

What Confidence is....and isn't

08/28/2023



What is Confidence?

When we talk about confidence, we are referring to your level of certainty or how much you trust your own abilities to handle the situations that come up in life. The word confidence is often used interchangeably with self-esteem. The two are very related. Self-esteem is how much you have a positive regard for yourself or see yourself in a positive way. If you have a lot of trust in your own abilities (confidence) then it would make sense that you also have a positive view of yourself (self-esteem).

Why is confidence important?

Having confidence helps you to be resilient. Resilience is your ability to adjust when negative events occur. Being able to trust yourself to manage whatever situation occurs puts you in a much better position to act and be proactive about what happens in your life. Having confidence also helps improve your relationships with others.

What confidence isn't.

Often there is a perception that loud people are confident and quiet people are not. This isn't the case. Introversion and extraversion are personality traits that refer to how we would rather interact with others. Introverts prefer more in-depth interactions with a small number of people while extraverts prefer engaging with many people. There are extraverted people who do not have a lot of confidence and there are introverted people who do.

Another misconception is that having confidence means being aggressive. This stems from the misunderstanding about the difference between aggressive and assertive. Aggressiveness is often associated with being pushy,

brash or annoying. Aggressive people often show a strong need to dominate. Sometimes they appear to always be gearing up for a fight. Behaving in an aggressive way intrudes on other people's rights to earn respect and retain dignity, express opinions clearly and honestly and ask for what they want. Another form of aggressive behavior is passing judgment or defining someone as "bad" because they disagree with you, then using this judgment to attempt to force your own view. Assertiveness is stating your position in a clear confident way while still respecting others. Those who are assertive are able to express themselves honestly and courteously, stand up for their rights AND respect the rights of others. People who have a lot of confidence in many cases find it easier to act assertively instead of aggressively. Those who don't have a lot of confidence tend to act more aggressively.

How do I increase my confidence?

Like most things, building confidence takes time and effort but there are many resources available to help. Start with these tips:

- Be honest with yourself about what you can do and when you need to ask for help
- Practice the skills you want to do well but are unsure about now
- Acknowledge what you have already accomplished
- Be willing to take risks and try new things
- Don't focus on what others think, instead celebrate your own progress

Whatever your goals in life are, understanding what confidence is and how to build it in yourself will help you manage and thrive in your life circumstances.

References

- Cain, S. (2013). *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* (0 ed.). Crown.
- Harris, M. A., & Orth, U. (2019, September 26). The Link Between Self-Esteem and Social Relationships: A Meta-Analysis of Longitudinal Studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000265>
- Herrman H, Stewart DE, Diaz-Granados N, Berger EL, Jackson B, Yuen T. What is Resilience? *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*. 2011;56(5):258-265. doi:10.1177/070674371105600504
- Maloney, M. E., & Moore, P. (2019). From aggressive to assertive. *International journal of women's dermatology*, 6(1), 46–49. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijwd.2019.09.006>

- Ruth H. Axelrod, 2017. "Leadership and Self-Confidence," Springer Texts in Business and Economics, in: Joan Marques & Satinder Dhiman (ed.), *Leadership Today*, chapter 17, pages 297-313, Springer.
- Utah State University. (2021, January 10). *Ideas to Build Confidence*. USU. <https://www.usu.edu/uwlp/blog/2015/ideas-to-build-confidence>

Authors

Melanie Dabb, USU Extension Assistant Professor