

FGSR Professional Development Professional Practice Module



Confidence

Your confidence must have been tested in one way or another. It might have been that big X across a paragraph on your paper or a grueling period of questioning during your candidacy exams. In such instances, do you remember what made you lose confidence?

Although confidence is a strengthening factor it is also a very fragile attribute, easily threatened by the slightest of pressures. Fortunately, the more confidence you have, the more pressure it takes to cause it to falter.

What is confidence?

Confidence is self-assurance arising from a belief in your ability to achieve things. It is the feeling that you are sure you can complete a difficult or challenging task.

Confidence is important because it allows you and others to believe in yourself, and, in your ability to successfully accomplish a task.

Tips

1. Recognize Success

When a task is successfully accomplished, it is important to acknowledge the achievement. This is important as it registers internally as something that you can do again. In other words, always celebrate your success!

2. Divide your task into manageable stages

Before you set out to perform a task or try to achieve a goal, you must realize that the activity is really a series of smaller steps. When you divide a task into several stages, it becomes less overwhelming. Moreover, breaking down your task enables you to celebrate several successes along the way.

3. Set reachable goals

Before you begin a task, begin by identifying the skill set and abilities necessary to carry it out. If your skill set and abilities do not match those required by the task, acknowledge this and mention it to your supervisor. Where your skills and abilities match the requirements only partially, mention it too. In short, be honest and open about what you are not familiar with. This way, you can minimize errors, and yet, be open to learn new skills.

4. Remind yourself that you are confident

Review your goals and your personal philosophy. If possible, share them with an expert or a role model in your field and ask for feedback. Once you have incorporated feedback into your goals, tell yourself over and over again that you can achieve them. One way to do this is by internally re-iterating and acknowledging your abilities. In short, always practice positive self-talk.

5. Act confident

Although some people may appear naturally confident, do not be intimidated. They have learned it and so can you. Confidence is an acquired frame of mind that can only be nurtured by practice. Practicing confidence may take some acting initially but this will, over time, become more natural to you.

6. Prepare thoroughly for the task

Work on the skills needed to do the task. You can never be over-trained or over-skilled for any challenges in life. Preparing thoroughly is the only way you can be sure that you are ready for the task and consequently, the only way you can do the task confidently.

7. Fight self-consciousness

Self-consciousness is awareness or embarrassment derived from the feeling that others are criticizing you. (From: <http://wordnet.princeton.edu/>) Self-consciousness is a strong enemy of confidence. You can usually tell that you are self-conscious when you feel anxious especially in social settings. To avoid self-consciousness, learn to keep your attention away from others, and away from yourself. Focus your attention on other things in your vicinity like a painting on the wall, or a beautiful landscape.

8. Accept criticism

Since criticism simply means "an expression of disapproval," not all criticism is un-healthy. In fact criticism is necessary for growth and progress. This type of criticism, otherwise known as constructive criticism, points out what has been done inadequately and suggests how it can be improved. To safely accept criticism it is important to distinguish between constructive criticism and destructive criticism. Unlike constructive criticism, destructive criticism tends to centre on your wrong doing or inadequacies without necessarily suggesting ways to correct them. Constructive criticism has most likely helped to improve your research paper or dissertation. It helps athletes reach their goals and has helped put this module together.

Activities to Do On Your Own

Confidence comes from three main sources (adapted from Perera, 2001):

First: From within yourself

- Figure out whom you are and the purposes for which you strive.
- Avoid comparing yourself with others. Their purposes are likely to be different from yours.
- Always or at least try to use positive emotional tones: enthusiasm and cheerfulness.

Second: From others

- Choose a role model whose confidence inspires you.
- Learn what makes your role model appear confident and mimic it.
- Seek out supportive environments and avoid those where you are consistently put down.
- Ask a trusted friend, relative, role model, mentor or anyone who knows you well enough to give you constructive feedback on your level of confidence.

Third: From your achievements

- Produce high quality results by meeting and exceeding expectation.
- Get involved by volunteering. People are generally nice to volunteers. Moreover, this will provide an opportunity for practicing and testing your level of confidence.
- Take note of places, activities and events where you feel more confident. Identify what gives you confidence in these environments and try to transfer them to other contexts.
- Rehearse a situation you dread.

Other Resources

- Kurtus, R. How to gain confidence. Retrieved on November 15, 2006, from the School for Champions website: <http://www.school-for-champions.com/excellence/confidence.htm>
- Pereira, K. Confidence building and self-esteem. Retrieved November 15, 2006, from the More Self Esteem website: <http://www.more-selfesteem.com/confidencebuilding.htm>
- Princeton University. WordNet: A lexical database for the English language. Retrieved, December 10, 2006, from the Princeton University Wordnet website: <http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=self-consciousness>
- Soanes, C., Hawker, S., & Elliot, J. (Eds.). (2006). Oxford dictionary of current English. (4th Ed). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Visit: <http://www.quotegarden.com/confidence.html> for various motivational quotes, such as:
 - Confidence is preparation. Everything else is beyond your control. ~Richard Kline
 - Don't think. Thinking is the enemy of creativity. It's self-conscious and anything self-conscious is lousy. You cannot try to do things. You simply must do things. ~Ray Bradbury
 - Nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent. ~Eleanor Roosevelt
 - It's not who you are that holds you back, it's who you think you're not. ~Author Unknown
 - We have to learn to be our own best friends because we fall too easily into the trap of being our own worst enemies. ~Roderick Thorp, Rainbow Drive
 - It ain't what they call you, it's what you answer to. ~W.C. Fields
 - I quit being afraid when my first venture failed and the sky didn't fall down. ~Allen H.
 - NeuharthIf you hear a voice within you say "you cannot paint," then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced. ~Vincent Van Gogh
 - Make the most of yourself, for that is all there is of you. ~Ralph Waldo Emerson
 - I am convinced all of humanity is born with more gifts than we know. Most are born geniuses and just get de-geniused rapidly. ~Buckminster Fuller
 - People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within. ~Elisabeth Kübler-Ross
 - If you really put a small value upon yourself, rest assured that the world will not raise your price. ~Author Unknown
 - Confidence comes not from always being right but from not fearing to be wrong. ~Peter T. Mcintyre