

# Confidence in Dating

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Negative dating experiences can take a toll on our self-confidence. After being turned down, “friend-zoned,” or never asked out to begin with, we may easily feel rejected, unwanted, or not good enough. We may question our self-worth or wonder what we need to change.

It makes sense why negative dating experiences affect us so deeply. For most of human history, survival and passing on genes depended on strong social and romantic connections, so we evolved to feel that social rejection is a survival threat. Our anxiety about being accepted evolved to help us connect, but sometimes this anxiety can actually get in the way of connection. When we are preoccupied with acceptance, we may become hyperaware of social rejection and interpret harmless social situations as threats (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009). This mindset can make us more likely to act in protective ways that reinforce rejection.

In contrast, self-confidence can lead to connection. Studies have shown that people rate others as more attractive when they seem confident (Brand et al., 2012). Additionally, when we feel confident in ourselves, we are more likely to show interest in others and help them, and in turn, those people are more likely to feel drawn to us (Fu, Padilla-Walker, & Brown, 2017). For example, researchers found that people who ask more questions are better liked by their conversation partners (Huang et al., 2017).

After experiencing dating rejection, how do we maintain self-confidence? Here are seven ideas to help us deal with anxiety about acceptance and strengthen self-confidence in dating.

1. **Strengthen non-romantic relationships.** Strong relationships can help you feel a sense of belonging, even during difficult dating experiences. Supportive friends and family members can help bolster your confidence by showing acceptance
2. **Identify your strengths and qualities.** Everyone has positive qualities to bring to a relationship. Focusing on these can help you feel more confident in dating. One way to practice this is by writing down a few characteristics that you like about yourself. What personal qualities make you a good partner? What makes you attractive? To help with this process, recall what positive things people have said about you in the past.
3. **Work on yourself.** We all have things to work on that will help us become better romantic partners, and improving these areas can help us feel more confident. Whether it’s physical fitness, financial discipline, social connections, emotional health, or other domains, strengthening these areas can increase your confidence in dating. To avoid feeling overwhelmed, choose only one thing to focus on improving, work on this consistently for 4-6 weeks, and then reevaluate.
4. **Be you.** As you work on yourself, try to become the best version of yourself, not someone else. You do not need to change your personality or your body to cater to the whims of others. Be your genuine self because if someone is looking for you, how will they find you if you’re trying to be someone else?
5. **Embrace rejection.** Dating is about finding the right fit, not evaluating how high you are on a made-up social hierarchy. When you are turned down or not asked out, it’s not because you’re not good enough, it may just not be the right fit. Even the most attractive, successful people are not for everyone. During moments of rejection, you can think, “They might be looking for something different. That doesn’t make me less valuable.”
6. **Pursue hobbies, passions, and interests.** Some may feel that the only way to be truly happy is to find their “perfect person.” In reality, you can find deep happiness and meaning in many ways, including friendships, family relationships, volunteer opportunities, careers, education, and hobbies. Developing your abilities in careers, hobbies, and interests can increase your self-confidence, which can spill over into dating. These activities can also help connect you to like-minded people who value you for who you are.
7. **Focus on others.** When we don’t feel confident in dating, it is easy to get self-absorbed thinking about everything we need to do to be accepted. It can help to redirect your focus on the other person. Be curious about them, and show interest in their

and reminding you of your positive qualities. The sense of security provided by these relationships can help you reduce anxiety about dating rejection.

lives. You can even prepare a few questions to ask beforehand to help you get to know them better. Showing genuine interest in others is attractive. Researchers found that people who asked more questions in a speed dating experiment were more likely to get second dates (Huang et al., 2017).

## Conclusion

These tips can help you maintain confidence through difficult dating experiences. Confidence in dating can be trained, so the more you practice, the more confident you can become (Li et al., 2020). Remember, it's not about being perfect, it's about being comfortable being you.

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