

Realise your potential - one step at a time.

Eight Top Tips

1. Know what confidence is
2. Identify and remind yourself of your strengths
3. Have a clear goal
4. Take a step by step approach
5. Draw on your courage
6. Avoid the comparison trap
7. Spend time with positive people
8. Think positively

1. Know what confidence is

Success comes in cans, not cant's. Author Unknown

Confidence is not about what you can or can't do. It's what you **think** and **believe** you can or can't do.

When you're feeling confident, you have a positive attitude towards yourself and your abilities and you **believe** that events and experiences are likely to turn out well. And so you give it a try.

But when you're not feeling confident, you're likely to **believe** that things will turn out badly. And because you **believe** things won't turn out well, you often feel that there's no point in even trying.

2. Identify and remind yourself of your strengths

Your strengths are the personal qualities, abilities, knowledge and skills you already have. Strengths are things that at the very least, you are competent at - you have sufficient skill, knowledge and experience in. But more likely, your strengths are the things you're good at and that you do well.

Identify your personal qualities. Qualities such as being as patience, caring, reliable, organised, adventurous, persistent, loyal.

Identify your skills. Think of the skills you have - skills you've acquired through work, study, hobbies and interests.

Remind yourself. Ask yourself, how has this quality or skill helped me in my work or day to day life? What challenges have I overcome by having this quality or skill? Write about it.

By identifying your qualities and skills and writing out how, why and when you have each quality and quality, you are creating your own personal affirmations; positive truths about yourself.

Build on your strengths. Think of something you's like to achieve. What strengths - what skills and personal qualities - do you already have that could contribute to developing your ability in that area?

3. Have a clear goal

The trouble with not having a goal is that you can spend your life running up and down the field and never score. Bill Copeland

Have a clear goal; something you're aiming to achieve. It could be a short term goal; something you want to achieve today, in the next few days or weeks. Or it could be a longer term goal; something you want to be able to do in the next few months or in a year or two.

Maybe you'd like to work freelance, run your own business, work abroad, or return to study. Maybe you'd like to leave a job, a university course or a relationship. Perhaps you want to travel; drive to Paris, visit Athens or Berlin, Costa Rica, or Cuba?

Commit yourself. Think of something you want to aim for - something you want to be able to do. Write it down. Then make a pledge to yourself. "I am going to..." whatever it is you want to do

As you achieve each goal you create the momentum that helps you continue to build your confidence in a range of other situations.

4. Take a step by step approach

What could feel almost impossible in one go becomes a lot more doable as a series of smaller steps.

Remember, confidence is all about believing - convincing yourself - that you *can* do things. Taking a step by step approach means you set yourself up for constant successes by achieving small targets along the way. With each step that you achieve, you convince yourself that you *can* do things because each step strengthens your beliefs about what you're capable of and encourages you to **believe** you can do a bit more with each step.

Remind yourself of what you've already achieved. Think of something you now feel capable and confident doing; your job or an aspect of your job, driving, travelling to new places, playing a sport or a musical instrument, cooking. Now think back to when you did it for the first time. Whatever it was, you learnt to do it one step at a time and with each step you became more adept, efficient and capable. You can do it again, with a different goal in a different situation.

Know what your baseline is and take a step forward from there. Decide what's that first step could be. For example, you might like to feel more confident about challenging other people's ideas or making suggestions in meetings. You could, therefore decide, "I'm comfortable making suggestions, so the first step I'll take from there is to query just one small issue in this afternoon's meeting."

Keep your mind focused on one step at a time. Tell yourself, "This is what I'm going to do next" and then just focus on that one step you're taking. If a step feels overwhelming or too difficult or didn't work out, break that step down into smaller steps. Set yourself up for constant successes by achieving small targets along the way and you see yourself moving forward and becoming more confident about doing or getting what you want.

Get started now. With each step you take, you will grow stronger and stronger, more and more skilled, more and more self-confident, and more and more successful. Mark Victor Hansen

5. Draw on your courage

Courage gives you the ability to do something **despite** fear, doubt and lack of confidence. In fact, in order to feel confident you have to start with courage. That first step is usually a courageous one.

There is power in doing. When you draw on your courage and take action, confidence will follow. As Christopher Robin said to Winnie the Pooh, "*Always remember you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.*"

Rather than fight feelings of fear and doubt, accept them. Whether it's courage to do something or say something, acknowledge your fear. Tell yourself "I'm feeling scared. I'm not sure about this." Then push past those thoughts and feelings and tell yourself "But I **can** do this." Feel the fear. And then do it.

Don't overthink it. The more you think about whether you should or shouldn't do or say something the less likely you are to take that first courageous step. Courage can be prone to leaking so the longer you wait, the less of it you'll have. Once you've decided to do something, don't wait, do it! Don't wait to feel confident before you do something; do something and confidence will follow.

Decide what is the one thing you'll do first. Do that one thing. Once you start doing something, it's easier to continue doing it. Having the courage to initiate that first step will make things happen. And once things

are happening you'll just be dealing with it.

6. Avoid the comparison trap

Comparing yourself to someone else puts the focus on the wrong person. Your skills, abilities, contributions and value are entirely unique to you. They can never be fairly compared to anyone else. Your time and effort could be better spent thinking positively about yourself.

Compare yourself to yourself. Focus on what you have done and are doing rather than what everyone else has done and is doing. Reflect on what you've experienced, achieved and / or overcome. See how far you have come compared to last week, last year, two years ago, five years ago.

Be inspired by others. Rather than compare yourself with other people, be inspired by them. See others as role models to learn from and inspire you. When you allow yourself to feel inspired by others, you can feel motivated to achieve and do well according to **your** own abilities, skills and resources.

7. Spend time with positive people

Confidence comes not just from what believe about yourself and your abilities but also what other people - family, friends, colleagues etc - think and believe about you and how they behave towards you and respond to you.

In a variety of situations, being positively noticed, encouraged or praised by others can help you build a positive view of yourself. You need positive people in your life! Positive people are likely to respond to you in positive ways and so help you think positively about yourself and your abilities.

Identify the positive people. Think widely; positive people in your life might be friends or family. But the person who introduces you to new worlds, ideas and interests is a tutor on a course or an author of interesting books. Perhaps there's a comedian on radio or TV who makes you laugh.

8. Think positively

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence. Helen Keller

Having a positive outlook does not mean denying the possible challenges and difficulties of a situation. Rather, you acknowledge any potential challenges and then, instead of letting them drag you down into a spiral of negative thinking, you look for the positive aspects and interpretations of a situation.

Supposing, for example, that you had the opportunity to apply for a promotion. If you were thinking negatively your thoughts might be "I probably don't have all the skills and experience needed for this job. No point even applying - they'll see I'd be out of my depth." But if instead you thought "I don't quite have the skills and experience for this job but I **can** emphasise how willing I am to put in the extra hours to learn" you would then be thinking positively.

Positive thoughts give you the hope and beliefs that will make it more likely that you **will** be able to do something.

Have a phrase or word that stops the train of negative thoughts. More often than not, you won't even notice when you're thinking in negative ways. But when you do, simply say "Stop!" to yourself. Or tell yourself "No, I'm not going there. I'm not thinking like that!" Then refocus your thoughts to more positive helpful thoughts.

Add the word 'but'. Anytime you catch yourself saying a negative sentence, add the word 'but'. This prompts you to follow up with a positive sentence. For example "I don't think I can do this. **But** I'll try and if it looks like it's not working out I'll ask for help."

From: Confidence Pocketbook' by Gill Hasson