



Self-confidence

Aim for the stars



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About the Tutorial

Self-confidence is one's ability to judge his own social and personal standing with respect to his environment and be able to derive satisfaction out of it. Self-confidence is influenced by factors like upbringing, work environment, and levels of dedication towards pursuing a cause. High self-confidence is an important factor in improving business ties and balancing personal life.

Audience

This tutorial is designed primarily for the students and professionals who lack confidence in expressing their opinions. It will benefit all those readers who suffer from low levels of motivation towards achieving their goals.

Prerequisites

Before proceeding with this tutorial, you are expected to have a calm mindset and be open to exploring the suggestions mentioned here.

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1. DEFINING SELF-CONFIDENCE

There is a famous saying that when you start the journey of your professional life, have confidence in your abilities. Because you have not proven your abilities yet.

Right from the early times through the evolution of the human society, this saying couldn't be truer in the context of the present. These are extremely competitive times that we are living in, and self-confidence is one of the biggest pillars of strength and self-sustenance for a human being, more so now than ever.



Being confident about your strengths helps you draw courage and resolution when the going gets tough in life. It helps you to keep things in perspective and back yourself when everyone else says that the task ahead is nearly impossible to complete in the stipulated time.

A confident person has enough ability to understand his limitations and knows how to make up for that with his resolve and strengths.

2. SELF-CONFIDENCE VS. SELF-ESTEEM

The word **esteem** comes from the word **estimate** which means to grade yourself on a standard. **Self-esteem** means to evaluate your own value and contribution in your professional and personal life.

If you think that you are important to the people around you, are contributing to the development of your surroundings, and are a valuable asset in other people's lives, then you could say that you have a high self-esteem.

In other words, a person with high self-esteem thinks that he is worthy of the world he is in and understands his significance. While self-esteem is dependent of the perception of self, self-confidence is completely different.

Self-confidence, on the other hand, is related to action and is more domain-specific. It's not an absolute observation as self-esteem, in the way that self-esteem is thinking of your worth in relation to the world. On the contrary, self-confidence is your positive self-assessment in performing a task.

A person who is confident of his abilities in one task might not be so when given another one. Hence, self-confidence depends on the task given to perform and on your own ability to do an action.

3. DYNAMICS OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

Now that we have understood how self-confidence depends on your perceived ability to manage an action, let's discuss the actions that help cultivating a sense of self-confidence. Self-confidence thrives in an atmosphere where the person is provided constructive feedback and the focus is always on the positive.

In such a working environment, a confident person will be able to practice his skills and talent beyond expectations, as he will get an opportunity to setting goals, forget his own past mistakes, and learn new things.

On the other hand, a person's self-confidence can be seriously hampered in an environment where there is constant comparison with others and where expectations are unrealistic. People are pitted against each other as per their performance in the numbers game.

In these conditions, a person will be forced to nurture an unhealthy competitive mentality by resorting to unfair means for success, listening to unworthy role models, being too harsh in judging his own performances, and underestimating his own capabilities.

Such an environment breeds an unhealthy workplace where the stress is more on beating one another's performances, as opposed to coming together as a team in helping one another. Such companies might peak for some time, but they ultimately crash.

4. TRAITS OF SELF-CONFIDENT PEOPLE

People with high self-confidence approach their problems differently as compared to others. They know the importance of building relationships and hence, they love meeting new people to get and share new ideas. It is this quality of theirs that makes them likeable, as they are always willing to be in a conversation that gives equal importance and respect to all those who have participated in it.

Confident people love expressing their ideas in front of others, as they are emotionally secure enough to take constructive criticisms and reject emotional ones. That doesn't mean that they are arrogant; on the contrary, they give everyone the opportunity to put their points forth. However, they have the courage to stick to their decision in spite of a lot of opposition to their ideas, if they are convinced what they are doing is right.



There are two outcomes to any decision taken – either it turns out to be the correct one, or you fail. However, what sets a confident person apart is that he doesn't boss around on detractors when he succeeds.

In addition, a self-confident person has the humility to acknowledge his mistakes and learn from them when he fails. This objective approach towards both success and failure is what makes a confident person a lovable and respectable personality.

5. TRAITS OF UNDER-CONFIDENT PEOPLE

When compared to people with high self-confidence, people with low self-confidence have a very harsh and critical view of themselves. They are prone to taking emotional decisions, as opposed to thinking rationally. They tend to be in their "caves" instead of meeting new people. They try to shun new company and avoid meeting new people.

An under-confident person tends to feel that he has nothing consequential or constructive to add to any process. This feeling of low self-worth, combined with a complete denial towards any change, makes an under-confident person extremely susceptible to mistreatment and undervaluation.



People with low confidence hesitate in sharing their thoughts and opinions, as they think their views will be ridiculed in public. In addition to this, their past experiences and interactions with people have not done anything to enhance their self-worth and change their views about their productivity and importance.

This is where a productive atmosphere comes in play. Every person learns from his surroundings and your self-confidence depends directly on the kind of people you meet and the type of discussions you have with them. While self-confident people interact with people whom they have something to learn from, under-confident people are convinced that they cannot change and are going to be undervalued in spite of what they do.

6. EFFECTS OF LOW SELF-CONFIDENCE

Every person needs someone who he can idolize and follow so that he gauges his own talents, achievements, and progress in comparison to that person and constantly improves. This is exactly what self-confident people do. While interacting with others, reading about others, and putting their ideas in public to gain perspective, they constantly improve their skills and knowledge.

But what happens when people stop doing that? They tend to lose focus, as they don't have any anchor left in their life who can stabilize them when they are getting adrift. When interaction with society is stopped, a person tends to think about himself and that reflects in the way he accepts criticism. Even constructive criticism for his work will appear personal criticism for him, as his approach would have become extremely self-centered by then.



People with low self-confidence tend to think they have no talent or skill to complete a given task and be appreciated. In fact, genuine praise for a good effort comes to them as a surprise and they perceive that as fake appreciation.

People need some positive image about themselves so that they can identify their strengths and weaknesses. People with low confidence often lapse into a mental state where everything becomes a weakness and every observation appears personal. This leads to further self-degradation.

7. SELF-CONFIDENCE WORKSHEET-I

The following quiz will ask you a set of questions about how you rate yourself on different facets of human life. The questions are all on a True/False basis so the participant is instructed to self-evaluate before answering the questions.

After having taken a decision, put a tick on the box and introspect. The ideal time complete this activity is 10–15 minutes, however the participant can take additional time if he needs.

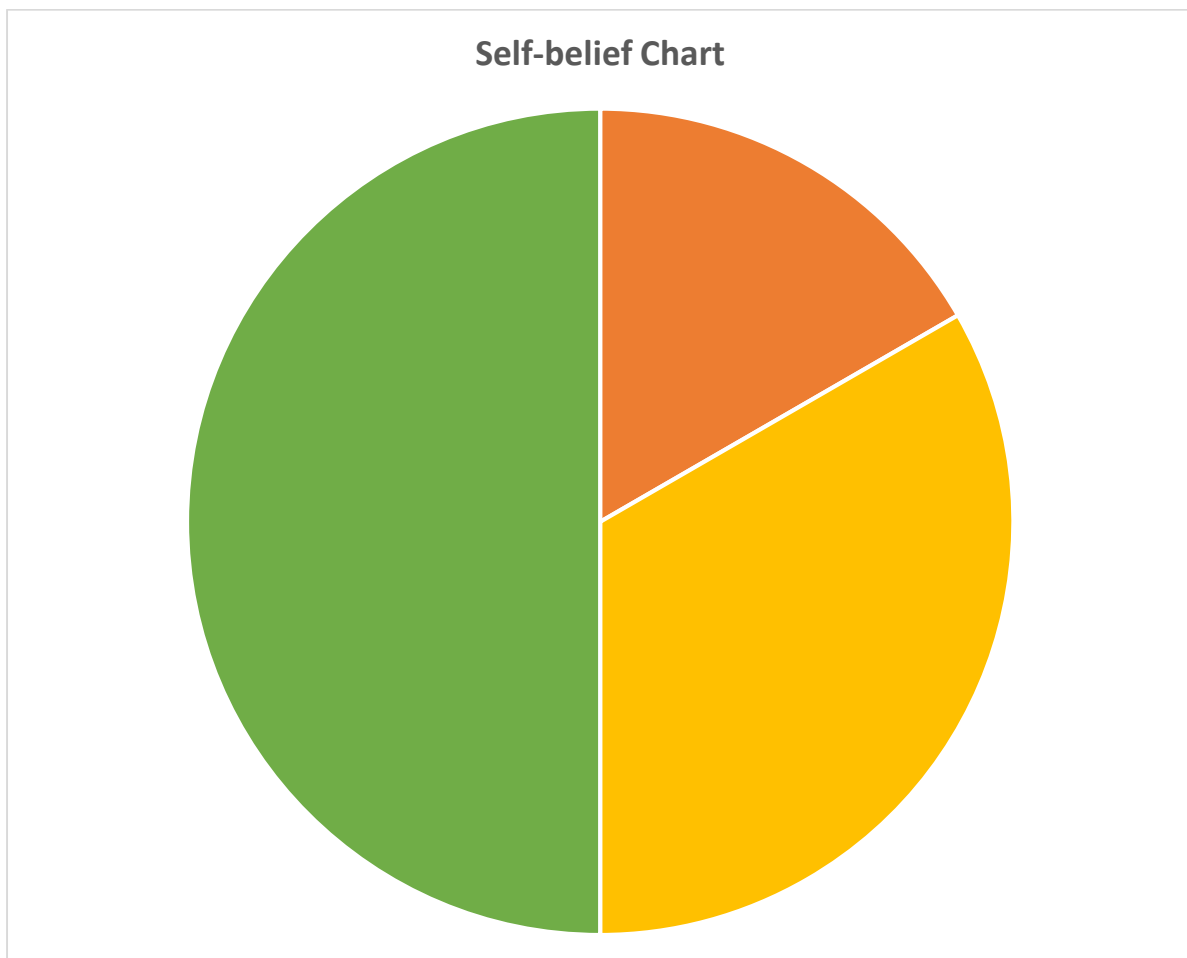
S.No.	Questions	True	False
1	I have difficulty in accepting myself the way I am.		
2	I constantly worry about changing my appearance.		
3	I am more worried about my failures to celebrate my successes.		
4	I think many people would not be fond of the real 'me'.		
5	I feel everyone is more confident and deserving than me.		
6	I avoid taking new projects and challenges as much as possible.		
7	I feel underrated around successful people.		
8	I am always worried about not making mistakes.		
9	I feel that I am incompetent and low on talent.		
10	I feel worthless.		

Note – If the number of ticks you give yourself on the True column exceeds 5, you know you have to bring a drastic change in your self-image and confidence levels. People who get scores upwards of 7 should really seek assistance.

8. IMPROVING YOUR SELF-CONFIDENCE

In the following pie-chart, we have a percentage-wise representation of the amount of belief you have on your abilities. Kindly fill that sector of the pie-chart that you feel is suitable for you.

- If you have 100% belief on yourself, select green.
- If you have 75% belief on yourself, select yellow.
- If you have 25% belief on yourself, select brown.



After you are done with the self-evaluation part, and have selected brown, think about what qualities would be needed in you and what changes would you have to make so that you can take yourself to the green block. List them down in the **Self-evaluation Table** provided below.

Self-Evaluation Table

Colors	Changes Needed
	• _____ • _____ • _____
	• _____ • _____ • _____

9. CRITICISM OF THE INNER VOICE

It is often observed that small children, especially those who have working parents, tend to channel their loneliness in the form of an imaginary friend. They talk to this “friend”, ask opinions of him and generally are comfortable with the idea of an invisible but constantly present friend.

Most of them grow out of this phase in life when they start going to school and start making actual friends, but the voice always stays with them. Many people tend to give themselves either positive self-talk in the time of seeking motivation, or negative self-talk in the time of handling failure and subsequent criticism.

This inner voice is what psychiatrists call “the inner critic.” It is a voice inside you that constantly talks to you, informs you, reminds you, and most often than not, instructs you. You trust this voice because it is familiar and most of the times, it speaks what you would like to hear.

When this voice speaks well of you, motivates you, and asks you to aspire for higher success in life, it is doing the job of a conscious observer. However, there are times when this voice, inspired by the surroundings you work and live in, berates you, criticizes you, constantly compares your achievements to that of others, causing you to chase impossible targets that you end up setting for yourself.

10. HANDLING CRITICISM OF THE INNER VOICE

Just like any unreasonable person who is hell-bent on proving you wrong, the solution to tackling and eventually silencing the “inner critic” is also in having a calm, logical, and resolution-oriented talk with it. Try to enter a calm discussion with it as that will help you identify areas where your approach is not what others expect out of you. It will help you realize where you are going directionless so that things can be brought back to track.

This is where you have to invoke what we had discussed in the beginning — sometimes you have to believe in yourself, simply because nobody else will. This inner voice, or self-critic, is nothing but your voice fighting for a lack of confidence with your ability. The best way to silence it is to prove that you have the skills needed to bring a particular task to its conclusion.

11. ACCURATE SELF-ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

The following exercise is designed to make a realistic comparison between your ideal expectations and what you really are.

The following table has ten characteristics that contribute the most in getting success for people. You are instructed to rate your role model on each parameter on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. After that, you have to give yourself a rating on the same parameters.

This is to give you a self-realization on how realistic your expectations of yourself are. In case you are realistic in your expectations, it will help you to know how far you stand from your goal and what steps you are supposed to take to achieve it.

S. No.	Characteristics	Role Model	You
1	Physical Appearance		
2	Relating to Others		
3	Personality		
4	Perception in Other's Minds		
5	Performance at Work		
6	Performance at Home		
7	Problem-Solving		
8	Capacity of Learning		
9	Insightful Observation		
10	Skills Needed to Succeed		

12. CULTIVATING COMPASSION

There is nothing wrong in having a few imperfections. Given a wish to change a few things about us, many would wish they could change or modify something or the other about themselves. However, that doesn't mean that we will continue hounding ourselves with an extremely critical view of things. For the same reasons, we must be compassionate in assessing others on their work and performance.

Compassion is a winning quality, in the sense that people with inspirational personalities often are compassionate towards fellow co-workers and other people in general. It's a quality that prevents us from being too critical and demanding of others and ourselves and allows scope to understand issues on a practical basis.



Compassionate people use specific and pleasant language while interacting with people around them. They feel comfortable with explaining their ideas and taking suggestions from others, irrespective of the professional hierarchy they share with their colleagues. They forgive mistakes and learn from them, have an acute awareness of their strengths and know how to use them to their advantage.

It has been found that when someone empathizes with the people he is talking to, the other person tends to feel more comfortable in sharing personal issues that are influencing his professional life and performance. Compassion makes it possible for people to step into other person's shoes and understand the situation from that perspective, which is the hallmark of brilliant communicators.

13. PITFALLS OF CHASING PERFECTION

Everyone wants to be perfect. Many people have role models whom they closely follow and emulate in the hope of attaining the success that their role models have achieved.

However, this constant drive towards perfection at times puts people in situations where they impose so many absurd targets with impossible deadlines on themselves that even if they reach their goal within the deadline, they end up severely compromising many important issues like health, relationships, and other commitments. People like these end up being lonely, isolated, and irritated all the time.

The world operates on the stability and security that rules provide, however rules that are too stringent are counterproductive, almost all the times. A person needs to remember that although setting high standards for oneself is not a bad thing per se, but too much of everything – even a good thing – is bad.

14. RESPONDING TO CRITICISM POSITIVELY

In a world that is as competitive as the one that we live in now, there is every chance that the work you put up for inspection or approval will be met with criticism. It could come from peers, seniors, and colleagues who have worked with you in the past or have known you for a long time.

While some critics could be justified in their observations and following them could really bring in a lot of improvement in your product, there will be a few who would pass judgement purely based on emotional reasons like personal hatred, jealousy, one-upmanship, etc.

Remember that you cannot satisfy everybody. It is just not possible. There will always be scope for improvement, but you need to think practically as to what is the set of parameters that you need to keep the quality of the output under.

A self-confident man would be really quick in finding the difference between both. He would appreciate and acknowledge the errors and areas of improvement as suggested by the constructive critics, while ignoring the criticisms of the latter.

The real reason people face an issue dealing with criticism is that while doing their work, there are chances that you get attached to your output and an emotional bond forms. Imagine a chef who lovingly and caringly prepares a soup. Now when faced with a set of judges, who pick and analyze every single ingredient and herb, a person is bound to feel that the judges are slightly unemotional in their assessment. It is this divide that causes the initial tension in every feedback session. A person should remember that emotions and personal dislikes have no place in criticism.

Now how to know whether a criticism is just and constructive? The first thing we should check is whether the criticisms are practical and flexible or are they draconian. They should allow exceptional cases and individual capability. In general, be wary of criticisms that use words like – "never, completely, all the time, totally".

You should also check for yourself and see if the value they are expecting out of you is achievable or not. If no, then they are setting unrealistically high expectations on you, and it will only lead to bad news if you start entertaining those thoughts.

In a professional scenario where many talented and creative-minded people work, there is always the chance that someone suggests some modification or change or enhancement to your output. If the objective of that feedback was to produce better performance, then it is justified. However, if the feedback is just to point out vague errors using personal dislike of a thing, then those criticisms are valueless.

15. TAKING COMPLIMENTS

Any criticism should be productivity-enhancing rather than restricting. If you realize that the feedback you are getting is only bringing lesser productivity and more negativity in your mind, you will know that your work is going to be substantially hampered in the long run.

But just as important it is to take criticism with an open mind, it is also important to accept a compliment properly. A compliment is an acknowledgement of work well done and that in itself is a reason to feel happy. However, there are people who get nervous or unnecessarily modest when taking a compliment. They reply with words that suggest they had nothing to do with the result and almost suggest that everything happened on its own.



These people need to realize that in today's competitive world, everybody expects the very best out of you; so even if you have done a really good job, people might say that you were only doing your job. In situations like these, genuine praise is hard to come by. Hence treasure and cherish those moments when your hard work gets rewarded.

There will always be people who would shower praise and compliments so as to get a favor from you. Those people should always be kept at arm's length as they are not praising, but flattering which is the first step before a fall.

16. MY USP

A **Unique Selling Proposition (USP)** is the quality in a person which he feels is his biggest strength, based on which he can get success in life. The following activity is designed to ensure that you know what qualities in you set you apart from the others.



Instructions – Fill in the blanks with a short description of what would you mention in a commercial about yourself if you were to market yourself. You can plan it the way a commercial plays out on the television.

What is the quality that describes you? How can you emphasize the positive characteristics and capabilities you have?

17. DEFINING RESILIENCE

Resilience is the quality that helps an individual bounce back from failures and gain his focus back after learning from his mistakes. Joy and disappointment are a part and parcel of human life. While many would sink after a debacle, a resilient person would analyze his shortcomings in his previous attempts and come back with much more preparation and determination than ever.

Psychologists point out the quality of resilience as the most sought-after quality in today's youth. People now are much more adaptive to changing environments due to the globalization of business, as compared to people two decades back.



This change can be squarely attributed to the changing dynamics at the workplace, need for energetic and focused performers, and the need to be able to recover from a spot of bother in a short period of time.

Resilience can help you deal with sudden changes with working environments and unforeseen circumstances that may come up at work. Nowadays, the ability to quickly change and adapt to a new situation, and to be productive in a new situation are the need of the hour.

18. BEING RESILIENT

Many qualities go behind developing a resilient personality. The first one would be the ability to learn from failures and bounce back as quickly as possible. However, a lonely person cannot fight his way back to an operative state that early. It takes a lot of self-belief and grit to bounce back from a failure and regain ground.

He would need a strong network of friends and associates who are supporting in nature and positive-minded in their approach. A resilient person also has a quality to be able to design a realistic plan and manage to implement it. Unrealistic targets and impossible demands are something that a person with resilience would avoid at all costs, simply because of the lesson he would have learnt from his previous failures.

Self-evaluation is a critical step in creating resilience. You need to have a clear understanding of your strengths and your boundaries so that you can execute your plans successfully. In addition to all the qualities mentioned above, the most important skill that people are now attributing to resilience is the ability to communicate clearly and deploy interpersonal skills to create a positive impact.

In all, a resilient person needs to hold his emotions in check and not be too impulsive. A level-headed approach toward problem-solving and issue-handling defines a resilient person fit for our times.

19. MAINTAINING FLEXIBILITY

Life is a hard teacher. It lets us fail a test first and then delivers the moral of the lesson. While many might find it unjust, that is the way things are. Now it is up to you to either keep complaining day in and day out about bad luck, missed opportunities, and the way things are going wrong in life. Or, you could decide that enough is enough and it is high time you got success in life.

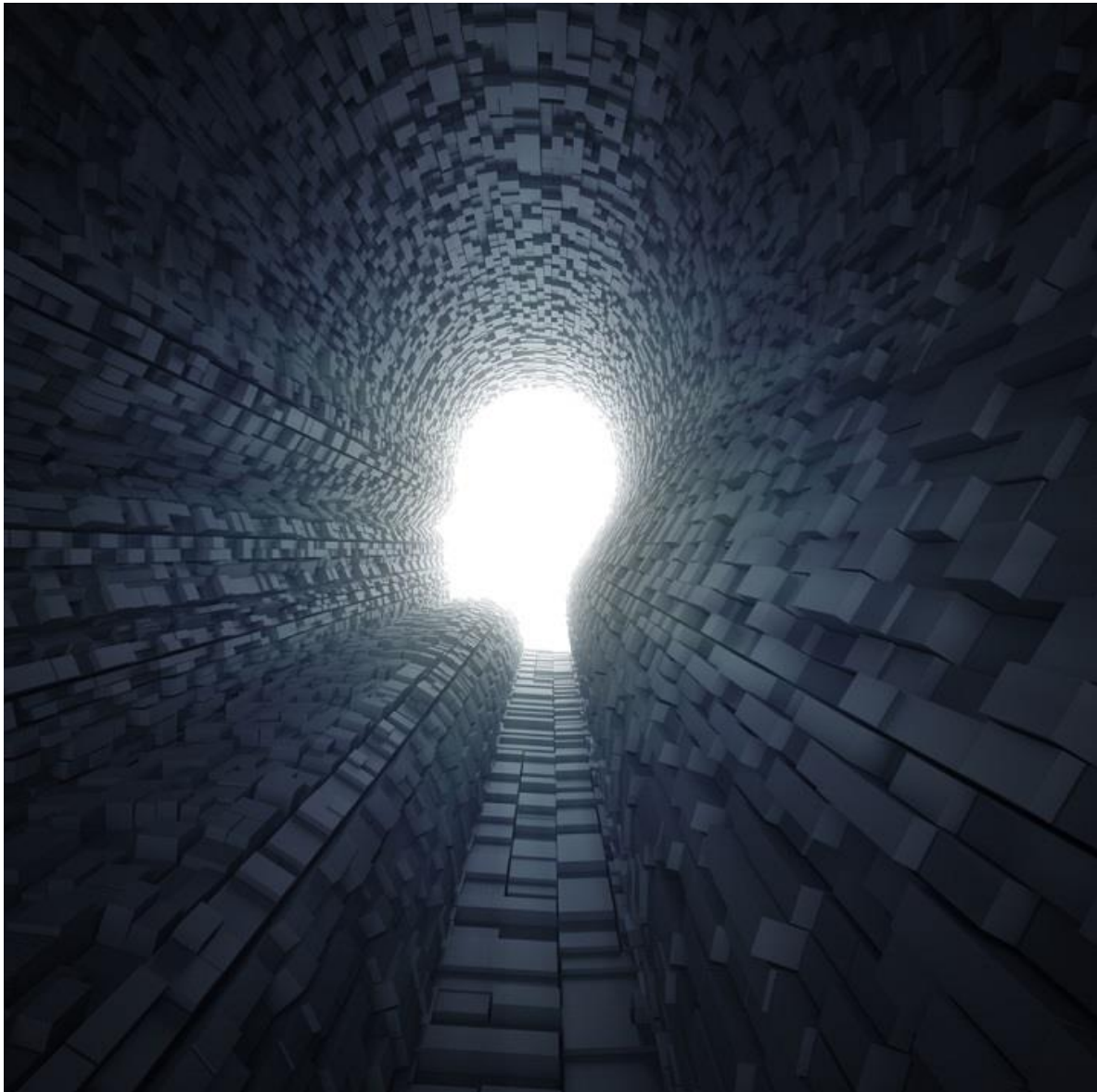
We are surrounded by people who have faced at least one big failure in their life. Whereas almost all succumb under the weight of that one big guilt, there are a few who used their failures as a springboard to climb to greater heights.

These people are not extraordinarily talented. All they have is a clear mindset and a clear purpose in life. They know exactly what it is that they want in life and they pursue their goal with dedication and passion. That is the reason they value relationships and give equal importance to other people in their team. They are very willing to adapt or change the action plan based on someone else's accurate analysis of a situation. This flexibility is what makes them adapt to the quickly changing world.

20. MAINTAINING OPTIMISM

It is often found that passion can be fleeting in nature. You may start on a venture with great fervor and gusto, but it might so happen that after a few days, you will experience the wind getting knocked out of the proverbial sail.

It is very important to keep motivating yourself about your dream and where it is that you want to reach in the end. It is only then you will be able to motivate people around you to re-engage with full determination and added energy, even after they have faced defeat in the first round.



Optimism is a term that is repeated often while talking about successful people. It takes a lot to collect oneself after suffering from failure and defeat. Hence, optimism in the face of hardship is a very difficult quality to practice.

In times like these, always remember that it's no use crying over spilled milk; what happened, has happened already. Wasting any more time on grieving over the fact that you had tried hard and yet didn't achieve success doesn't bring any change in your present, other than guilt and shame.

21. CULTIVATING A WINNING BEHAVIOR

Humility is an endearing quality to a lot of people. There's a saying that greatness awes you, familiarity connects you. Humility makes people love and respect you as they equate your success with your being humble. Nobody likes a person who's arrogant and excessively proud of his achievements.

Having said that, even humble people fail at times. The difference is in the way of accepting a failure. Where aggressive people will try to turn around and blame anyone in their line of sight for a failure, a humble person would first look inwards and identify areas of improvement in him, before passing judgement on anybody.

The way you behave with people is the way they remember you as. Self-centered arrogant people don't carry an influential aura around them. They were successful despite their superior attitude, and not because of it. People would do well to understand the difference. Anyway, the times of these kinds of bossy people have long come and gone, for good.



Also, it's always better to immediately accept your mistake and take responsibility, so that ego-related problems end as quickly as possible. It is only then that you can plan on the next steps and get back to a successful life.

22. EXERCISE – WINNING BEHAVIOR

In the following exercise, you will be introduced to different situations. Without giving much thought to what your actions will be, try to fill the first column headed "**Instant**".

The actions you mention under the column "**Instant**" should be the one that you will do when immediately faced with the situation. Fill this entire column first. Then take your time to think what the best action would have been, and write that under the column "**Calm**".

S.No.	Scenario	Instant	Calm
1	Your car breaks down in the middle of the road.		
2	You hear your ex has started dating someone.		
3	You get rejected in an interview due to lack of experience.		
4	You recover from malaria, only to catch chicken pox.		
5	Your performance is questioned due to the mistakes of your manager.		
6	You were on an important call and the battery dies on you.		
7	You get turned down by the person you asked out on a date.		
8	You spend hours cooking a dish for a dinner party and it burns.		

Compare both the actions and see how many actions from the "**Instant**" column match with the ones mentioned under "**Calm**". The more the similarities, the more the indication of you being a level-headed person who has his emotions in check.

Impulsive behavior is a very natural way to react when the chips are down. However, impulsive behavior ranges from showing dissatisfaction to expressing anger to violent behavior. It is always better to take a deep breath and address the solution of the problem, as opposed to addressing the problem by cursing and swearing and venting.

23. CREATING RELATIONSHIPS

When you are talking of creating healthy relationships, you are talking of quality, priority, and flexibility. No relationship can survive on aggression and complete control lying with one person only. Inviting and encouraging people to share their opinions with you makes them feel equal and important, which in return, helps them in contributing better.

Passion is very important to be a success in the face of adversity. It is the quality that can inspire people to continue pursuing their goals, as passionate people don't equate things they are passionate about with work. Senior recruiters always give more importance on the amount of passion a young candidate has towards his job. The reason being that if his passion goes beyond mere earning and feeding the family, then he will one day dream of creating something new and bringing a new initiative for the company.



However, one very important, and equally neglected quality that is so ingrained in the personalities of successful people is their sense of humor. It is not something you are born with. People have to work hard at cultivating it. The reason they give it that much of importance is because humor draws people closer. No one is more endearing than a person who makes a mistake and has the guts to make a joke out of it.

That's a temperament not many possess, but the reason they do so is because they want failure to tide over as soon as possible so that they can focus on the next venture. They are emotionally stable with people cracking a joke at their expense, as they realize the comfort level someone shares with you to be able to do that.

24. CONCLUSION

Self-confidence is only an umbrella term for a lot of things. Emotional constraint, humor, empathy, resilience, string relationships, all go into creating the personality that exudes self-confidence.



A self-confident person would know how to say things that are honest without hurting other's sentiments. A self-confident man also knows how to be heard with dignity, when there is a difference of opinion. All this takes practice, but the most important thing is the belief that you can be better. This is the cornerstone for any improvement in the world.