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Confidence is a Choice

By Judi Moreo

Why is having confidence in ourselves and our abilities so hard? Why do many of us have the tendency to overestimate other people's abilities and power and underestimate our own? Why are many of us so concerned with what other people will think about us?

If we are to understand these things, first we need to understand why we think, feel, and act the way we do. We need to understand why and how we have become who we are, as well as why we react or respond in certain ways. When we understand ourselves, we can either accept the way we are or make changes so we will be able to accept ourselves.

What we believe and accept about ourselves determines our behavior and performance. These, in turn, create our results and our results affect our confidence levels.

If we have self-limiting beliefs, we will have self-limiting behaviors. If we have self-empowering beliefs, we will have self-empowering behaviors. In other words, if we think we can, we can. If we think we can't, we can't. If we think we can, we will find a way. We perform as well as we believe we are capable of performing.

Many of our beliefs about ourselves have come from outside sources: people, education, and experiences. Many of us have allowed the opinions of others to become our opinions of ourselves. We've listened to people tell us we are incompetent, inadequate, unworthy, bad, or stupid. We've internalized, processed, and often believed what others have told us.

There is a direct correlation between the quality of our relationships and our levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. If we are like most people, how we feel about ourselves, good or bad, is largely dependent upon the degree of acceptance we have felt from the influential people in our lives.

If we were compared negatively to other children, especially children outside of our immediate family, we might have believed those children had more abilities and were "more" than we were. That is when feelings of inferiority started to set in. If we didn't

receive appreciation or recognition for our achievements then, we may believe others are smarter, stronger, or better than we are now.

STOP IT! Start now to work on your self-discipline, self-reliance, and responsibility. These are the very characteristics which help us achieve. Achievement builds self-esteem. Start now to show more interest in others and help them feel special. The biggest psychological need most people have is to be understood. So start by listening to others. Ask them questions about themselves and their lives. Listen attentively. Show interest in what they have to say. Lean forward. Comment on what they said before you start telling your own story and talking about yourself. Compliment others, especially on things they do well.

Stop criticizing yourself. Stop talking about your negative traits. The more you concentrate on them, the more they hang on. What we put our attention to is what multiplies in our lives. Instead of criticizing, look for the things you like about yourself. What are your strengths? Make a list. Place it where you can see it daily. If there is something you don't like about yourself and you can change it, then do it. If you can't change it, don't whine about it. People don't want to be around someone who whines and complains. And besides, most of the things you don't like about yourself, no one else has noticed until you brought it to their attention.

Confidence comes when we determine that we are responsible for ourselves: when we are able to stand on our own two feet, make our own decisions, and deal with the consequences of our own behaviors and choices. Work to be an independent person who does important things. Choose to step out of your comfort zone. Set a goal and make a plan to do something different or bigger. Take a risk and take action.

You can achieve self-confidence. It's a choice. You can do the things that make your heart sing. You can learn to create your own success and your own happiness. You are a unique individual. Realize who you are and remember, you are more than enough.

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