9 Top Tips for Building Confidence

When our confidence and self-esteem is low, we tend to see ourselves and our life in a more negative and critical light. We also feel less able to take on the challenges that life throws at us. If you feel that building and maintaining confidence and self-belief is a daily challenge, you are not alone. Try these simple tips every day for a week and see if you can unlock your power.

Tip 1: Identify the negative thoughts you have about yourself

You may tell yourself you're "not smart enough" to apply for a new job, for example, or that "nobody cares" about you.

Start to note these negative thoughts and write them on a piece of paper or in a diary. Ask yourself when you first started to think these thoughts.

Next, start to write some evidence that challenges these negative beliefs, such as, "I'm really good at creative writing," or "My sister calls for a chat every week."

Write down other positive things about yourself, such as "I'm thoughtful" or "I'm a great cook" or "I'm someone others trust." Write down some good things that others say about you.

Aim to have at least 5 positive things on your list and add to it regularly. Then put your list somewhere you can see it. That way, you can keep reminding yourself that you're enough.

Tip 2: Create a mantra for yourself

Affirmations aim to change your negative patterns of thinking and speaking into positive ones. Try transforming any negative thoughts you identified in Tip 1 into positive thoughts. They should start with positive statements, I am, I can, I will, I do.

Begin your day with a set of affirmations about who you are and what you bring to the world.

You don't have to say affirmations out loud, you can repeat them in silence.

- I am smart
- I can get the job of my dreams
- I am loved

Tip 3: Be kind to yourself

Being kind to yourself means being gentle to yourself at times when you feel like being self-critical.

For example, you may say to yourself: "You're not smart enough to go for that job, don't embarrass yourself by applying..

Try to talk to yourself like you would to a friend or a young girl in a similar situation. Be gentle with yourself and be your own support system - raise yourself up. We often give far better advice to others than we do to ourselves.

"You are smart enough to do that job, and there is no harm in applying - give it a shot!"

Tip 4: Learn to be assertive

Being assertive is about respecting other people's opinions and needs, and expecting the same from them. By communicating clear boundaries to those around you, you'll reduce the risk of becoming overburdened, resentful, angry and depressed.

Start by saying "no" - People with low self-esteem often feel they have to say yes to other people, even when they do not really want to.

For the most part, saying no does not upset relationships. It can be helpful to keep saying no, but in different ways, until they get the message.

Tip 5: Practice self-care (properly)

Self-care does not mean taking a bubble bath - it means taking care of yourself so that you can be healthy, and do all the things you need to and want to accomplish. By taking care of yourself first, you can then take care of others better.

This includes staying physically healthy, eating well/nutrition, and prioritizing your own mental well-being. Self-care should feel nourishing.

Tip 6: Build a support network

If you find certain people bring you down after spending time with them, try to spend less time with them, or tell them how you feel about their words or actions. Try to build relationships with people who are positive and who appreciate you. They don't have to be physically near you — online and virtual friends can be just as supportive. Find a group that shares your interests or beliefs, like the CAMFED Sisterhood!

Make a list of the people you can lean on or who raise you up. We all need a support network.

Tip 7: Set yourself a goal

We all feel anxious or scared to do new things at times. But those with healthy self-esteem do not let these feelings prevent them from trying new things.

Set yourself a goal, such as joining an exercise class or going to a social occasion. Achieving your goals will help to increase your self-esteem.

Tip 8: Power posing

OK, don't laugh. As women, in a patriarchal world, we are taught to reduce ourselves — be smaller, quieter, be polite and more 'feminine'. This reduces our power and our voices. So a simple way to feel more confident is to physically take up more space. Try standing in the mirror with your hands on your hips, elbows out and feet placed far apart, head held high.

Try this next time you're on the phone, especially if it's a difficult conversation. The other person won't be able to see you but you'll feel more confident with your feet grounded, taking up the space you deserve and owning your power.

Tip 9: Find a motivating podcast

There are a lot of great podcasts out there that delve a little deeper into confidence, self-esteem, and leadership. So why not ask around, or explore some of the websites that curate them for you. It's fun to explore, and you can listen while you practice self-care, like getting plenty of fresh air.

Did you know?

We care deeply about girls and women growing in confidence and assertiveness, because we're passionate about social justice, gender equality, and women's leadership. We're CAMFED, the Campaign for Female Education, and our Sisters in Africa support girls in their communities to learn and thrive, by developing confidence and valuing themselves, so that they can grow up to be independent, influential women.