

Bringing Out the best in others

SALES • COMMUNICATIONS • EMPLOYEE EFFECTIVENESS • PERSONAL GROWTH

How to Develop Real Self Confidence

By Alice Wheaton

Successful people are often in situations where they feel fear, doubt, and insecurity. The difference between them and the majority of people is that they are not willing to allow their feelings to run their lives. They are able to experience the feelings of fear without labelling themselves as having poor self-esteem or lacking self-confidence.

Although feelings provide great information, they are not facts. For instance, you may *feel* incompetent to handle a particular challenge but actually *be* quite competent. Your mind in this case is giving you erroneous information and hoping you will act on it to keep you out of the winners circle.

Successful people are not necessarily more confident than the average person. However, they are more willing to live with discomfort. They know that feeling insecure from time to time is quite normal. Consequently, they do not have unrealistic expectations of themselves. Rather than becoming stuck in the quagmire of self-doubt, they look at the stressful situation and then identify at least three *other* options for dealing with the issue. Fear gives us only one option and that option is always negative.

Those who are willing to work through difficult feelings and situations will develop competence and resilience; consequently their self-concept will be heightened. As a person begins to view him or herself as competent, self-confidence becomes a moot point! You will never be offered a job where the main requirement is confidence; prospective employers would much rather have competent employees.

Mistakes and failure are part of the overall plan to help us create a successful life. It is during these low times in our lives that we can hunker down and draw on our hoarded resources. We may feel very insecure, experience low self-confidence and feel needy. The brilliance of being at this stage and feeling those feelings, but not being owned by them, is that we become very *humble* which simply translated means *teachable*.

Those who are teachable develop new skills and more character, which leads them out of the difficulty, and their self-respect grows. Those who continue to develop their discernment, to behave with care and consideration towards others in the midst of a difficulty, even when they are feeling low, will actually contribute to their self-esteem.

Imagine feeling that you were always perfect in everything you said and did. Not a very realistic portrayal is it? Even if it happened that your life worked out that way, you'd probably be very arrogant and therefore *un-teachable*.

Consider this scenario: You are at a large, crowded party and the host has prepared two sets of nametags for each person. Each guest is given a choice to choose from one of two nametags and

they are placed in two separate bowls. Your nametag in the first bowl would have this inscription: *Hello, my name is _____ . I get it right all the time. I always feel confident.*

Your nametag inscription in the second bowl would read: *Hello, my name is _____ . I make mistakes and sometimes I feel insecure.*

I believe more people would select their nametag from the second bowl. Let us assume that a few would select their nametags from the first bowl. If someone were to walk around wearing the first name tag, they'd probably be shunned because neither perfectionism nor arrogance is attractive.

Most people feel a degree of insecurity all the time. The **gap**, between where we are now and the vision of where we would like to be, causes uncomfortable feelings. The desire to reduce those uncomfortable feelings fuels our motivation to excel which in turn shortens that gap and reduces our uncomfortable feelings. The more we choose challenging goals and the more 'gaps' we close the more competent we become. Then, *voila*, **confidence follows competence**. In this society, we have a tendency judge our insides by another's outsides and to subscribe to the Confidence Myth.

Beware of the Confidence Myth

When we begin a new initiative, it is normal to feel uncomfortable because we have no experience with the process for achieving success with this new endeavour. We then tell ourselves we are not confident. Well, of course not! Confidence is always a by-product of competence. Without fear, there can be no courage; without courage, there can be no action; without action, there can be no competence; without competence, there can be no confidence. Craving confidence before one has acquired competence is magical thinking. Competence always precedes confidence!

I would like to substitute the popular term *self-confidence* with *self-respect* because self-respectful behaviours are more easily identified. For me, they include telling the unmitigated truth, never touching dishonest money, doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do, doing what others don't want to do, etc. What are your values? What are the self-respectful actions that flow from that? When we deviate from our standards, we accept responsibility and make amends. When we are respectful in our behaviours we come to expect nothing less from those around us.

Surviving and thriving despite the difficulties gives you the power, strength of character, and belief in yourself to face the next challenge. These attributes show in your demeanour and that is what people mean when they describe someone as: *he or she is a confident person*. When you set high expectations for yourself and practise the required behaviours, over and over again, the insecurities will slip away. That is, until you take on, or face, an even bigger challenge and the old feelings of fear, doubt, and insecurity will have to be vanquished once again! This is how life expands for everyone - **life shows up when we declare ourselves in the game**. Everything is out there just waiting to be claimed!

Alice Wheaton is a best selling author, consultant, coach, professional speaker, and trainer. For more information on her services and products, visit her web site www.alicewheaton.com