

Self-Confidence

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Self-Confidence is not, as a character in a Robert Parker novel was once described as, "...often wrong, but never uncertain." *Self-Confidence* is not synonymous with arrogance. It evolves from knowing who we are, and begins by developing an awareness of personal strengths and challenges. Once that "self-awareness" has been developed, you must learn to accept and feel at ease with that "self" which has been discovered, that is self-confidence. A person who has developed self-confidence is able to manage themselves in ways which are situationally appropriate.

Taoist philosophy has a concept known as the "Un-carved Block." The idea is that *each of us is perfectly suited to be who we are*. The path to self-confidence starts with developing an awareness of self.

Self-awareness starts by paying attention. You constantly get information about your "self." This information comes in the form of "feedback" from others and from you. The actions and reactions of others is a powerful source of feedback. It may be direct or it may be indirect, all you have to do is pay attention.

However, feedback also comes from a place much closer to home. The feedback you give yourself is one of the most powerful factors influencing your level of self-confidence. What are the self-talk messages you give yourself? Are they positive, negative, empowering, or self-limiting?

The hardest thing to do when hearing feedback, whether it comes from you or others, is to listen for the facts, and not react to the underlying opinion or the emotion. Here are two things you can do to improve the flow of feedback.

1. Be willing to listen to it all. It is critical to have the ability to separate the information from the attitude or the person you are hearing it from. After you have listened to the feedback, it is equally important to understand what is valid feedback versus invalid feedback.
2. Learn how to separate the **valid** feedback from the **invalid** feedback.
 - **Invalid** – Feedback that comes in the form of "conditional approval" may be suspect, i.e., "I will only like, love, value, or appreciate you, if you behave in the way I require of you." *It is critical to listen for the facts, and separate the information from the attitude or the person you are hearing it from.*
 - **Valid** – Feedback that is consistently received from different sources is a strong indicator that the information may be true. *The same rule as above applies, listen for the facts, and separate the information from the attitude or the person you are hearing it from.*

Self-confidence is one of those positive reinforcing cycles. *"If I have confidence in myself, I am less threatened by the actions or thoughts of others. If I am not threatened by others, I am more accepting of their actions and their deeds. If I am able to accept their actions and words in that spirit, I build their trust in me."* *Self-confidence* creates the capacity to trust others. When that happens, your actions will model the behavior you want to see in others:

- I will assume good faith.
- I care about our relationship and want to resolve our differences.
- I am open to influence and prepared to change.

Constructive relationships are characterized by a high degree of trust. A high level of trust, will allow you to be more accommodating of differences and helps to build agreement. to realize the positive benefits.

Acting with *confidence* can also help to build agreement between individuals. *Agreement* comes in two forms:

1. *Agreement that is reflected by consensus.* We may agree on the following things: what is important (our values), where we are going (our objective), or how to get there (our actions). Consensus does not mean we all agree 100% of the time, it only means the result or decision will be supported by everyone.
2. *Agreement to remain open to new ways of seeing.* Angeles Arrien in her book, The Four Fold Way, referred to it as the ability to "...remain open to outcomes, not attached to them." This is often the most difficult agreement to make, since we become very attached to our beliefs and perceptions. Learning to be "open to influence and be prepared to change" means giving up our "pre-conceived" notions of the universe that we have spent a lifetime acquiring.

Confidence is the first building block for good interpersonal work relationships. This capability must be created from a strong sense of who you are, and a level of comfort and pride in what you find there. *While we may not be perfect, we are perfectly suited to be who we are.*

Self-confidence builds trust and agreement. Trust and agreement are building blocks for resolving our differences. Resolving differences lead to innovative solutions.