

## Building Self Confidence

Think about the times when you've felt most confident at work. Was it when you were running a staff meeting, analyzing reports, or talking with your customers? These situations are where your strengths and talents shine through and you handle them easily and effortlessly. Now think of the times when you've been most uncomfortable – making a formal presentation, meeting with a prospective customer, or interviewing for a new position, for instance. Drawing on self confidence in these situations can calm your nerves and give you the ability to face new things head-on. Others' perception of you is their reality, so do all you can to influence them positively and get hired or be promoted! Here are some ideas on building that all-important confidence as you're preparing for entering unfamiliar territory:

**Vocabulary:** Listen to the words you use and how you speak of yourself, especially when nervous. Downplaying successes and pooh-poohing compliments send messages about your confidence level to others. Stay positive, self-supportive, and remember your previous achievements.

**Self-Talk:** What do you say to yourself when you make a mistake or are faced with a new challenge? Feeding your mind positive thoughts about yourself are just as important as feeding your body with good food and exercise. Create some affirmations to help you through tough spots – “I am capable and confident”...”I handle new situations easily”. Appreciate your own best qualities and strengths.

**Be Present:** Put away distractions, especially all things that light up, beep and buzz. There is hardly any excuse for having these things in an interview or business meeting anyway. Be present with the person you're meeting with – listen, interact, and make them your priority at that moment. Being fully present with them is truly a foundation for solid business relationships.

**Posture:** Pay attention to how you sit and stand when doing something unfamiliar. Take a stance that tells people you're open to receiving information and input, while keeping in mind what accomplishments and benefits you already bring to the table.

**Voice:** In addition to words, pay attention to how you sound. Speaking calmly and confidently at a steady volume conveys trustworthiness and competence. Record yourself speaking before you enter into that conversation or interview.

**Appearance:** Be comfortable in your professional attire. Fidgeting with a stiff collar or itchy fabric will detract from your verbal message. Sometimes that tried and true older garment is better than something expensive and new. Dry clean, mend, iron and polish it up to make a great first impression.

**Eye contact:** Look people in the eye even when you're uncomfortable. Making a connection via the eyes settles everyone's uneasiness and helps express sincerity, openness, and interest.

**Accomplishments:** Remind yourself of what you've done successfully in the past. Chances are that you'll pull from that previous experience to help you push through any new unfamiliar ones. Keep a running list of monthly successes and review it often and definitely before stepping into a new event. Be ready to talk about these when given the opportunity, not in a bragging way, but in a matter-of-fact, “here's how I can help you” way.

**Visualize:** Close your eyes and imagine the task ahead already successfully accomplished. Do what the athletes do – play it out in your mind over and over again, so when the actual time comes, you're comfortable and exude confidence.

**Forgive & Forget:** Get over any past mistakes and interviews gone bad that may hold you back as you encounter this new challenge. Think about that old nagging story one last time, talk it out, forgive the parties involved, and let it go. Don't carry it into what can be an exciting future.

**Practice** all these things and your confidence will soar. People will want to hire you, have you handle their accounts, give you more responsibility – all because of the way you come across and make them feel.

Building self confidence helps us grow personally and professionally, and create dynamic exciting lives with new challenges and positive outcomes. With confidence, you will carry yourself with respect and dignity, better connect with managers, customers and colleagues, and build a work life of integrity. In the words of Henry Ford, "Whether you think you can or think you can't, you are right." Believe in yourself, put these tips into practice, and go out there and be successful!

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