

FIND YOUR PURPOSE AND GIVE YOUR LIFE MEANING

THE SUPER SELF- CONFIDENCE SHORTCUT

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What does self-confidence actually mean?

It means we feel capable, good about ourselves, ready to accept a challenge. It is the feeling that “I CAN.” I can do this, I can manage this, I belong here.

To feel confident demands the suspension of fear, anxiety and doubt. Can you do this? Yes, read on.....

Your normal state of being is neutral. You are neither confident nor unconfident. You are cruising along on an even plane, in neutral, emotionally stable.

Then something happens.

Your brain immediately assesses the situation.

“Have I been in a situation like this before? If so, what happened? What did I do last time?”

Your memory then churns up pictures, feelings and sounds from your last encounter with a similar situation. You instinctively react - fight, flight or freeze.

If you felt confident in this type of situation last time, all is well, you immediately feel comfortable, confident that you will survive, maybe even thrive this time.

However, if you felt nervous, anxious or afraid last time you encountered something similar to this situation you will immediately generate similar feelings and your level of confidence will decline.

It is what you have stored in your memory over the course of your lifetime that dictates how you feel and react in every new situation you encounter.

Your challenge

The challenge you face is that a lifetime of reacting in certain ways has built up a belief within you that it will always be like this. In other words, when I encounter a situation where I lose confidence I believe that this is what will always happen to me.

You have programmed both your memory and your belief system to make you feel like this - to lose confidence.

This can lead to a feeling of helplessness. You may start to believe that there is nothing you can do - that you are destined to always feel like this.

Stop, think a moment - you don't have to believe that. It is your mind, your body and your memory we are talking about here. You have the ability to replace them with whatever information, feelings and behaviour patterns you wish.

There is plenty of scientific research to show that whilst you cannot erase all of your memories you can overwrite them. You can pile so many new memories on top of your old memories that they become suppressed by the sheer weight of your new memories, then the old memories will no longer hold the same power over you.

- The next time something happens, when you ask yourself the questions: Have I been in a situation like this before?
- If so, what happened?
- What did I do last time?

A whole new way of seeing things, of feeling and behaving will emerge.

Where confidence problems start

They start when we are young.

They start with the concept of right and wrong.

They also have foundations in the concept that only success is admirable. In other words, in order to be regarded as successful we must pass exams, we must play in the top team, we must mix with popular people, be in with the in crowd.

From an early age we are expected to behave in a certain way. We are encouraged or discouraged from doing certain things. If parents are overly protective or don't encourage their children to be adventurous, they are more likely to feel inadequate or incapable.

As we grow older we are taught we must achieve a certain standard in order to make progress.

The problem with this way of measuring people is that every human being does not have the same level of skills and abilities. We all learn in different ways.

It is notable that the winner of the Sword of Honour (the reward for being the best officer cadet) at the British Army's Officer Training School at Sandhurst has never become a Field Marshall. In other words being good at learning to be an officer has never proved to be an indicator of who will learn to be a successful general.

Similarly the best sports players are infrequently the best academic students and vice versa. Good artists are only rarely good writers. Scientists are often poor orators.

The point is that no single human being can hope to be the best at everything. The top achiever in every situation they encounter.

So for most of us, our lack of confidence problems start in our early years at school and even sometimes in the home where critical parents and teachers set expectations and standards for us that we are not adequately equipped to either understand or achieve.

You might have been good at science and maths but, if you were, the chances are that you weren't as good at art and languages. Or you may have excelled at drama and English but not done so well at chemistry and geography.

We all have strengths and weaknesses, natural aptitudes and abilities so it is highly unlikely that we will excel at everything. Yet school curricula are designed to test us in a very specific, pre-defined way on all subjects. And what they achieve, is to teach us that if we don't achieve an acceptable standard we're not good enough.

It is a lack of encouragement and acceptance when making mistakes that causes loss of confidence. It is the fear of failure and the pain resulting from failure that makes us lose confidence.

Watch a tiny baby. You will be hard pressed to find it losing confidence. As it grows the small child becomes an explorer. It moves around picking up objects, tasting them, testing them, exploring the world around it without boundaries, except those set by its parents. It learns and grows in confidence with a loving, supporting environment.

Anxious parents worry if their child doesn't talk or isn't walking by a certain age, or starts wetting the bed. They want their child to be 'normal' or what they understand or perceive to be normal. Even more they want or expect their child to be outstanding. They are already setting standards for their child and the child may not be capable of meeting their standards.

Notice that the child is not setting its own standards, it is being judged by other people's standards. But it will soon learn about failure if it does not manage to achieve those, "other people's" standards.

Your parents and teachers set up a process of constantly measuring you. You were measured against other children, against the exam system, against standards based on the aspirations of others.

As an adult you'll have measures and standards set for you in your career.

The burden of conditioning

Can you see how you learn, at an early age, that there are many areas of life in which you are destined to fail?

From an early age you learn how to react to certain situations based on what you see and learn from how others behave. You picked up on the feelings and emotions of the grown-ups around you. How they think and act has an affect on you which you take through to your adult life.

You have been conditioned to feel embarrassed, guilty, ashamed, unworthy if you fail. It was not fair to teach you, at a young age, that there were many areas of life in which you would fail. Your parents and teachers did not mean to make you feel bad. They thought they were teaching you well, but they never thought about the consequences of injecting you with the pain of failure.

Your parents and teachers had themselves been conditioned with the “right way” of doing things. The right way of teaching. The right way of bringing up well behaved children. They thought they were bringing you up to be a model citizen. They wanted you to be a good, worthy member of the human race. They were doing their best. They simply did not realise the consequences (for you) of the way that they were bringing you up.

Do not blame your parents or your teachers for the fact that you sometimes lose confidence. There is nothing to be gained by blaming others. In fact blaming others will not make you feel better. Blaming others will not cause you to gain the confidence you desire. Blaming only makes you and the person you are blaming feel bad, if they know you are blaming them.

The consequences of failure

What is failure? It is simply that you made mistakes or did not reach a particular goal. Perhaps it was not possible to reach that goal. Perhaps there was someone better than you on that day who got there before you.

The real problem here, is how you are measuring failure. You have fallen in to the trap of measuring success or failure according to a score card.

Life isn't a game of football or chess or any other game that has an absolute result. Where winning is the whole point of playing the game.

You are playing the game of life. You will play hundreds and hundreds of smaller games during the time that you are a resident of planet earth. Even the very top teams are never at the top of the league tables all of the time. Other teams come along and beat them from time to time. Bear in mind that the top teams are only top of one particular sport or game. They would not achieve the same level of success if asked to play another sport or game. Yet you measure yourself all the time against the very best and you allow yourself to feel bad when you do not measure up or win every game.

Are you crazy?

Think about your last failure. The last time you lost confidence, the last time when you felt bad about your result. Now ask yourself these questions:

- Did you feel bad as a result of this failure? Yes/No
- How long did the bad feeling last for?
- Does it make you a bad person that you did not reach the goal? Yes/No
- Will you die because you did not reach that goal? Yes/No
- Did you do your best? Yes/No
- When you review this failure in your mind is there anything humorous about the way that you reacted to the result? Yes/No

Only if you failed to do your best do you have any reason to feel bad about the result. If you gave up, or lowered your standards then you're right to feel disappointed, unless you had a good reason. But even if you feel bad about

the level of effort you expended, you can still determine to do better next time and you can learn from the experience. There is no reason to lose confidence because of this one result.

The best consequence of making mistakes or failing is the learning. Analyse what happened.

You can either learn that this is a field of activity in which someone with your skills and abilities could not expect to do well.

Or,

you can learn that this is an activity in which you need to make a determined effort to improve your skills and abilities, so by doing your best next time you will achieve a better result.

Note: if you decide to take the second option you should not set yourself an absolute target, like winning, but you should just determine to improve and do your best. Winning is always dependent on too many variables, the weather, the strength of the opposition, your biorhythms on the day as well as those of other competitors etc. etc.

The curse of your self-image

Fear of making mistakes, fear of humiliation.

Your self-image comes from how you feel about yourself at a given moment in time and how you judge your sense of worth.

Ask yourself this: “are you meant to be perfect?” Have you ever seen someone set ridiculously high expectations only to fail? Have you been that person, on the receiving end of laughter or disappointment resulting from your failures?

Whenever your self-confidence takes a dip it is nearly always because you too had set yourself a target beyond your capabilities and failed to reach it. Your failure is painful because your only measure of success or failure was whether or not you hit your target. And your failure dented your self-image.

Accept that you are not perfect. Oh dear, did your self-image just take a hit?

We can all excel at many things, but it's important to know what those things are and to recognise that being great at one thing does not equip you to be the best at everything you will encounter in life.

It is impossible and indeed not desirable to lead an error free life. There will always be areas where your abilities will be less than those required for high achievement. There will always be mistakes. There will always be unforeseeable, unpredictable occurrences that you could not have planned or trained for.

Part of the joy of life is its unpredictability, the surprises that give us an adrenaline rush of excitement of joy. Making mistakes and learning from them.

It is normal to make mistakes, normal to bite off more than we can chew, normal to set our sights on the unattainable, normal to slip on a banana skin and it is normal to believe that we are better than we are.

The lesson we have to learn is to be realistic and to accept that we will never be top of the class at everything we do. But if we can enjoy the challenge and do our best, we can still get a lot of pleasure out of new challenges and experiences.

The best medicine for your self image is to learn to laugh at yourself when you fail, when you don't measure up to other people's abilities in a particular sphere of activity.

Learn to be realistic about what to expect from yourself. Know you do not need to be a genius at everything you can possibly do. Know there will always be someone who is better than you and that's OK. It does not make you a lesser person.

The combination of everything that you are, the sum total of your being is unique, it has a power and a beauty all of its own.

Don't look outside yourself for your self-image. Don't try to be perfect always. Recognise that you have limitations and just do your best with what you've got, because what you've got is a whole lot.

The way to overcome your anxieties and loss of confidence

Up to now you have been writing “anxiety” or “loss of confidence” programmes into your memory.

What is happening to you is that the moment you encounter any situation where you previously lost confidence you simply go onto autopilot and lose confidence again.

So, if it is the programmes you have stored in your memory that are causing you problems, you need to change the thoughts and behaviour patterns that you have written into your memory.

For example you may have a fear of public speaking. Every time you think about public speaking you immediately start to feel nervous and lose confidence. This means that thinking about public speaking automatically triggers a memory of nervousness and loss of confidence in your memory.

The solution is to write a new response into your memory.

This is simply done by asking yourself: “*how would I like to feel about public speaking?*” And, “*how would I like to behave when I am speaking in public?*”

Your answers might be: “*I would like to behave and feel as though I am confident, happy and in control when I speak in public.*”

You now have to act this out. Do it like this:

1. Think about speaking in public.
2. Feel confident, happy and in control. Do it now. Imagine that you are speaking in public and create the feelings of confidence, happiness and control.
3. Picture how you are behaving. Stand up right now and actually act with confidence, happiness and control.

Of course just doing this once will not override the public speaking anxiety programme that you have created over a number of years. You need to do the exercise above many times in order to embed it into your memory.

How to embed new feelings and behaviours into your memory

This is your self-coaching programme. Do not rush this section, it is by far the most important page in the book.

Write a list of the situations where you lose confidence. Start writing now. Do not stop until you have at least five situations on your list.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

Then write against each situation how you would like to feel and behave in each of the situations. Do this now.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

Now enact your new feelings and behaviours every day, twice a day for the next thirty days.

How to guarantee success

Even when you fail, ensure you do not lose confidence.

The more you succeed the more your confidence will increase.

You don't need to accept other people's score cards as being the absolute and only measure of success and failure.

Guy's boss set him a target of 100 sales a month. Unfortunately that month a big factory in Guy's territory closed down that month and five thousand people lost their jobs. But despite the depression amongst the local population Guy still managed to make 60 sales. His boss told him that he had failed, but Guy knew that, given the circumstances he had done his best and his results were respectable.

Should he have lost confidence because of what his boss said or should he gain confidence from the knowledge that his best efforts had produced a good result in the prevailing conditions?

The point is not to allow your performance as measured against a boss's target to affect your self-confidence but rather to feel confident that you have done your best in the circumstances.

Judy had been invited on a date with Noel. She liked Noel a lot and made a great effort to look her best and to do her best to be amusing company. However, when they got to the party Noel spent the whole evening talking to and dancing with Shannon. Judy felt disappointed that Noel obviously preferred someone else to her.

She determined not to let the situation spoil her evening. She made up her mind to be amusing and enjoy the company of other people at the party. In the end a man called Owen took her home that night and he turned out to be the man for her.

Roger was the 100 metres champion of his running club. He was training hard for the regional championships. He knew that he was about to encounter competitors of a higher calibre than any he had ever run against before. The challenge of raising the bar excited him and he worked hard on his strength and fitness.

He knew that he could run under 11 seconds because he had done it on his home track. But he did not set that as his target, neither did he set himself the goal of winning the race. He simply told himself that he was only as good as he was on the day, that everyone else had probably trained just as hard as he had. There was no way of knowing what times they were achieving at home. He would simply give of his best, run as hard as he could and see what happened. Whatever the outcome he knew that he would feel good about himself knowing that he had done his best.

On the start line he was aware that he felt relaxed and ready. He could feel that the men beside him were nervous with anticipation and he took strength from the fact that they were obviously tense. Roger ran his best race ever and finished second to a man who broke the regional record. Afterwards Roger felt very good about himself because he had run his best race ever and been on the track when the regional record was broken.

Donna had to make a big presentation to the whole company about the role her team played. The thought of speaking in front of so many people excited her and made her feel nervous.

As she started to plan what she would say she found herself thinking about the reaction she wanted to get from the audience. She visualised that by the end she wanted them all to be smiling and clapping in appreciation. Then doubt suddenly invaded her mind, “what if they don’t applaud?” She had created a score card. She was set up to judge herself and to be judged by the applause of others.

She immediately reset her goal for the talk. She would ask those likely to attend the presentation what they needed to know about her team. She would find interesting ways to present the information, she would prepare thoroughly. Then she would do her best on the day and judge herself solely on the criteria of whether or not she had done her best.

When you set a score that must be attained or a goal that must be reached it is always in the future. You are always striving to reach forward, you are not totally in the present.

When you are doing your best, you are doing your best right now. It is a present and continuous effort to achieve. It is a great way of focussing your mind and your energy. It is the best way to know, when the task is finished, that you can feel confident because you have done your best. Nothing more could have been asked of you.

The power of optimism

There is a scientifically proven relationship between optimism and confidence.

Many people chose to feel pessimistic in the belief that by being pessimistic they won't be disappointed if things do indeed turn out badly, and they will feel good if they are proven wrong and things actually turn out better than they anticipated. However, by always expecting the worst they programme their performance to produce poor results.

On top of that, if you are always expecting the worst you become miserable company, depression is likely to seek you out.

Conversely someone who is always expecting good things to happen is likely to be cheerful and programming themselves to help good results to come their way. They are more likely to attract lively people who will help them achieve their goals.

When you expect good results you feel good about your future and it helps you to feel confident in the present.

As you work through your self-coaching programme each day make sure that you feel optimistic that you are becoming a more confident person.

Maintaining your confidence and your mental strength

Always being at your best requires a high level of self knowledge. The more you know about yourself and the way you think, feel and act the better you will be able to perform in all areas of your life.

Sustaining a good level of self confidence requires good levels of mental power. Your mind is a muscle and as such it needs constant training in order to maintain its fitness and strength.

We hope you have found this publication helpful. You can get daily mental power coaching by simply being a member of [The Shine Network](#).

You'll receive personal growth coaching from four of the very best personal development coaches. The Founder members of The Shine Network include:

David Ferrers M.nlp who has been a full time professional personal development coach for over 25 years.

Clare Evans the author of Time Management for Dummies who coaches all over the world and appears regularly on radio and TV.

Alex Jacob M.nlp who also runs the Centre for Creative Learning and The Creative Masterclass.

Matthew Matheson a communications coach is an expert on public speaking and improvisation.

All these coaches, as well as many other professional members of the Network will be available to guide you to find and achieve your life's purpose.

How you now go forward to achieve your life's purpose is up to you. The Chinese philosopher Lao Tsu said, "*start and go on.*"

You have just started an important journey in your life, continue that journey by joining us on <https://The-Shine-Network.com>. Do it now while you're in the right frame of mind.

With best wishes

David Ferrers
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