

Skillbook

Building Your Self-Confidence

Stress Management
Skills



Mindtools

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If you have any queries, please contact us at
mtecustomerservices@mindtools.com.

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1. Introduction

Having the right level of self-confidence is vital to a successful career. Having too much or too little can lead to under-performance. Over-confident people can appear arrogant and this can cause them problems. They are likely to take unwise risks and make careless decisions, and their behavior can alienate the very people they depend upon. Whereas, under-confident people second-guess themselves and avoid putting themselves forward for new opportunities. They hold themselves back from achieving their potential.

What you need is an appropriate level of self-confidence – enough to function happily and competently, but not so much that you make hubristic mistakes and upset those you rely on with your arrogance.

Think of the relationship between success and self-confidence as the two sides of a set of weighing scales – too much confidence, and your success can dip, too little and success will be hard to reach.

An appropriate and healthy level of self-confidence will help you to perform better at work. And when you perform better, you enjoy more success, which builds your confidence even further.

People gravitate toward those with a healthy level of self-confidence and, when you have it, your ability to influence and inspire them soars.

But what if you're not naturally self-confident, or what if you've allowed your insecurities to take control?

Don't worry – the good news is that you can take steps to build and strengthen your confidence, and this **Skillbook** shows you how to do this.

We've brought together four useful exercises that you can use to uncover your inner talents. You'll then learn how to translate these talents into an abundant source of confidence that you can dip into whenever you need a boost.

You'll learn how to:

- Remind yourself of previous successes.
- Reframe past mistakes.
- Set confidence-building goals.
- Envision a successful future for yourself.

2. Celebrating You

Self-confident people have several key traits that others don't. For instance, they believe that they can achieve what they put their mind to. They don't talk negatively to themselves, they don't criticize their own performance, and they don't compare themselves to others – they simply believe in their own talents.

They're happy with the way they are, but they know that, if they try, they can be even better. And they do try, again and again. They don't give up, because they celebrate everything that they do – with gusto!

We all have an internal monologue that accompanies us as we move through life. With every action we take, it's there, advising us, warning us, encouraging us. Confident people's internal monologue performs like a cheerleader, providing them with continuous support and encouragement. However, if you are not a confident person, your internal monologue will tend to be less positive. You may doubt yourself and your abilities, and you might also allow your fear of failure to hold you back in life.

Just think about what you could accomplish if you could chase away that monkey sitting on your shoulder, scoffing at your attempts at success! All it's doing is keeping you down!

2.1. Banish the Monkey

The best way to get rid of something you **don't** want is to replace it with something you **do** want. In this case, you have to replace your negative thoughts with positive visions of your successes and worth.



Action:

Use the table on the next page to list successes that you've had in your life. Write down a few in each category. The size or duration of the success is not important. We want you to focus on the things that you've accomplished and have been proud of.

Area of Your Life	Describe Your Past Success
Education	
Career	
Family	
Hobby/Sports	
Community	

Now, look over your list of successes and accomplishments. Take a moment to let the depth and breadth of your achievements sink in.

Too often, we come to believe that we have limited strengths. We focus our energy on the areas where we do have confidence, but we don't venture beyond them. This means that when we have to step outside our comfort zones, we panic, and, if we're not careful, we make choices that damage our confidence later on.

Now that you've listed your past successes, you should have a better appreciation of your talents and abilities. But, to get rid of that monkey once and for all, you need a quick way to remind yourself of how great you are. Just like cheerleaders who excite the crowd, you have to encourage yourself to believe in your personal greatness. You can do this with personal affirmations.

2.2. Personal Affirmations

A personal affirmation is a statement that you create to confirm your worth. You repeat this phrase to yourself as a way to reinforce its message. Eventually, the affirmation becomes a natural aspect of your self-talk.

To create an affirmation statement, keep in mind the following:

- Use "I" statements: "I love myself..." rather than "Love yourself..."
- Use the present tense: "I am smart", rather than "I will be smart."
- Use positive language: "I am smart," rather than "I am not dumb."



Action:

Think about the talents and successes that you identified in the last exercise. On the next page, write an affirmation statement about yourself that will boost your confidence, and help you feel great about yourself and your future success.

Describe things like the qualities you exhibit, the positive actions you take, and the attitudes you possess. Repeat this statement to yourself at least three times a day until you truly believe it.

I am a person who is...
and who...

3. Reframing Past Misses

You've started developing your confidence using your achievements and proven talents, so now it's time to move on to another building block of high self-confidence – knowing that you can rebound from failure.

High self-confidence helps you get through the tough times. No one can “win” all the time. Holding your head high and staying focused on your goal is critically important to success. You've got to be resilient, and be able to see setbacks as opportunities to improve. As Benjamin Franklin said, “I didn't fail the test, I just found 100 ways to do it wrong.”

A failed attempt is really a whisper telling you to try again. Your failures serve as guideposts for the rest of your journey. They help you to know which paths to avoid in the future, and they allow you to start heading in the right direction.

If success comes easy, it's unlikely to bring you satisfaction. Sure, you can set really simple goals for yourself and achieve them. But it's when you set the bar high, and suffer a few bumps and bruises, that you build your confidence and confirm what you already know – that you can do almost anything with enough work, dedication and conviction.

Embracing your failures as readily as your successes is a sign of strong self-confidence – the kind that won't be eroded by setbacks, and that will inspire you to be the best that you can be.



Action:

Think of a recent setback, a time when you didn't achieve what you wanted, or something that damaged your self-confidence. Then think about the feelings or beliefs about yourself and your abilities that this conjured up for you. Briefly summarize the incident, and the feeling that you experienced, on the next page.

For example, “I failed to get a report submitted on time. This caused me to believe I am disorganized.”

Incident Summary:
This caused me to believe/feel:

How can you think about this incident, and your role in it, in a more useful, positive or beneficial way?

For instance, rather than thinking, “I’m disorganized,” say, “I need to develop a system to manage my workload better.” Being disorganized is a character flaw that may be hard to change. To develop a personal workload management system, on the other hand, is achievable. You’ve now reframed the incident in a way that empowers you to make changes, and emerge stronger, more capable, and more confident than before.



Action:

Write your reframed statement below, and make a note of your emotional reaction.

Incident Reframe:
Emotional Reaction:



Action:

Now, identify two more ways that you could improve the situation, and your reaction or response to it. When you look at a situation from a different angle, you can see many opportunities for growth and development. These all lead to a better understanding of how to build your confidence and achieve success.

Incident Summary 2:
Incident Reframe 2:
Incident Summary 3:
Incident Reframe 3:

4. Setting Confidence-Building Goals

You're probably familiar with goal setting as a great way of organizing yourself for achievement. Setting and achieving goals (and taking the time to celebrate their achievement) is a powerful way of building your self-confidence. After all, if you've worked hard to achieve these goals, you've earned the confidence that comes with success!

The more goals you achieve, the more confident you become, and the greater the chance will be that you'll achieve even more of your goals. This shows how powerful goal setting can be.

Life Goals

The first step is to set life goals. These are extremely important, as they point you in the right direction, and they allow you to achieve successes along your journey. (You can also use them to achieve the vision of yourself that you created with your affirmations in Chapter 2.)

Short-Term Goals

The second set of goals complements your life goals and builds your confidence. They have a short-term focus, and achieving them will help you feel good about what you're doing each day.

You can base your initial short-term goals based on the reframing exercise you completed in the previous section. These goals are not fixed – it's important to continue developing them, especially when you miss targets or don't achieve what you intended to. This way, you'll provide yourself with an up-to-date, steady supply of goals and accomplishments that will help you to build your confidence and self-esteem.



Action:

For the three reframed statements you developed, use the following template to create specific, short-term and achievable goals that you can start to work on immediately.

Use the SMART mnemonic, where appropriate, to make these goals powerful. SMART stands for:

- **S** – Specific.
- **M** – Measurable.
- **A** – Attainable.
- **R** – Relevant.
- **T** – Time-bound.

Goal 1
Goal 2
Goal 3

5. Envisioning Your Success

In many ways, your mind will interpret a vivid image of the future in the same way that it does a real experience. That's why personal affirmations can work well, and it's why you can boost your self-confidence by creating strong mental images of your future success. (This is something that successful athletes do routinely.)

To help you do this, try Treasure Mapping. Use this simple yet powerful technique to create a motivating image or collage of each of the major goals you identified in Section 4.

For instance, if you are a salesperson and your goal is to beat your company's sales record, you could create a collage of pictures that will help you to visualize achieving this. It could include positive keywords, images of people winning awards or signing deals with customers, pictures of your product standing proud, and – right in the center – a representation of the sales figures you hope to achieve.

Your collage will serve as a quick reminder of what steps you need to take to achieve your goal, and how it will feel when you do so.



Action:

Close your eyes and imagine success in your chosen goal. Use all five senses: describe to yourself what things taste, smell, sound, look, and feel like in your successful future. Who is there with you? What are you doing? How do people react to you?

When you have a strong image in your mind, create a graphic representation of it in the box on page 12.

You could draw a scene, use shapes and colors to convey your image, or even arrange single key words on the page. Don't worry if you're not very good at drawing, you just need to create a visually stimulating picture. Alternatively, you can cut and paste images to create a collage. This is your vision, so capture it in the way that suits you best.

(If you can't print out page 12, use a blank sheet of paper instead.)

My Vision

6. Key Points

Self-confidence is vitally important for your success. Although some people seem to be born with an abundance of self-confidence, it isn't a genetic predisposition, and you can develop it yourself.

There are many things that you can do to increase your self-confidence. First, start believing in yourself.

Then, regularly use affirmations to remind yourself of your talents and wonderful attributes, and build a strong vision of your successful self. Even before you feel confident, your mind will take over and help you act with the confidence that you need to achieve your goals.

It's important to recognize that you will make mistakes. These are opportunities, not failures. By reframing them, you create more opportunities to achieve your goals, improve your skills, and step closer to your dream vision.

Building self-confidence is like climbing a staircase. Start climbing, keep going, and walk step-by-step until you reach the top!