

A short guide to Building Your Confidence

Confidence

What is self-confidence?

Self-confidence is an attitude about your skills and abilities. It means you accept and trust yourself and have a sense of control in your life. You know your strengths and weakness well, and have a positive view of yourself.

Two key points here - it is an attitude, and it is about knowing both your strengths and weaknesses.

Firstly, you're already on your way to having more confidence.

How come? You have made the decision to read this guide.

In doing so, you have recognised that you want to improve your attitude towards having confidence in yourself, and you have recognised that there are areas that you would like to improve on, ie: you know your weaknesses, or perhaps they are perceived weaknesses.

As well as an attitude or perception, confidence is also a skill. It is a skill that can be learnt and developed. And as with anything that we learn and develop, we need to practice, practice, and practice some more.

Confidence is like a muscle, we need to keep working it for it to be able to grow and develop, to shape it into what we want.

There are going to be many things that you are already confident in doing or being, which you will have learnt and developed; you just might not recognise them all yet.

Confidence needs permission! In order for you to develop more confidence, you are going to have to give yourself permission to fail and make mistakes.

Think of when you were younger and were learning to ride a bike, or perhaps you have helped your child learn to ride a bike; no one gets on and rides a bike with confidence the first time! You need to practice and build your confidence gradually.

Confidence is about knowing that things can go wrong but you can figure it out and overcome it.



Different types of confidence

Situational confidence - this is as you might think, how you feel in certain situations. It might be that you feel you lack confidence in networking, presenting, or interviews. This is just about feeling out of your comfort zone which is perfectly normal.

Systemic confidence - this is more about your beliefs about your confidence levels. So just because you don't feel confident at interviews, it doesn't mean you are not a confident person and lack confidence everywhere else.

Let's build your confidence! Expectations shape reality.

This is a mindset thing. If you are expecting things to go badly, and just focusing on how nervous or low in confidence you will be feeling, that is going to be your reality and in turn, how you then behave.

Look to shift your expectations - I am prepared to the best of my ability; this will be a learning experience; I will feel slightly nervous and that's okay as I am out of my comfort zone; I will be the best I can possibly be given the skills and resources I have.



Know your strengths

In what situations do you feel confident? What is different about these? What qualities do you bring? Take a strengths profile.

There are plenty of free ones available online such as, <https://www.viacharacter.org/>, and ask your colleagues, friends, and family, what qualities do they admire about you?

Strengths are also things that you love doing. The things that bring you joy, when you are in your flow. The beauty of these is that you don't even have to be that good at them. Marcus Buckingham describes strengths as "any activity that energises you even if you're not good at it".

So when you're using your strengths in whatever you're doing, you are more likely to find joy, happiness, and fulfillment.

Reflect on what your strengths are, where you're adding value by who you are/ what you do. Write them down. Go back to your list when you are having a low confidence day to remind yourself of your strengths. How could you bring more of this into the areas where you don't feel so confident?



Be an advice giver.

Helping others and giving them support and advice is a great confidence booster. Always good to check with the person first if they want your advice though!

This is where knowing your strengths comes in. People are not good at everything. There are going to be many areas where your help and advice are going to be greatly received. Whether you are the excel whizz at work, the person who can placate an argument or someone who can bake the lightest cakes, you can share your strength with others and at the same time boost your confidence.

Develop a growth mindset.

There are two types of mindset:

A **growth mindset** means you believe your intelligence, skills and abilities can be developed over time and will continue to do so.

A **fixed mindset** means you believe intelligence is fixed—so if you're not good at something, you believe you'll never be good at it.

By developing a growth mindset, you are open to the idea that you will always be learning, developing, improving. You will never be the finished article and the joy is in the journey of learning.



Make your inner critic a person, and your friend.

This might sound a bit strange but we all have that nagging voice in our heads from time to time telling us 'we aren't good enough' or something similar. That's our 'inner critic'.

Take away their power, give them a name, a character, picture what they might look like. Start to recognise when 'they' are talking to you, and talk back. If your critic says, "you can't do that, you don't know how"; reply by saying "thanks, I know I haven't done this before but I am learning so it's not going to be perfect and I want to give it a go."

Recognise your achievements.

We all achieve things every day, we just don't often recognise it in ourselves. It is far easier to recognise what other people achieve.

Get yourself a journal, or use your phone/tablet, and jot down your achievements. You can do this on an hourly, daily, weekly basis. As you go through your day, take 5 minutes to acknowledge what you have accomplished in the past hour, note your progress, and if your progress hasn't been what you expected, note your learning - you have a growth mindset after all!



Confidence in relationships.

Much of our low or lack of confidence is related to relationships and there are going to be certain relationships where you have more confidence than others.

Break these down. Look at the relationships where you are confident, and those that you have lower confidence.

Make a note of the qualities and behaviours you bring to your confident relationships and see how you can apply these in different contexts - eg: in your not-so-confident relationship.

Stop comparing yourself to others.

When we compare ourselves to others, we are just making ourselves feel inadequate. Just as we shouldn't judge people for things we might not agree about them, the same goes for judging them on the things we perceive they have or do that are better than us. We rarely have the context behind other people.

In other words, 'Don't judge your insides by other people's outsides.'
We are all unique and different. That is what makes us special.



"Comparison is the thief of joy" (Theodore Roosevelt)

Surround yourself with the right people.

Spend time with people you care about and who care about you.
By doing this, your confidence will increase.

You trust these people; ask them to work with you on building your confidence. It takes practice to improve and grow in new areas. These people will support and encourage you, and when they provide feedback on areas for further improvement, you are not likely to see this as negative as it is coming from a place of trust and positive intent.

"Don't take criticism from people you would never go to for advice"

Focus on the positives.

Our brains are hardwired to remember the negative things instead of the positive. For example, in a presentation, if you made one mistake, you would only remember that and not the rest of the presentation which will have gone perfectly.

So this is a new habit to practise. When you next have a conversation, a meeting, or an interview, spend time making a note of all the positive things that happened. You can note the things that didn't go as well as hoped, but remember to note them as learning/growth points.



One step at a time.

Learning a new skill is not going to happen overnight. And you don't want to try to build your confidence in lots of areas at once.

Work out the areas where you don't have confidence and those areas you want to increase your confidence (there may be some that just don't seem important once you have written them down).

Then prioritise them, and work on them one area, one step at a time.

Timing is key.

There are always going to be days that you aren't going to feel top of your game. You might have had a bad night's sleep, a cross word with a family/friend, or just feel a bit emotional.

This is not the time to try and build your confidence in something new if you have a choice. So be aware of yourself, your needs, and your feelings. Be kind to yourself and treat yourself as you would do for your best friend. Give yourself a break and build that confidence another day.



Focus on the right amount of confidence.

Remember, you know what confidence feels like. You are confident in certain relationships; you are confident in certain activities.

You only need to focus on becoming confident in the areas that are important to you and will make a difference to you.

And you don't want too much confidence; too much confidence equals arrogance and I have never heard anyone say
'I wish I was more arrogant!'

If you've found my **Building Your Confidence** guide useful, I'd love to hear from you. It's great to connect with people & hear their feedback - see contact details below.

Email: sally@shinecoaching.org.uk

Website: www.shinecoaching.org.uk

LinkedIn: [sally-chapman-shine-coaching](https://www.linkedin.com/company/sally-chapman-shine-coaching)



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