PERSONAL GROWTH | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT | VALUES

Confidence – "You only sell you"

Seven basic points to remember about yourself

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This article's focus is on self-confidence and self-esteem. In my opinion, there is nothing more important than your belief in your own potential for success and happiness, regardless of your age, gender, ethnicity, looks, education or background.

> ***The truth is, every day "You only sell you. You don't sell products or a business concept. You sell the value of the person offering the products and services.***

The decision of the buyer is based on the value of the seller. Just as products are branded as "the best", "cheap", "ineffective", "trustworthy" or "unreliable", so, too, are individuals branded by others as "winners" or "also-rans." Who you are shouts so loudly, that people either can't hear, don't want to hear, or listen carefully to what you are saying. Everybody loves a winner, and we all want to buy from winners who pass their own value on to us.

Self-confidence isn't something you were born with. It's something you develop. Many of us were cultivated like weeds as children. We played inferior roles to the adults around us, who frequently reminded us of our faults and shortcomings more than our successes and abilities.

If you had that type of childhood, as I did, you face a special challenge in building up your self-confidence as an adult. Here are some basic points to remember about you:

1. *Realize that the most important opinion about you is the one that you hold.* Ultimately, nobody else is responsible for your life but you. Nobody else is accountable for your actions but you. Therefore, nobody's opinion about you is more important than yours.

2. Recognize that the most important conversations are the ones you have with yourself. Whether or not you are aware of it, you have a running conversation with yourself from the time you get up to the time you go to sleep. Your thoughts and ideas are "you talking to you." *Have daily conversations with yourself that are supportive and reinforcing.* We know the value of talking to people who praise us, reward us, recognize us, are happy to see us, and let us know they genuinely enjoy talking with us. Talk to yourself with those same qualities – silently as well as audibly.

3. Develop a strong system of internal values. Weigh what you hold to be true, good and lasting. Write down some of your values for periodic review. Read material that reinforces what you hold to be significant in life. Know what you believe and why you believe it. At times, have discussions – even debates – with yourself. *Draw conclusions about life. Think about deeper issues. Your values will greatly affect how you relate to others.* The stronger your values are, the greater the impact. If you are lacking in internal values, you will tend to draw from and even use other people to try to mimic their behaviors, if only superficially. Instead, seek to become a model, one who can help and give strength to others.

4. Don't reinforce your failures. Failure is a detour, not a dead-end street. Failure is a temporary setback, not a residence. Failure is a learning experience, not a person. *Like success, failure is a growth process, not a status.* Don't wallow in your mistakes. Correct them and move forward.

5. *Don't demand perfection of yourself.* An A is usually awarded to the person who scores 90 percent or better, and sometimes the score doesn't need to be that high. Professional basketball players only make half their shots. Professional quarterbacks complete only half their passes, and professional baseball players reach first base less than 40 percent of the time, and that includes walks. And we all know what our averages are in picking stocks to invest in that are always going up. That would be never! Give your best effort every day and keep ratcheting forward. Perfection is not only totally unrealistic to expect and virtually impossible to achieve, but it greatly deters your ability to move forward. The person who is constantly looking over his or her shoulder at what might have been done better can't possibly be focused on the future. *Drive with your eyes ahead; don't drive by concentrating on the rearview mirror.*

6. Give each job or task your best effort. Countless individuals say, when confronted with a chore, "I'm too good to be doing this." They have contempt for their current situation and position, and get discouraged easily. Success is an accumulation of what you do in the minutes of each day. No task is too unworthy to do well. *There are no small parts – only small actors.*

7. View the big picture of life. Step back from the landscape of your life today and take a long walk, ride a bike, or just sit silently, observing the wonder and abundance of God's creation in nature. You are a part of a much bigger whole. Listen to the subtle rhythms of your environment. *Recognize that you have rhythms and cycles of change in your life. Relax and open up to the vast creative and interrelated world around you.*

To develop confidence, you must see yourself ultimately as a unique part of creation. You must recognize, *WITH PLEASURE*, that nobody else is just like you. No one else has exactly your temperament, history or experiences. No one else has your footprints, your finger prints, your voice print or your genetic code. No one else has precisely your set of talents, capabilities and skills.

You are one of a kind. The value is there. It just needs to be dusted off and polished.

Denis Waitley is one of America's most respected and beloved authors, keynote lecturers and productivity consultants on high performance human achievement. He has inspired, informed, challenged and entertained audiences for over 25 years from the boardrooms of multi-national corporations to the control rooms of NASA's space program. Denis has been voted business speaker of the year by the Sales and Marketing Executives' Association and by Toastmasters' International and inducted into the International Speakers' Hall of Fame.

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