my quest towards self-confidence?

Another important thing to assess is the way a person responds to the thoughts that are being said by the inner voice. A person might think that negative thoughts are empowering and that they give the much needed push to attain one's goals. Negative thoughts and comments can be helpful in the short run; however, they do more damage than good. Negative thoughts instill a general feeling of hopelessness and incompetence, especially if one fails more than once in a certain endeavor. Viewing life in a positive light is the way towards building self-confidence. When a person stumbles down, the inner voice should say "stand up, you can do it!" rather than "you're pathetic, stay down before you hurt yourself again!"

The general tone of the inner voice is as important as what it is saying. Negative tones should be controlled and be reversed into positive ones.

3) Make a difference

Dealing with one's inner voice can be a daunting task. If it's hard to talk to somebody who wouldn't listen, it's even harder to talk and listen to oneself since there can be no sensible argument that could happen.

Getting rid of the negative thoughts inside one's head will give the positive thoughts some space. It is all about rephrasing the negative thoughts to make them positive. One's concept of the world is based on his views of the world. You develop self-confidence by feeling good about yourself. The inner voice should not have control of the body it is the person who should have control over the inner voice.

Self-confidence is like a pair of eyeglasses, having the right pair can make one enjoy the beauty of things to the fullest. Life, if one truly looks at it, is all about perception. One will never enjoy life if he perceives it with much negativity. This is also true in terms of viewing oneself. Self-confidence is tied to having true happiness. True happiness can only come from within a person's heart and believing in oneself is the only way to achieve happiness.

CHAPTER 12: Speak "I can" instead of "I can't"

The "Can Do" Attitude Can Take You Places

Ever noticed we are never really quiet inside our own minds? Try it out. When we sit in a corner, away from others for a break, we keep on thinking. We can't stop ourselves from thinking. As long as the body feeds us sensory data from the environment, we respond to the environment.

In prehistoric times, man relied on his instincts to survive. Scientists have called this the fight-flight response in which a person instantly chooses to fight and overcome his adversary or run away to survive.

The body, perceiving a threat, increases and opens up its stores and energizes the necessary cells to prepare for a fight or a run. The body becomes more alert, the muscles get all the blood they need, sugar and fat are burned quickly.

In modern times, the fight-flight response is still useful in a minimal capacity for situations against robbers, muggers, or prize fighting. Soldiers and people on the violent path still need this even more.

For the average civilian, the only violence encountered is usually verbal or on television. However, what most people don't realize is the violence and pain they inflict upon themselves inside their own heads.

As social animals, human beings are expected to interact with others of their species to have a good life. In cities and towns constructed by humans, this is unavoidable and people cope in different ways to eke a living out of these artificial jungles.

However, sometimes fight-flight responses take over and spill over into areas of interaction that do not require an extreme response. This may be due to undisciplined use of negative reinforcement techniques in childhood, a traumatic experience, genetics, the environment, etc.

In the average American, this spills over into everyday life. For example, being the butt of jokes by peers, trying to ask a girl out for a date, or getting chewed out by the boss. These are situations that, to most people, are times of extreme stress.

The only way to overcome these extremely stressful situations is to train yourself to see it another way. A "Can Do" attitude reflects this outlook.

To make the most of life, people have to accept living to the fullest. Having a "can do" attitude shows that life to you is:

- A journey. Don't worry about the destination, enjoy the process. People are expected to make mistakes. If it does happen, why make a big deal? Accept the mistake, learn the lesson and move on. Be thankful that you had the opportunity to learn something new. If the lesson is not learned, life comes back to teach it again and again until you get it.
- Not to be taken too seriously. Life taken too seriously only makes the uptight person more stressed. Laugh, have fun. Accept that nothing is perfect. It is perfectly normal to see that you can eat ice cream with French fries. That white people can fall in love with blacks. Life comes in all shapes and sizes.
- Not about survival, but about living well. Life is hard enough without letting art and beauty into the individual life. The "can do" person knows why he is here because he had taken the time to know his purpose.

Whether that purpose is to teach college football, or to be president of a Third World nation, the "can do" person does it with two feet on the ground and his eyes fixed on the future.

- Half full, not half empty. People have learned from society a kind of sickness. That for people to survive, it is better to see things in a pessimistic way. The point is entirely missed. Life depends on how you see it. A "can do" attitude is quite the optimistic realist.

An optimistic realist knows that a lot of things can go wrong because the world is like that, but that does not stop the person from trying out opportunities to take him to better places and better opportunities. Fear is not allowed to dictate action, only warn. Logic is not used to find reason not to do it, but is used to achieve the optimist's objectives.

- Is not alone. "Can do" people know that people are more than willing to help them. This is because the world reacts to sincerity in a way that a person reacts to a child. There is no trickery involved. A "can do" person is an agent of change, not hesitating in helping others along the way. Others are also on their way to become better.

Help yourself by helping others. Develop trust and friendship, but never be surprised at the ambiguity when you encounter it. Accept it as part of the process.

A "Can do" attitude can definitely take you places you never dreamed of.

CHAPTER 13: Set goals

Setting Your Eye on the Bulls eye

The alarm rings, you wake up. You turn off the alarm and start the series of rituals that would get you showered, dressed, fed with breakfast, and eventually on your way to work. You kiss your wife on the cheek as she readies herself for work and taking the kids to school. You say your goodbyes.

As you take your car from the driveway, you notice that all is quiet in the early dawn. You like to leave for work early to get away from the traffic. The trip is uneventful and the radio blares out music you have no fondness for.

As you arrive at work, you check your mail, and start work with a cup of coffee. Lunch comes and goes. You think about saving enough to run a small business in a few years. You have told yourself the same thing for three years now.

What's wrong with this picture? Are you one of them? Does the same dreary day pass by one after the other until you realize you're thirty-five with little time left?

Don't let this happen. Start setting goals with a timeline. Set goals by the SMART method.

The SMART method of setting goals has been around for a long time and has been used by many people. It is one of the many tools used by executives to hit their goals realistically and consistently with enough room to adjust to unforeseen circumstances.

Setting goals is a mind game that needs to be revisited as often as possible. This is to establish the goal consistently in the mind of the goal setter. Eventually the goal setter will have no need to be reminded on the goals he sets for himself.

SMART is an acronym for the following bywords:

- **Specific.** The goal has to be as detailed as possible. This is to reduce the time to think about what the goal is. This must answer the basic questions of Who, What, When, Where, Which and Why.

The more specific the goal, the more the end result can be envisioned by the goal setter. This dovetails into the sports theory that an athlete can see the goal before it is attained through training. Studies have affirmed that visualization helps immensely in the attainments of a desired goal.

- **Measurable.** When setting goals, it must also be specific that progress can be held up against a measure, or a benchmark. In bodybuilding, it is measurable to state that the goal is to bench press a weight of 200 pounds in two months time.

The old adage states that if "it can be measured, it can be attained" is also a known fact among athletes. Athletes keep a record of their performance on and off the field of contest in order to have something to compare against. They even measure other athletes in different sports to improve their understanding.

- **Attainable.** This is a part where you determine the will to reach your goals. Do you think the goal is attainable? Will it help you fulfill your overall goal? The more specific a goal is, the more you can find ways of reaching your target. You develop and educate yourself on reaching those goals.

- **Realistic.** Does it make logical sense? Getting to Mars and back within 20 days is a goal, but with the resources, you have, is it realistic? Will it take a huge effort to achieve the objective? A person must be willing and especially able to achieve the goal.

It is still realistic to aim high. It has to do with the rewards received, or the way the goal moves you forward. If you do not possess the skills or inclination to

reach the goal, then the goal is unrealistic. No amount of motivation can get a man to do what he despises.

- **Time-bound.** This is the most important of all. A goal has to have a deadline. This is to prevent the goal setter from letting his goal slide from one day to the next. The true price paid for goals is the time you give the goal.

Remember this, time is the true price paid for your dreams, the earlier the dream can be achieved, the more time you have to enjoy it.

Don't let other people rob you of your goals, use the SMART method and share it with others so you can help each other reach your goals.

CHAPTER 14: Smile and try to think a negative thought

Choice: Between Stimulus and Response

Have you ever tried to smile and think a negative thought? Usually the result is that one of the feelings will win out. Whether it is you will feel better because you smiled or that you will eventually feel bad and frown, this is an important fact in human psychology.

Humans cannot really hold attention on more than one thought at a time. This is the key to mastering oneself in this life.

Victor Frankl was an Austrian psychiatrist who ended up in a concentration camp during World War II. He witnessed numerous atrocities and was a victim of German experimentation himself.

However, he observed that people trapped in the camp had different ways of dealing with their dire predicament. Some people lost the will to live, others went mad. Some men turned on their fellow inmates, while some ended their lives in suicide.

There were others, though who turned out quite differently. There were men who went from hut to hut, and gave away their last piece of bread. They encouraged the men, women, and children of the camp to keep on living. They gave them a reason to hope for a better future.

Why were these men, in the face of overwhelming despair, still able to master themselves enough to help others with their problems? This is what puzzled Frankl. But even he would eventually find out why when he was tortured.

Frankl believes that between stimuli and response lays the choice of man to react to any given circumstance. He has practiced this in the concentration camps and his sense of future vision helped him survive. He realized he had a choice, and his choice was to live.

The human animal is the only organism so far known to be aware of its own existence. Untrained, this awareness does not help him overcome his instincts to react to any given situation. Frankl has found out that it is possible to use the will to make a choice on how one can react.

Other theories also hold true to this tenet. Sales people have long practiced that if one smiles long, he will eventually feel good about himself. In essence, he can make himself feel anything he wants. In essence, it is outside-in.

Smile even if there is no reason to smile. It will foster a sense of positivism that drives out negative thoughts. This is a two-edged sword. Try to frown and you can find yourself too serious to even let people near you. Our thoughts are fluid and they are ever in one state to the other.

The challenge is to keep them where you want them.

The Buddhists have long recommended breathing methods to clear the cobwebs from your everyday life. They believe that a sense of detachment and awareness of one's state is the key to dealing with unbalanced emotion.

The effect of breathing is that concentrating on the breath is a source of steadiness that is much needed when one needs a sense of control. Breathing deeply and concentrating on it also loosens hold on the ego. It supplies the body with more oxygen to fight the effects of stress.

The Buddhists sense of detachment lessens the stress of responsibility by teaching the practitioner to not be concerned on the outcome of a task, but to only enjoy the process. Coupled with an emphasis on simplicity, compassion, and exercise, the lifestyle Buddhists lead is full of activity yet does not affect their outlook in life.

The test is still to catch yourself when you are too stressed to function well. This is where choice comes in. You make the choice to stop work when going on will be counter-productive. You choose whether it is feasible to commit to a project when you know you already have your hands full. Awareness is the gauge that tells you when you have too much. Choice is the lever that you turn to ease the pressure.

Part of choosing is when to say no. When presented with an opportunity. One must ask if the opportunity is feasible and if there is time to devote to it? If it is not, then there should be no shame in declining. Overloading oneself is another sign of poor choice, and doesn't do you or the inviting party any lasting good.

The key is the awareness to respond with an appropriate choice.

CHAPTER 15: Using daily affirmations

Let Yourself Know How Great You Are

Religious people might actually have a good idea. Next time, when you hear the chant of monks, the homily in a Catholic Church, the singing from the Gregorian, remember that it is a way of affirmation of themselves and of their faith. And you can use it to affirm yourselves.

People from all walks of life use affirmations to keep themselves going. Warriors, merchants, students, even politicians. This is because affirmations are a surefire way of reminding the self of their choices and their goals.

Affirmations are defined as declarations of the belief of an existence or truth of a thing. This is one of the foundations of self-confidence and the way one can deal with the world.

Sometimes we lose track of ourselves. It happens at work, taking care of the needs of your wife and kids. Or meeting your obligations at church or in your workout, sometimes we forget the “why” of things.

Most people go through life not setting goals. In fact, only three out of a hundred college students in the United States set goals. These 3% eventually go on to realize their goals and earn a higher income than the rest of the 97%. This is a startling figure. It means that goals are not taken seriously.

People with goals are more confident of themselves because they measure themselves against a benchmark. This has the effect of letting them know where they truly stand against the goals they set.

It may be understandable that people lose their way after they set the goals. This may have been a result of having no mechanism to constantly affirm their actions. Or there was no method set up to affirm the goals they have set, reminding them the reason for working long and hard.

When goals are forgotten, time is wasted. And the person loses his self-esteem, his confidence, and gives up.

It is therefore important to maintain a high self-confident attitude that does not depart from reality. The role affirmation plays on maintaining self-confidence is in the area of autosuggestion.

Autosuggestion is a declaration of an intention or a goal is stated over and over again until the mind of the person accepts the statement as truth. This type of affirmation is viewed positively and it mobilizes one's resources and effort towards the attainment of the goals so stated.

It is also a means of harnessing the power of the subconscious in helping achieve goals. It is a form of self-hypnosis, usually accompanied by having a compelling vision with the statement; the person repetitively tries to live through the moment as if it already happened.

Sports psychology has made use of autosuggestion and visualization to win games and this was proven time and again by claims made by athletes. It seems that human beings are quite good at mentally programming themselves to achieve a specific goal.

However, the opposite effect can also take place. One can repetitively place himself in a position where negative thought repeatedly bombard the mind into submission. The brain makes no distinction between a positive suggestion and a negative suggestion.

Therefore the wording of the affirmation is very important. It is always better to declare a statement in a positive sense instead of the negative because the mind does not hear any negative remarks.

For example, if one wants to stop smoking, his statement should not be "I will not smoke." The mind can only perceive and accept it as "I will smoke." It would always be better to say, "I will exercise daily to be healthy."

The more positive the affirmation the more powerful the effect of the affirmation will have.

Affirmations must be stated everyday. It should be the first thing done when one wakes up, before work is started, and before one goes to sleep. This is programming the mind for success.

Visualization is executed by seeing a future event in as great detail as one can. It must involve all the senses, even taste and smell. The objective is to create a

compelling vision that the mind will readily accept as reality. If done correctly, the mind will subconsciously work towards the fulfillment of that desire.

The mind is a powerful tool for success. Because it is like a sponge, one must be careful what one or others put in it. Use affirmations and visualizations to clean up your mind as well.

Nothing happens easily. However, employ some of the principles outlined here and in no time your self confidence will soar!

Best of luck.