

How to have the confidence to believe in yourself

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Do you doubt yourself even though others tell you you have no reason to?

Or wish you had the confidence to do something you always wanted to?

Self belief can make a huge difference to your life, and enable you to feel good about doing new things and living life to the fullest. Everyone feels safer in their own 'comfort-zone' but if a lack of self belief is stopping you from doing new things then it can be changed quite simply. There is no reason to hang onto feeling bad about yourself, although sometimes you can choose to do so as it may be giving you a hidden benefit – does it give you an excuse to avoid anything? Or give you lots of reassuring attention? Maybe you fear how people will treat you if you are confident?

Wouldn't it be better to feel good about yourself no matter what other people do or say? You can never please everyone anyway so you may as well be happy in yourself.

This workshop will help you start to look at why you have low self-belief, and then show you 6 different methods of changing it.

In order to have self-belief you firstly need to work out what it means to you, most people have confidence in themselves at some times but not others. (confidence is how you feel when you believe in yourself)

What would you define self belief as?

If I could wave a magic wand and give you self belief, name 5 things that would be different in your life, eg. belief that you can do something, belief that your

opinion is valid, belief that you are loveable, belief that you deserve treating well etc.:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Self belief is what you think of yourself, but it is not necessarily true. It is just an opinion that you hold onto, or assume others hold about you, eg. you are boring so therefore others will be bored of you. Low self-belief comes from the negative messages you tell yourself, that you have repeated so many times you believe them. They may have started off coming from a comment someone once said, or a fear you have, but you keep them alive by repeating them to yourself.

You can also keep them alive by comparing yourself to others, only you are comparing what is going on inside you with what they present to the world, two very different things. For example you may think celebrities are better than you, and beat yourself up for not being like them, only to find they suffer from the same doubts and problems as you. Of course there are some things that some people are better than you at, just as you are better than others at some things. How many things have you beaten yourself up about without even learning the skills to achieve them? Would you do that to someone else?

What characteristics in others do you admire?

What can you do to develop those skills in yourself?

Once negative messages become a belief they become like the writing stamped through seaside rock – always there, and they will cloud your decisions in life. Just because you tell yourself negative messages doesn't mean they are true, just that they have become a habit. As with all habits – it's easier to stay with what you know so low self-belief becomes normal, and scary to change. These beliefs once served a purpose, and we will discuss more about that once we look at whether it really is a lack of self belief you have.

It is important to get clear on what you want to change so that you can know if it definitely is a lack of self belief or something else. For example, if you doubt that you can feel comfortable presenting to a group of people then that can be a lack of self belief, or a lack of skills. If it's a lack of skills telling yourself it's a lack of self belief, or visa versa, will make it very difficult to change. You will then be even more convinced that you will never be comfortable presenting, when the solution could in fact be easy. What skills could you learn so that you feel more confident in yourself in some of the situations you listed at the beginning?

If you are already very skilled, or have been told that you are good and still doubt yourself then that is a lack of self-belief.

It may help to ask someone who's opinion you trust whether what you believe is true. What things do people say to you that you dismiss and think 'if only they knew'?

This is a sign of a lack of self-belief.

Nerves are natural and not to be confused with a lack of self belief either – nerves are eased by relaxation, but if we doubt ourselves the nerves will get

worse. Have heard of the phrase self-fulfilling prophecy? Basically it means you create what you focus on – so if you are telling yourself that you are not good enough you will then look for evidence to support that, and hence reinforce that belief. Also, by telling yourself negative messages, like not being good enough, you are alerting yourself to possible danger and thus putting yourself under stress. This renders you even less able to do anything but ‘fight or flight’, so you are more likely to mess up. If you took away the negative messages and replaced them with positive ones you would relax and have more chance of success. Athletes know that in order to perform at their best they need to be relaxed and positive, so it’s not surprising that you do not do your best when you beat yourself up and get stressed! (of course you then judge that as being the best you can do though...)

A little word on the difference between having self-belief and being arrogant, arrogance is believing you are the best and are better than others, whereas self-belief is believing that doing your best is good enough. You can have self belief and still not achieve what you want.

Next you need to understand why you have a lack of self belief as this is something that has been taught to you, and therefore can be untaught. You were born a blank sheet and either learnt to believe in yourself or not. If you do not know the cause then it will be like sticking a plaster over a splinter, and will only mask the pain.

We learn things by firstly acknowledging that we do not have the skill, then learning to do it by concentrating on what we are doing, before it finally becomes a habit and we no longer think about doing it. Once you are aware of a lack of self-belief you can start by consciously changing it so that it then becomes natural to believe in yourself instead.

Doubting yourself is a form of protection from setting yourself up to get disappointed or hurt. Maybe you were rejected so assume everyone will reject you so you can’t be disappointed again? Or failed at something and were

laughed at, so don't try anything new to avoid feeling humiliated? Or were constantly criticized as a child so now criticize yourself so others can't?

What is your protecting belief? Look at the 5 things that would be different about your life, what negative messages do you tell yourself when you think about doing those things right now?

Is there a common theme in what you tell yourself, eg. a label you give yourself (eg. stupid, useless, boring etc) or a phrase you keep repeating?

This message you give yourself will have a very strong hold on you as you have told yourself you need to believe it in order to survive, and trying to do the opposite will trigger panic in you. It also sets up an addictive pattern – negative thinking makes you feel bad, so when something doesn't happen the relief you feel is the high you then crave.

Now the good news – by changing the underlying belief you no longer need to protect yourself. For example, if your underlying belief is that you are not worth loving, then to believe someone could love you will set off a panic that they might reject you, so you feel better not believing it. If you change that belief so that you do believe you are worth loving, then you will feel good about believing someone could whether one person rejects you or not. This is why it is important to understand what your lack of self belief is, and bring it out in the open so you can change it.

Some beliefs are easy to change, but others maybe deeper entrenched, so I will show you a few different ways to change what you believe about yourself. Please do not do them all at once as that will overwhelm you and set you up to fail. Also be patient with yourself, you have had years to set these beliefs in stone so they may need to be chipped at bit by bit.

Method 1

It is important to remember that our beliefs are not necessarily the truth, they are what we told ourselves to give meaning to an event eg. you were shouted at and told you were lazy, so either that person lied or you are lazy. As a child you were more likely to believe an adult is telling the truth, and therefore believe you are lazy. Even though you then learnt that people say things out of frustration rather than because it's true that belief has become ingrained.

Write down a negative message you tell yourself:

Now list the evidence that supports that. Someone telling you it is true is not evidence - that is their opinion.

Now list evidence that proves that belief wrong, eg if you believe you are lazy – list times you worked hard. Include even small things, like getting up every morning (a lazy person wouldn't).

Think of a belief you can tell yourself instead, eg. I work hard at what I choose to.

Repeat that positive belief every morning, and whenever you feel doubts. Remember - telling yourself a negative message makes it a habit, not a fact.

Sometimes simply challenging the belief is enough to loosen it, we are retraining our minds to think a different thought. It's a bit like creating a new path across a field – at first you may need to look where you walk but after a while the path becomes easier to follow.

Use the attached form to guide you through this.

Method 2

This is similar to method 1, only by writing a journal you can become more conscious of what messages you tell yourself. Whenever you feel a lack of self belief write about it, and write your thoughts down. By putting your thoughts on paper they lose their grip. Someone worked out that we have about 66,000 thoughts a day go through our minds. Now obviously we can't consciously notice all of them, most are like background music setting the tone of a lack of self belief. By bringing them into our conscious mind we can challenge them so they lose their grip, and one way to do that is to write your thoughts down. Whenever you think of doing something that you lack self belief in ask yourself why and notice the answers, they will be something like 'I always fail' 'people will laugh at me' 'I will look a fool' 'they will notice me shaking' etc. These are rarely based on fact so challenge them – when have I succeeded? How do you know people are going to laugh at me, or judge me? Most people are actually feeling the same as you anyway and put on a social mask to cover it, as I'm sure you do too! (and remember – if someone does criticize you then that is a cover-up for their own lack of confidence – not fact! There are ways to give people feedback that is not damaging). By getting in the habit of writing regularly you will also get to know how your mind works and notice patterns.

Method 3

By keeping a journal you will be able to see what triggers your self doubt – is it in certain circumstances only? Or with certain people? Is it when you are tired, or having a bad day? Compare it to times when you feel confident – what is different? Were you feeling different before hand? So that we don't need to consciously think of everything we do our minds tell us to react the same way we did in a similar situation (this is how phobias work), like an automatic reaction. If you have previously panicked when confronted by a certain situation, then your automatic response is to panic again. By becoming aware of that, rather than going with it, then you can over-ride your response and learn a new one. Quite often we will get an uncomfortable physical sensation, like nerves, that we then try to explain and may conclude is really self-doubt. By bombarding ourselves with negative messages we then feel worse. We could, alternatively, start by thinking the worst in a situation. This leads to us feeling a negative emotion, that then encourages us to fear the worst. If we break the pattern before it takes hold, and replace it with a positive state, then the outcome will be different. It's a bit like stopping a runaway car before it gathers momentum down hill, much easier the earlier you get it.

You only need to break the pattern 3-5 times before a new pattern forms.

Ways to break the pattern:

- The first 2 methods above will break the pattern.
- Do something different – go for a walk or stretch, think of something that makes you feel good, maybe imagine someone with you encouraging you.
- Distract yourself, whatever way works for you. Read, ring someone, listen to music, do relaxation exercises, laugh.
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- Imagine the negative message is said in a cartoon characters voice (this does work – who can believe something said by Donald Duck?)
- Imagine you are in the future, after the situation has ended, looking back. Play the scene as if it went amazingly well.
- Act ‘as if’ you were confident and believed in yourself. Or act as if you are a character in a film who is confident.
- NLP has a few different techniques to help you change patterns, including anchoring and swish. Contact me for more info on these.

Method 4

Sometimes your lack of self belief can come from a destructive relationship you have had, especially if you were a child at the time. By healing this it will be unable to still affect you today. (If this event is a form of traumatic abuse please book a session with me or another therapist rather than do this exercise).

Who first told you the negative messages you are now telling yourself? Or behaved in a way that led you to believe they are true?

Write about the event. If it was happening to someone else now, what would you say to that person? Write a letter to the younger you telling yourself what you needed to know then, eg. it is not your fault, the other person is in pain and lashing out, you are a wonderful person etc. It may help write a letter to the other person telling them the damage it did and how you feel, then burn it while telling yourself it no longer has an affect on you. Let it go.

Can you forgive the other person? Forgiving is not saying it is OK, you can still think someone behaved wrongly and forgive them. You can learn from it and protect yourself for the future without letting it damage your self belief. Forgiving

them is saying that you will no longer let it affect you, they no longer have power over you. It is also about understanding that that only people in pain hurt others.

If this does not work, and you are unable to talk to they other person to tell them what affect it had, then please book to see me or another therapist to heal it.

Method 5

If you find yourself saying that part of you knows you are good enough, whilst part of you doubts it, then you can do something called parts negotiation. Each part of you has a valid reason to be in conflict with the other, and like any negotiation you need to find an agreement between the two (sometimes there are more that two). This is done by finding out what the part really wants - we talked at the beginning of this about how a lack of self belief is a protection from something. By finding out what the negative part is really fearful of you can reassure it, and quite often find that it's reason for protecting you is the same as what the other part wants, eg. to be accepted, or feel good.

Here is a way to do this negotiation:

Make sure you are sitting comfortably, and hold out both hands palm facing upwards. Imagine one part of you on one hand, and the other part on the other hand. See if you can get a sense of each part – do they have a weight or texture? Maybe they look like something.

Next we are going to talk to each part in turn – ask the first what it wants for you by saying X (whatever it tells you)? And then ask it again – what is important to you about getting (the answer to previous question)? Continue to ask that question until you think you have got to the real reason behind it's resistance, eg.

What do you want for me by saying *I will fail?* To stop you looking a fool

What is important to you about *stopping me looking like a fool?* People won't laugh at me

What is important to you about *people not laughing at you*? I will feel accepted

What is important to you about being *feeling accepted*? Feel loved

The crux of the issue is about being feeling loved.

Now ask the other part exactly the same questions but about wanting you to go for it.

What do you want for me by *giving it a go*? Something I want to do

What is important to you about *doing something you want to do*? Feel successful

What is important to you about *feeling successful*? To be liked more

What is important to you about *being liked more*? To feel love.

Now thank each part for doing such a great job, and ask them if they can help each other to feel *loved whilst still protecting yourself from danger, and still go for it*. If there is any resistance check out the questions again, otherwise bring both hands together so the parts merge, and then push the part into your chest. This is actually a very powerful technique and things will shift inside you if it is done right. Sit still for a while.

Method 6

Self belief needs feeding daily, by telling yourself positive messages and doing things that make you feel good. It's like filling up your tank to be ready for when you really need a good boost in a new situation. If you surround yourself with people who tell you negative things or abuse you, or do not look after yourself physically and emotionally, then it will be more difficult to feel good about yourself. Some people are also very good at soaking up other people's emotions – so it could actually be someone else's negativity you are feeling (see my section on highly sensitive people on my website for more info).

Having self-belief is like exercising – you can't do it once and then expect to be fit. What things do you enjoy doing that you could fit into your daily routine? Or do when you need a boost? Is there a picture that makes you smile, or relax? You can get aromatherapy gels to carry with you that make you feel relaxed and happy, or carry an inspiring piece of writing or music. One of the most powerful is the imagination – think of a time you felt strong and you will get the feelings back. This is about learning how to get the best out of yourself, and therefore life.

If your belief is still entrenched, or you are fearful about letting it go, there are more powerful methods that need to be facilitated by a professional like myself.

Most of all accept that you are a unique and wonderful person and that the world needs for you to be the real you. It's like a jigsaw puzzle - if you try to be the same as other pieces you can only ever be a fake them, and the picture will never get finished. Have fun getting to know you, I promise you will be even more wonderful than you can imagine.

Please feel free to e-mail me any questions katalyst4ch@aol.com

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.
We ask ourselves 'who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?'
Actually, who are you *not* to be?
You are a child of god. Your playing small doesn't serve the world.
There's nothing enlightening about shrinking so that other people won't
feel insecure around you.
We are all meant to shine, as children do.
We were born to make manifest the glory of god that is within us. It's not
just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we
unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.
As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates
others.

(Marianne Williamson)

Further reading:

Fearless Living by Rhonda Britten

Over coming low self-esteem by Melanie Fennell

The Art of Happiness by The Dalai Lama

Self Matters by Dr Phil

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My name is Kathryn Hodgson and I am trained in NLP Psychotherapy and Evolutional Kinesiology (amongst many other things!). If you want to learn more about how I can help you, or read any of my other free articles please visit my website at www.katalyst4change.co.uk

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