

7 Easy Hacks to Build Confidence



Introduction

At its most basic, confidence is knowing what you're good at. It's knowing the value you provide and conveying that value to others. But don't make the mistake of confusing this with arrogance which involves believing that you're better than others. On the other end of the spectrum, there is low self-esteem which involves believing you're less valuable than you think.

Building self-confidence is aiming for the middle way without going too far.

Whether it's personal life, career or social scenarios, confidence is something everyone needs in any given situation. It is how successful people overcome daily obstacles. But it doesn't happen by accident. If anything, it comes from repeated practice and small successes which then build into larger accomplishments.

The secret to building confidence is to include it in your life as a habit. It may be difficult because people are naturally inclined to

fall back into old habits and feel insecure of taking on a new one. But it is by no means impossible. Even being short of confident is a habit in itself. So the only way to become more confident is to build it as a habit and then become comfortable with it.

This habit formation involves making changes, adopting new behaviors and takes time and energy. At the same time, the process also involves breaking away from old habits and developing new, productive ones.

Expert opinion holds that the best way of doing so is to start small. This makes any task seem easy to handle. So take a look at these seven hacks given here to get you started.

Hack #1

Present Yourself with Confidence

A lot of how you feel about yourself is reflected in your appearance. And a large percentage of how others perceive you also comes from your body language. This can include, posture, gestures, facial expressions and eye movement.

That's why taking care of how you dress in front of others is important. The point here is not to impress others so much as to feel good about yourself. When you know you look good, you end up feeling good about yourself as well. Dressing well is much more than donning the trendiest clothes. Instead, it's all about looking poised and feeling self-assured with a confident posture in any situation. When put together, this whole package sends a positive message to others around you.

Expert opinion states that there is a direct correlation between what you wear and what you think of your potential. Looking good and dressed sharp is a powerful way to boost self-confidence. This little bit of effort goes a long way and as you notice the difference, you can bring your confidence into other areas of your life as well.

Even science backs up the idea that dressing well increases performance. Besides feeling good about yourself, being well groomed also encourages others to take you seriously. This means you can make yourself appear more confident based on your clothes alone. A change of wardrobe can help you land the job you want, the deals you want, the recognition you desire, and even the partner you want.

The other important aspect of presentation is posture. There is a lot of power in posture. If you tend to slouch, straighten up. If you tend to fold your arms, open them up. Along with dressing event-appropriately, your posture and body language say a lot about your confidence levels. Research shows that when you have a confident posture during an activity, you actually feel more confident.

How you carry yourself speaks volumes about your confidence level. In fact, if you've ever paid attention, you'll see that confident

people have a confident walk, with a powerful stride. They refuse to hide by slumping their shoulders or looking down as they talk.

You want to be able to express this body language confidently. Make a conscious effort to stand tall, talk with your hands, make eye contact and practice active listening. Engaged body language also uses open gestures, nodding and smiling. It may even involve mirroring the movements and expressions of others. This can make you seem not only more confident as you engage in dialogue but also more approachable.

When you shake hands, remember that a firm, solid handshake is a universal sign of confidence. Although, make sure that while it's strong, it's not crushing.

On the other hand, actions like fidgeting, avoiding eye contact, tapping your foot or biting nails are all tell-tale signs of nervousness and uneasy body language.

Hack# 2

Use Positive Affirmations

When life gets tough, it's great to seek advice from others around you. But perhaps the best person who can counsel you is you. For many people, the natural way to relieve anxiety is to engage in some self-talk. But it is the way you speak to yourself during this pep talk that makes real difference.

There is a two-pronged approach to this. First, think positive thoughts and pair them up with positive affirmations. Second, remove any negative thoughts holding you down.

Many of your emotions get determined by the way you talk to yourself throughout the day. If you don't deliberately and consciously talk to yourself in a positive manner, you'll start thinking about the things that make you unhappy, lower your confidence and cause you to worry. Most people have these

automatic thinking patterns that are negative. Sometimes, these negatives become so deep-rooted that it can be hard to change them without awareness and effort.

There is little doubt that using positive affirmations harnesses positive thinking. Positive statements that you repeat to yourself can help you challenge and overcome self-sabotaging negative thoughts. If you feel skeptical about using positive affirmations just think about it another way. Just as regular exercise helps improve your physical health, positive affirmations can do the same for your mind and outlook.



When you keep telling yourself that you can do something and do it well, it will keep you motivated and boost your confidence. Some research also shows that when you use positive affirmations while goal setting, they become more effective. Identify areas where you need affirmations such as feeling and looking more confident and make them compatible with your core values. Finding those that resonate with you will be the most effective.

The power of affirmations lies in repetition. Recite these daily when you need a boost or when you engage in negative thoughts. While these may not help you forget your shortcomings, or erase toxic influences from your life, they will help you dwell less on the negative and focus more on the positive.

The reason why it's important to remove negative thoughts is that too many of these can easily become self-fulfilling prophecies. When you talk yourself into believing that you're not good enough, these thoughts drag you down and keep you anchored there. Use affirmations to turn such negatives into positives. When negative self-talk makes you struggle, choose an affirmation that is the opposite of that thought or belief and put that into practice.

The most common way of practicing positive affirmations is in front of the mirror. While this may seem silly at first, you do

establish a visual and psychological connection with yourself when doing so. By looking yourself in the eye and telling yourself you can do something, you create a stronger belief in that thought.

Experts will tell you that you need to feel the affirmation and not simply say it. This adds weights to your affirmation and makes it more effective.

Hack #3

Stop Over Analyzing Situations

Many people tend to overthink and overanalyze situations. This means that when they have a great idea, or experience some kind of inspiration, instead of acting on it, they start to break it down bit by bit. However, this kills the inspiration.

Once you start doubting your own inspiration, it'll become very hard for the idea to materialize. Just think of a time when you had a great idea, but didn't speak up. And since you didn't do it instantly, your brain found a seemingly better reason to quiet you down.

Such second-guessing your every move is perhaps the biggest killer of self-confidence. Keep your doubts in check and make a reality check of all the doubts that you have. It's not that every decision

has to be quick and without thought, but if you're indecisive with most of your choices, it will lower your self-confidence. Besides, overthinking leads to negativity. It has a tendency to twist things around, presenting things to appear much worse than they actually are.

If you want to ask for anything, but feel unsure doing so, you may never actually ask for it. It actually becomes very easy to tie yourself in knots while overthinking an issue. Asking may provide you with a simple solution, but doubting yourself you may not feel entitled to even expressing your own preferences.

In most scenarios, overthinking isn't even connected to the present. At best, it's related to the possibility or mere chance of things happening another way. It is the perfect way to lose direction, and along with it, your confidence in yourself.

Typical practices over thinkers engage in include asking the same question over and over again, over planning, canceling plans, asking for reassurances and having a fair bit of trouble making decisions. In the end, over thinkers either beat themselves over making a mistake or fret about how their decision will impact the future. And along with these distressing thoughts, their confidence naturally takes a beating as well.

The problem that over analyzing situations creates for confidence levels is that it stresses you out every time you have to make even the smallest decision. This makes thinking about big decisions completely unfathomable and you are left with your doubts pinning you down. Also known as “analysis paralysis” this bad habit keeps you from moving forward and never being sure of yourself.

Just remember that confident people don't always make the right decisions either. But they do make decisions faster than people who are indecisive. This ends up giving them an edge as they know how to improvise and switch directions when needed.

If you are among those who can actually make a decision and stick with it, consider yourself lucky. For others fixating on getting every detail right, becoming confident in their own potential will be a long way off.

Because the act of over analyzing is one in your head, it makes sense to get it out of your head. So to act confidently, you have to be faster than your doubts.

Hack #4

Limit Social Media

One of the scariest things to damage confidence is the instinct to compare your life to other people. And there has been enough research done to establish that social media furthers this behavior. In fact, research shows that about 60% of people report having tainted confidence caused by social media. Such comparisons of other people's contentment fuels personal insecurities.

With social media, impossible standards are set by people who curate their lives and show only the most enviable moments of their life. These picture perfect images become the cause of distress for many others beating down on their confidence levels.

The comparisons people make on these platforms is often seen as leaving users insecure, as if they aren't able to keep up with others.

Whereas this comparison was once made at family gatherings or in the office, now the same is done via social media in perfectly crafted and duly exaggerated representations of people's lives. The perfect way to bust anyone's confidence.

While it is fairly natural to measure progress in life, but when done this way, it becomes problematic. Because now, people compare themselves to perfectly crafted versions of other people. Even though they know that these photos have been engineered with filters and what not, they still manage to generate a sense of insecurity in viewers who haven't yet reached those milestones or hope to do so in the future.

The sad result often is feelings of jealousy or envy that don't do much to garner confidence. For instance, those with body image issues often feel less happy after spending an hour a day on social media. Teens have a particularly hard time with their need for validation when they compare themselves with peers who seem to have it all. Up and coming entrepreneurs may see their confidence slacken as the competition seems to have made it while they're still struggling to get through the door.

On a more general note, the excitement of getting likes and comments on social media becomes highly addictive. If your post

doesn't get the feedback you thought it deserved, you start to doubt yourself. You start to think of what you did wrong- was it not funny enough? Didn't you look your best in it? Or was your achievement not as promising as you believed it was? You start to value the opinions of others over your own and any shred of confidence you had when you posted that image/post goes out the door.

Researchers even have self-explanatory names for these phenomena such as "Facebook Depression", "Self-Promotion Envy Spiral", and "Social Comparison Theory" where constant comparisons lead to feelings of insecurity, not being good enough in your own life and messing with confidence levels emanate.

The fact of the matter is that there is no true way to feel good about yourself if all you do is spend your time in front of a screen. All the while, real life is happening outside of screens so make sure that you find the time to explore the real world around you.

Hack #5

Contextualize Your Fear

Everyone has fears but confident people know that they have to act despite their fears. These fears can be minimized if you put them in proper context and move ahead. When you face your fears, you develop resilience and confidence in different facets of life.

For most people, it is their fear that holds them back from being confident than any other factor. The majority of the people are held back by their fear of failure. This fear paralyses most into inaction which, once again targets an individual's confidence. It restricts you to your comfort zone and makes you avoid taking risks. In your lack of self-confidence, you are more likely to undermine yourself and assume that everyone else already knows what you know.

No one likes to fail, but how different people handle fear varies. For instance, confident people never let the idea of failure overpower

their idea of success. They don't let their fear overcome their confidence. Confident people will tell you that the trick to conquering your fears is by facing them quickly without allowing yourself time to become afraid.

Interestingly, anyone who faces fear with confidence, actually makes it diminish. The more confident you grow, the fewer fears you have remaining behind. But if you back away from them, they keep growing until they hold the power to hold you back. When you discipline yourself against your fear, your dread of that situation fades gradually.

One common area where you need confidence but fear holds you down is that of speaking in public. However, research in this field shows that regardless of how scared a person may be of public speaking, if they are made to regularly face a group and speak in front of it, they will eventually lose this fear.

Once again, facing and putting your fears in context is easier said than done. The best approach to do so confidently is by taking small steps. Confront your concerns in small doses which makes them easier to overcome. If you lack the confidence of talking to strangers, then simply start off by making eye contact. Gradually move up the confidence ladder by adding in a greeting and then

perhaps asking a question. Keep adding on until you're confident enough to have a conversation.

As your fears subside, you'll see your confidence grow. This doesn't make confidence an absence of fear but rather mastery over it. The higher your confidence level, the more willing you'll be to come out of your shell and take chances. You'll be less likely to be affected by setbacks (some refer to as failure) and more committed to achieving your goals.

And if your fears stem from what others think of you, you'll need to look for approval from within. It's only when you are happy with who you are that you'll feel confident about whatever you do.

Hack #6

Work Up a Sweat

Exercising is a great way to improve your health but how does that exactly fit into boosting your confidence levels? Well, in a few different ways.

For starters, when you feel better physically, you also start to feel the same mentally. Improved health lets you take on more challenges and gives you the stamina to overcome more obstacles. A combination of improved physical and mental health can also help you establish a positive attitude make you ready for taking on more personal goals.

When people with body image issues turn to exercise, they experience an improvement in the way they look. As their body image improves, it also makes a mark on their other outlooks. Whereas they weren't happy with their looks before, or happy with others around them, they can now feel the change both on the

outside as well as on the inside. As you start feeling good about your accomplishments, your whole perception changes as well.

Meeting small milestones leading to more ambitious ones yields a sense of accomplishment which is a huge stepping stone for boosting confidence.

Alongside giving your confidence the boost it needs, exercise is also helpful for reducing stress. If you've ever experienced the runner's high, you'll be aware of the stress-busting potential of exercise. Exercise lets out feel-good endorphins which help control stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol.

On their part, endorphins act like natural painkillers. They kick in about an hour after intense exercise as a stress response when the body has experienced enough stress and needs something to reduce the pain. Interestingly, elevated endorphin levels during exercise can be so potent that studies show them to be on par with just medication or counseling when lowering stress and even depression. And getting a regular hit of endorphins helps the body better respond to different forms of stress.

With improved stress levels, you can better manage daily tasks on hand. When you start to handle daily stressors easily, life becomes

just that much easier letting you focus better on what you have to do. When your stress-free performance starts delivering improved results, you naturally feel better about yourself and more confident in how you handle these tasks.

Exercising regularly also fuels your brain, literally. It helps bring oxygen and important nutrients to the brain to enhance cognitive functioning. For most people, a workout session helps them think better, concentrate more and feel less groggy.

When results of regular exercise start showing, it starts to have a cascade effect. A person who successfully sticks to their exercise routine is more likely to feel confident about their physical potential. They will feel good that they can now successfully carry out their everyday activities that now also involve a physical aspect. They feel alert and energized and this increase in motivation and confidence will also spill in other areas of daily life.

Hack # 7

Meditate

The idea of meditation may seem counterintuitive right after mentioning exercise, for exercise pumps you up releasing endorphins whereas meditation aims to relax and calm the mind.

That said, meditation is a great tool to inspect your inner thoughts. After a good session, your faith in your abilities can reaffirm and help you get past any doubts. Research has established that the practice of meditation can help with stopping negative self-talk. It is this negative self-talk that is often behind a lack of self-confidence.

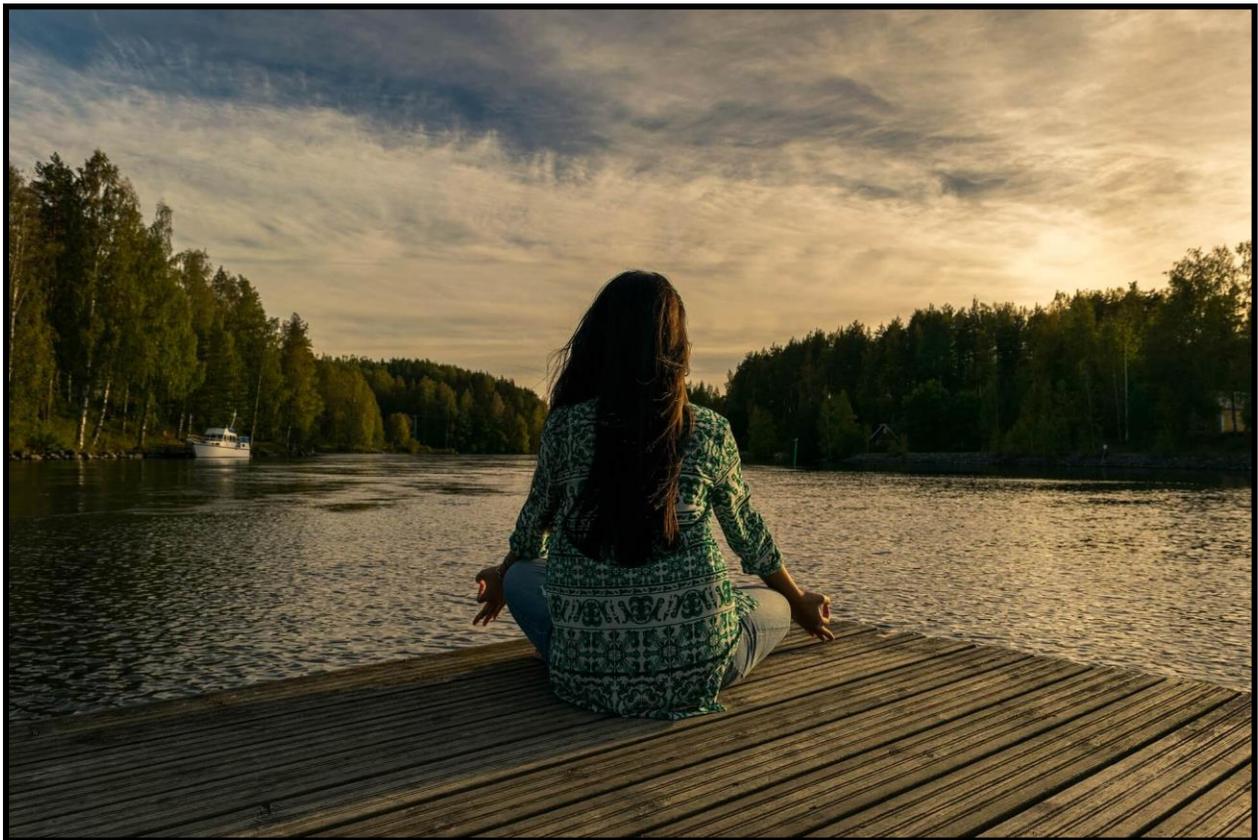
However, when you meditate, the practice trains your brain to disassociate yourself from the ongoing mental chatter inside your head. This mental chatter is also often the source holding you back from showing your full potential. Your mind is so caught up in

debating with itself that it prevents you from taking actual action about things that bother you. But meditation makes you realize that you don't have to listen to the voice in your head at all times, and particularly when it focuses on the negative.

When you meditate, you can silence your inner critic to take the backseat and settle down. Instead swap that negative self-talk with positive thoughts to get your confidence back on track. While meditation doesn't mean controlling all your thoughts, it does involve reducing the control your thoughts have on you. For instance, when you start to doubt your abilities, your value as a person or even your appearance, your self-confidence will plummet. Put simply, these thoughts make you feel bad about yourself.

Yet when you try to shut these thoughts out or argue against them, you're giving them the attention they don't deserve and only making them seem more important than they really are. However, meditation teaches you to simply observe these thoughts and just accepting that they are there tends to weaken them. As such, you reduce the emotional hold these thoughts have on you which will also reduce the frequency of these recurring thoughts.

Continued meditation will also help you realize that these thoughts don't define you. Just because you think something doesn't make it true. Meditation teaches you to recognize these thoughts for what they are; just thoughts. They are not your reality or truth.



You can pair your meditation sessions with positive affirmations as mentioned earlier. Or try some visualization instead. Visualization makes for the perfect complement to meditation and can significantly improve results.

Studies show that the brain doesn't differentiate between a real memory and an imagined or visualized one. Instead, when you visualize something vividly and with emotion, your brain accepts it as if it were real and the mind records it as a real memory. This is how visualization is used to overcome doubts and build confidence.

The practice is easy to incorporate into a meditation session where you imagine a situation and your mind records it as a real memory. As such the situation becomes known and familiar to you, which means that you'll feel more confident going through it as you've already done so, although in just your mind.

Contrary to popular belief, meditation is not something that requires hours of sitting still quietly. So if you think that it would be impossible for you to meditate, then just keep in mind that certain types of meditation such as yoga also include movement. If you believe that people have to be either good or bad at meditating and you're the latter kind, then just remember that everyone needs practice to get better at meditation. While some people may have an easier time focusing than others, even wandering thoughts are a part of meditation. It doesn't mean that you are bad at it.

And finally, if the thought that meditation is all about controlling the mind is holding you back from trying out this practice, know

that the opposite is actually true. Meditation is not about controlling all your thoughts but about realizing that all thoughts can't be fully controlled. Your mind is the way it is and you learn to accept it as is. This acceptance nullifies your negative thoughts and empowers you to let go of unwanted thoughts easier, including doubts about your confidence levels.

Conclusion

Building confidence takes time and effort. It is a hard thing to maintain because it can be crushed easily at any moment. While some people make it look easy and natural, even their confidence level is the outcome of learned behaviors.

The fact remains that most people constantly practice mediocre behaviors and routines whereas confident people carry themselves very differently. The trick is to trade one for the other through training and nurturing and then cultivating that confidence level.

