

## **SELF-CONFIDENCE**

Self-confidence can be described as one's trust in his/her own thoughts, feelings and learning ability. Self-confident people can evaluate their experience in a correct way, look at incidences in a more positive and realistic way, make right decisions for themselves and react efficiently to the changes in their lives. Feeling valuable and respectful towards one's own self, with the acceptance of positive or negative character features, is one of the most important milestones towards self-confidence. With this way, one can think and feel more positive about his/her own self and the world, can behave more effectively and creatively, and have a chance for self-development.

*Self-confidence can increase or decrease according to the context (situation, time, people) we are in.*

Sometimes a person can feel low self-confidence and this does not have to mean a lack of self-confidence. Everyone can feel inadequate and unhappy while comparing his or her abilities with others. Realizing the factors influencing self-trust and accepting the fact that no one has infinite self-confidence is quite important for feeling confident.

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-CONFIDENCE**

Parents' attitude and behaviors towards their children are very important in terms of development of self-confidence. Parents encouraging their children, giving positive feedbacks when their children achieve success and behaving realistic and supportive when their children fail, positively influence the development of self-confidence. In addition, parents' attitudes towards their own achievement and failures also influence the development of self-confidence of children in early ages. Later, a child's own experiences with his/her friends through playing games become significant and the child develops self-awareness about his/her self and place in the world. They start to make their own decisions, like which role they will take in a play or which toy they want to play with. The experiences children have and the perceptions of parents towards them play an important role in development of self-confidence.

Starting school life has an important role for improvement of self-confidence. Students can improve their self-confidence through acceptance of their individual differences and abilities at school. At this point, children's relations with their peers and social approval by their friends are very essential for the development and protection of self-confidence. Parents and teachers can support development of self-confidence and feeling of control by giving their children a chance to make decisions of their own. However since some children may have difficulties in constructing relations with people in a different rules and adapting to environment, they may have problems trusting themselves. Parents and teachers should be attentive to these kinds of

situations.

During adolescence, adolescents live through changes in many aspects and they may have to deal with difficulties about their self-confidence. In this phase of life, feelings are closely related to "shame" and it is important to prepare conditions for talking about these feelings of shame with the closed ones. In the course of time, adolescents' focus changes from their bodies to the relationships and in the end of adolescence; close relationships become the most important source for the self-confidence. In this phase, adolescents start to learn from their experiences, to take responsibility of their behaviors and to acquire new skills. With the help of their relationships, adolescents learn more about friendships, entertainment, social skills, coping with problems and overcoming difficulties. All these experiences prepare the conditions for development of self-awareness, emotional maturity and self-confidence.

*Self-confidence never stays at the same level in life, it always continues to change and develop in the years of adulthood.*

Self-confidence can change in every developmental phase by any experience. Thus it is alive and dynamic throughout life.

### **THE MAIN FEATURES OF CONFIDENT PEOPLE**

The features of confident people can be lined up like this: They know who they are and which kind of person they want to be. They can face with their powerful and less powerful sides of their characters. Generally, they evaluate themselves with their positive sides and feel valuable. They trust in their own skills. They respect themselves. They feel that the control of their lives is in their hands. They have realistic expectations and they can stand criticism. They think positively and behave assertively in new and hard situations, which makes it easier for them to achieve success. They continue to feel valuable even when their expectations are not met and they may laugh at their mistakes. They know their boundaries in relationships, they behave closely and construct healthy bonds. They can risk losing, failure and negative experiences. They have effective skills to cope with tough experiences of life. They do not only trust themselves but also others. They feel belonging to their social environments. They feel generally happy thanks to their healthy identity.

In summary, being open to learning and acquiring self-awareness, having personal integrity with the possession of positive and negative feelings, thoughts and behaviors, taking responsibility of relationships, values and decisions, living genuinely, having aims and learning from experiences are important to construct a 'healthy' sense of self-confidence.

### **THE MAIN FEATURES OF PEOPLE WITH LACK OF SELF-CONFIDENCE**

Mostly, lack of self-confidence is not related to a realistic deficiency and/or an inability. Lack of self-confidence generally derives from unnecessarily focusing on the unrealistic expectations of

our families and society; the things we learn from our childhood. The features of people with lack of self-confidence can be lined up like this: They can make deductions from others' thoughts and behaviors. Thus they are sensitive towards others reactions. They are reactive towards the implications relating to themselves and this leads to labile and fluctuating emotions. In their relationships, they are unsatisfied with people and their feelings towards others can change frequently. They value feedbacks more than it should be and they have difficulties coping with negative feedbacks. They evaluate themselves with the perspectives of others. Comparing themselves with others too much, they believe that others are happier and more successful than themselves. They have difficulties getting into social relationships since they see themselves inferior. They always assess themselves, have inner voice which is generally negative and judgmental. Since they judge themselves easily, they make themselves incapable. They feel angry, furious and alone. They ignore or do not take their accomplishments and positive sides seriously. They do not feel successful, rather they devalue their successes. They refrain from taking risks to avoid becoming unsuccessful. Generally, they don't expect themselves to be successful.

### **FALSE BELIEFS EFFECTING SELF-CONFIDENCE**

*All or none thinking:* It is a tendency to perceive everything in two dimensions black and white, good or bad. Negativity leads one to see everything in negative, erasing all positive parts. *“Even one mistake prevents me from being successful.” “Today s/he did not greet me, I’ve already known that s/he was not good person.”*

*Perfectionism:* Perfectionism is unrealistic feelings and thoughts about success, including too high expectations. Even when the person is successful, since s/he does not meet his/her own high standards, s/he does not feel successful. *“I should gain the love and approval of every person in my life.” “I should be very talented and successful in every area of my life.”*

*Generalization:* It is a tendency to perceive everything as a disaster, expecting to face negative events. Some people generalize negative situations in their life to others. *“This job interview was not good, I am always unsuccessful person.” “I guess s/he did not like me, no one likes me however.”*

*Exaggeration of negative events / Ignoring positive events:* Some people do not see the good things as much as the bad things in their lives. *“I’ve never taken a bad grade in my life. However if I take, I will feel destroyed.” “First time, we had an argument with my lover. We are not a good couple tough!”*

*Accepting a momentary feeling as general:* It is accepting a negative feeling as real without thinking about it. *“I could not talk in the lecture today, I am feeling like stupid, which means I am stupid.”*

*Giving too much importance to musts:* Must sentences generally imply perfectionism and they

include the others' expectations more than one's own wishes. *"Everyone should have words to say about any subject in university and I still don't know many things in life, which means I am inadequate."*

*Stigmatizing:* Stigmatizing means one's judging him/herself with only one behavior or feature. It is underestimating the self and generally feeling of guilt accompanies this situation. *"I am 17 years old and no one asked me for date till now, I am very ugly and unworthy and this is my fault."*

## **STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING SELF-CONFIDENCE**

*Make evaluations with your own criteria:* Don't judge yourself by comparing yourself with others or by society's norms, but evaluate yourself with your own criteria. If you evaluate yourself in a realistic way, you can discover your features which can be changed and you can see your strong and positive sides as well. Your negative feelings (fear, anxiety e.g.) are not always related to the realities in your life. For instance, you can feel unsuccessful or hopeless for some reason, but feeling this way does not have to make you "unsuccessful or hopeless" person in general.

*Focus on your strong side:* Every human being has both positive and negative characteristic features. The basic part of self-confidence is acceptance of one's own self with both positive and negative sides. Focus more on what you can do rather than what you cannot. Do not forget that everyone has their own limitations and no-one can be perfect. Praise yourself with anything you try and for your effort and do not give importance to the result of your efforts more than necessary.

*Take a risk and be open to new experiences:* See new experiences as chances for learning, not as things to win or lose. New experiences provide you new insights and improve your self-confidence.

*Do not label yourself:* Do not label yourself with negative adjectives. If you label yourself as "I am stupid, ugly, unsuccessful etc.", you would decrease the chances for better experiences in life. Instead of doing these kind of generalizations and labeling yourself, just focus on the specific feature or the event which make you feel negative: "The thing I do is not reasonable." or "I don't feel beautiful today."

*Improve your abilities:* Remind yourself that you cannot do everything perfectly and that the important thing is to try to do your best. Try to understand what you can do and what you cannot. Try to work on your abilities.

*Get rid of "musts":* Ask yourself "Do I really want to do this?". Try to find what you really want and question what you tend to do most. Give an effort to achieve your potential and realize the values of your features. Respect yourself and give priority to your own needs and wills.

*Determine reachable aims:* Having realistic and reachable aims and later trying to approach these aims improve you. The unreachable aims only increase stress and failure.

*Solve the problems:* Don't worry and do not avoid the problems. Face them. You can feel powerless and inadequate about some of your problems and because of this you can exaggerate the difficulty of these problems. However avoidance does not solve your problems, it only makes them harder. Determine your first step for the solution and then take an action.

*Trust your own thoughts and feelings:* Self-confidence depends on believing oneself. Care about others' opinions about yourself but value your own thoughts and beliefs at the same time. Trusting inner criteria instead of outer criteria is very important for self-confidence.

Self- confidence is very important in every area and stage of our lives. However it is very important to note that life is not fair every time and sometimes we may not be successful despite doing our best.

*Lack of self-confidence is not related to a lack of a feature or an ability. It is more related to how one perceives him/herself rather than who s/he is.*

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