



The Mystery of Confidence

By Michelle Kelley

Women and girls need more confidence! We're not born with it. We wonder why others have it and we do not. We don't want to talk about it. We don't know how to talk about it. We don't understand it. We need it and without it we are at a disadvantage.

What is Confidence?

When I was in high school, I would look at the "other girls" – you know, the popular ones, the ones guys would ask out – and wonder where they got their confidence. They appeared to have a perfect life, to have everything figured out and to have been born confident.

High school was rough for me. Not something I would want to relive. Since then I have been on a journey to find my own confidence. I'm not exactly sure when it happened. Maybe it was when I graduated from college or graduate school. Maybe it was when I went through my divorce or bought my home. Maybe it was when I started my business. Maybe it was when I learned about boundaries, found my voice and realized "No" is a complete sentence.

Confidence is a bit of a mystery. It's elusive. It may always seem to be on the horizon or that it's just something others have. The truth is that we are not born with confidence – no one is. We create

it. It is something that is nurtured, that we work on and build throughout a lifetime.

We tend to think that confidence is feeling-based. This is true. It is a feeling, but it also comes from a winning combination of action and right-thinking.

Think back to when you were learning how to ride a bicycle. After you learned, your confidence was sky-high because you did it! You set a goal and mastered it even though it wasn't a conscious process. You likely had a big smile on your face. You were full of yourself and rightly so. That's confidence. It's often situation-specific.

“Above all, we must be authentic. Authenticity breeds confidence.”

Here’s the good news: If you have a spark of confidence in any area of your life, it can transfer to other areas.

Confidence for Healthy Relationships

The most important area to feel confident in is within relationships. Without confidence, a girl cannot stand up for herself or speak up for herself. Without confidence a woman cannot ask for a raise at work or ask for change in a valued relationship. Without confidence, a girl or woman is held back from reaching her personal and professional potential and will likely suffer in silence – with a smile on her face. If you ask her how she is doing, she will probably reply “fine.”

It is possible to be confident in all of your relationships, even the difficult and challenging ones. Confidence within a relationship is defined by your ability to understand all parts of a relationship, be able to use your voice appropriately, and lastly, to take necessary action.

Confidence Destroyers

- Negative messages about our capabilities, talents, intellect or appearance – from others or ourselves
- Anxiety: Women worry more than men. It’s been passed down from generation to generation.
- Abusive / toxic relationships
- Media messages about how we should look or what we should be doing.

The problem with us females is that we think we have to be good at everything, both personally and professionally. Girls get this message at a young age. Remember those popular girls at school?

If confidence is what you want for your daughter, then ask yourself “Do I feel confident? Do I have healthy self-esteem?” If not, please don’t feel ashamed or guilty. I would rather you be honest with yourself and commit to starting the journey to increased confidence. An authentic mother-daughter relationship is much more likely to help your daughter than pretending you’re confident when you’re not.

In order to dig out of a hole, we have to build a ladder – a ladder of our strengths and accomplishments. Above all, we must be authentic. Authenticity breeds confidence.

Building Confidence

1. Recognize that the spark of confidence is inside of you. Yes, it’s there!
2. Name it. “I feel confident when I ____.” No matter how small or trivial you think it is. Seriously, if you are good at keeping calm, baking cheesecake or running a company, own it.
3. Define yourself by your strengths, not your perceived weaknesses.
4. Develop positive self-talk. Stop focusing so much on what you don’t do well or don’t like about yourself. Females engage in destructive self-talk more frequently than males. You can change your self-talk once you are aware of it.
5. Seek out supportive people and spend more time with them.

Thinking vs. Doing

Take a look at an area of your life where you do not feel confident and ask yourself, “Why don’t I feel confident here?” You will need to decide if you have a thinking problem or a doing problem.

For example, if you don’t feel confident with public speaking, ask yourself if you need to be good at this. You would be surprised how many women knock down their own confidence/self-esteem because public speaking is not their strength – when it doesn’t need to be. This would be a thinking problem. However, if you need to be a better public speaker for work (or if you desire this) then you have a doing problem. The solution is to take action – get a speaking coach, join Toastmasters International. This is a learned skill.

Your confidence journey should be acknowledged (without shame), shared and cultivated with yourself first and trusted-others next. This process requires vulnerability, so you don’t want to trust this process with just anyone.

Learn to choose wisely, think wisely, and seek out others who can help. Embrace change. Embrace imperfection. Embrace yourself just the way you are. You are good enough.

Remember, confidence will wax and wane throughout your lifetime, depending on your life circumstances and even your mood. Learn to chart your confidence and notice patterns. It’s not as much of a mystery as you might think. You can learn to unlock the door to a stronger confidence, and you will definitely feel happier and be a role model for others.

Building your confidence is a gift you give to yourself and those that you love. ❖

Recommended Reading:
Daring Greatly by Brene Brown

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