

The Confidence Factor is the first in a series of guides, pocket manuals, CDs and audio products that will help you to develop yourself for your ultimate success.

Also available:

The Networking Factor - tips

The Confident Manager - reference

An aspire 2 publication

transforming aspirations into reality

the Confidence Factor

*10 steps to boost your
confidence in any situation*

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by Kate Atkin

Yes...

Confidence *can* be learnt!

If you've ever had a crisis of confidence either at home or at work, then you'll be all too familiar with how your thinking can spiral out of control. Your mood changes, you find your concentration lacking and then your work suffers.

'In my experience, self-doubt is something that occurs frequently. It is how you deal with it that makes the difference,' says Kate.

Kate Atkin has successfully coached management teams at Boots The Chemists, The Royal Society of Chemistry and Cambridge Building Society with her popular course *Creating Confidence* and regularly gives talks entitled *Present Yourself with Confidence*.

Now she's concentrated the results of her studies into this booklet, which encapsulates her secrets to boosting confidence and presenting the confident persona that fuels success.

Kate Atkin is also author of *The Confident Manager*, written in a compelling story format. The book provides valuable lessons to young and aspiring managers as well as sage advice to those already experienced in management.

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Note from the author

Confidence is needed in many different situations, and depending on your own life experiences you'll have a level of self-confidence in situations others may dread.

This pocket guide is for the times when you find that the butterflies are starting to get the upper hand and you would like to have them fly in formation again. Or when you find your self-doubt starts to creep around the corner and you haven't been able to turn the internal voice off.

When I decided to write this guide my own internal voice started to say, 'Will anyone want to read it? Will they find it useful?' Having done my research I found that my own thoughts needed to be silenced and the maxim of 'just do it!' grew louder.

While reading this guide you'll find sections in which to jot down your own thoughts and situations. I encourage you to write in them and use your notes as a tool to help create the 'Confidence Factor' when you need it.

"Ships in the harbour are safe, but that's not what ships are built for"

John Shedd

What is Confidence?

Confidence is elusive. Often when we want to have it, it's just not there. There are other times when we exude confidence, yet don't realise it. We tend to only notice when we are lacking in confidence, not when we have it.

So what is confidence?

- It's an inner feeling of self-belief
- It's knowing you have the right information
- It's knowledge
- ... and more ...

When do you need it?

The answer to that question will be different for different people – but it will usually be 'when I want it and don't have it'.

Decide when you would most like to feel more confident and, using the tips in this booklet, start taking action to enable your confidence to grow.

It might be when you're approaching your boss, or a client or certain members of your team.

It might be in social situations: when you're due to go to a party with crowds of people; or talking to someone one to one.

Perhaps you would like more confidence asking someone out on a date, or sharing your feelings with your partner?

Well you're not alone.

Whatever the situation, you can be sure that you won't be alone in feeling that you lack the confidence to cope. There will be others who will be feeling just as nervous as you. Maybe all you notice are the people who seem to exude confidence. Well here's a secret, those who appear fully confident are often doing just that – appearing so! That doesn't mean they have confidence, just that you believe they do and that's all that matters.

This pocket guide provides you with tried, tested and proven strategies, which, when adopted, will help you to feel and appear more confident.

You too will be able to create your own confidence and go for it!

“Try not. Do, or do not. There is no try”

Yoda

Confidence Factor I

The Importance of Breathing

Take slow, deep breaths

Our breathing becomes shallow and fast when we feel stressed. Under stress, breathing tends to be done from the upper part of the chest, which has less room to expand, so the lungs fill with less oxygen.

This means that there is less oxygen reaching your brain, so you think less clearly and your heart beats faster to pump the oxygen round the body.

Taking just three slow deep breaths when you're feeling stressed helps to calm your heart rate and provides more oxygen to the brain which can help you to think more clearly.

ACTION

- Breathe slowly and deeply
- Take three deep breaths when you're feeling nervous

*“I'm not a failure if I don't make it.
I'm a success because I tried!”*

anon

Confidence Factor 2

What Secrets is Your Body Telling?

Stand tall and be aware of your posture

Have you ever noticed how your body posture changes when you lack confidence? How do you stand when you're feeling a little nervous?

The chances are you will have hunched your shoulders, your eyes will be looking downwards and there will be a lack of a smile, maybe even a worried frown on your face. All this helps to send messages to your brain that tell it that you're not feeling too good about yourself.

What does the brain do? It produces chemicals which enhance that stressed out, nervous feeling – cortisol! Isn't the human body a wonderful machine? It's a process that's easily reversible. So ask your brain to do something helpful and create the chemicals that will help you feel confident. How?

Your brain does what your body asks it to do. Adopting a confident posture really will help you feel more confident ... go on, give it a go.

ACTION

- Stand upright with your back straight
- Put your shoulders back (not quite army major style!) and relax them
- Keep your head up
- Walk purposefully, rather than hesitantly
- Speak clearly with a steady tone

“Never bend your head. Always hold it high. Look the world straight in the eye”

Helen Keller

Confidence Factor 3

Smile

Put a smile on your face

Put a smile on your face and voilà – the brain says ‘aha, we are feeling good today’ so gives you some more of the happy chemicals which do that – serotonin and endorphins.

When you become stressed or nervous you often frown without meaning to. The smile drops from your face. It takes as many muscles to frown as it does to smile – so which ones would you rather have in shape? Also, would you like laughter lines as you get older or frown lines?

Do this for a moment:

Think of a time when you were stressed, or nervous. Concentrate on it and ask yourself where you were at the time? Who were you with? What were you or they saying? How did you feel? What could you hear? Picture yourself back at that moment in time.

I bet you can picture it really clearly – and that was only a memory!

Ok, now stop and reflect on what happened to your posture and in particular your face at that moment. What did you notice?

Now let’s reverse the strategy – think of a time when you had just succeeded at something. Maybe when you felt the world was with you and you could do anything you wanted to? Concentrate on this for a moment. Where were you? Who were you with? What were you or they saying? How did you feel? What could you hear? Picture yourself back at that moment in time.

Ok, now stop and reflect on what happened to your posture and in particular your face at that moment. What were the differences in facial expressions and posture between that memory and the first one?

My guess is that for the first one you had a frown on your face, or at least a lack of a smile, and for the second one the corners of your mouth were turned up – or maybe a full-grown grin. You certainly looked different.

Did you feel different too?

That’s the power of your mind at work – the brain simply does as we ask – so start asking it to be constructive and get it to give you a helping hand in feeling confident.

Take a moment to note the positive event, your posture and your feelings

ACTION

- Put a smile on your face. Yes, even force a smile when you don't feel like doing so!
- Smile at people in the street
- Smile at those you pass in the corridor at work
- Smile when you're feeling down
and
- Laugh aloud – often

“We either make ourselves miserable, or we make ourselves strong. The amount of work is the same”

Carlos Casteneda

Confidence Factor 4

Control Your Thinking

Think the right thoughts

It's just as vital you give your brain good thoughts to mull on, as it is to give it good body signals. This is instead of the negative thoughts we so often feed ourselves.

Being positive doesn't mean being unrealistic. I'm not advocating that you look at your garden and say 'There are no weeds', expecting the weeds to die without you taking any action.

Believing you can do something and creating confidence is not about lying to yourself – it's about being realistic and keeping a positive frame of mind.

Be the person you would like to be in your mind and watch as that feeling works its way through your body and into your actions.

Your subconscious mind doesn't notice a negative; when you think of what you don't want to happen it views it as happening. Let it know how you do want things to be and very quickly you'll start noticing the positive difference in your life.

Would you allow your best friend to talk to you the way you talk to yourself in your head? No? Well, start having your mind as your own best friend and think positively.

ACTION

Stop

- I'll never be able to ...
- I'm no good at ...
- They won't like this
- They'll probably think I'm stupid

Start

- I'll give this a go
- I've done something similar before
- They might like this
- I'll ask, someone else may be wondering the same as me ...

Write down some of the language that you wish to start using.

“You are today where your thoughts have brought you; you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you”

James Allen

Confidence Factor 5

Watch Your Language

Choose your words

The language you use can fit into one of three categories:

- a. positive language
- b. neutral language
- c. negative language

Positive words are words like ‘certainly’, ‘absolutely’, ‘definitely’, ‘great’, ‘fantastic’.

On the negative side you have ‘no’, ‘definitely not’, ‘no way’, ‘things are horrendous’, ‘it’s a nightmare at the moment’ and so on.

Neutral language includes words such as ‘hopefully’, ‘I’ll try’, ‘I’ll have a go’, ‘we might’, ‘possibly’, ‘it’s okay’, ‘I’m all right’, ‘not too bad’.

Often we stay neutral, partly because we don’t want to upset anybody and partly because we don’t want to over-promise and under-deliver, thinking it is safer.

The downside is that staying neutral doesn’t instil confidence in anybody else.

Have you ever noticed the impact of someone saying he will try to get you the report done by Friday? Compare that with the words 'the report will definitely be with you by lunchtime on Friday'. In whom would you have the most confidence?

That's not to say that you need to be positive the whole time. It's better to be definite one way or the other and let's face it, there are times when the answer is a resounding negative . . . just be sure to say so in a positive way!

Give the reasons why something can't be done before you tell them that you can't do it.

ACTION

- Listen to and monitor your own language
- Cut out the neutral language
- Be definite - say what you mean and mean what you say

“Our problem is that we make the mistake of comparing ourselves with other people. You are not inferior or superior to any human being . . . You do not determine your success by comparing yourself to others. Rather you determine your success by comparing your accomplishments to your capabilities. You are ‘number one’ when you do the best you can with what you have, every day”

Zig Ziglar

Confidence Factor 6

First Impressions

Make it a confident one

It's true that you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

The first time and the most recent time you meet someone will be the two you remember in the greatest detail.

So, what impression do you want to make? Before meeting someone, spend some time thinking about this. How will you speak, what will your body language be like, what will you wear?

After all that preparation, don't let a last minute rush get the better of you. Take a split second to compose yourself before you knock on the door, enter the room, or walk over to the person you're meeting.

A first meeting often starts with a handshake. Make sure your handshake lets the other person know that you are confident (regardless of how you are really feeling). Offer your hand, shake with a firm, not vice-like grip for a couple of seconds and make eye contact while you do so.

ACTION

- Take a split second to compose yourself
- Offer your hand to shake
- Make eye contact. Shake with a firm grip
- And keep smiling

Confidence Factor 7

Appearance – Does it Really Matter?

Dress for success

What you wear has an impact, often subconsciously, on how you feel. I'm sure you can think of that special item of clothing you feel good in – and another one that you don't.

Only wear clothes that help you feel good and are appropriate for the occasion.

Get rid of all those items you don't feel good in – the charity shops will love you!

Now that doesn't mean you have to buy designer outfits. You might pick something up in a charity shop that does just the job.

If you're unsure what suits you then see someone who specialises in giving advice – perhaps a colour analyst, or a free personal shopper at one of the high street department stores. Once you start to buy things that suit you, you'll find your wardrobe mixes and matches more easily. This applies to men just as much as women.

Wear what is appropriate for the occasion and if you don't know, ask.

Part of feeling good about yourself is looking good. Confidence goes hand in glove with self-esteem.

Shoes

Well-polished shoes show attention to detail, and, for ladies, a small heel can help your posture.

Hair

Hairstyle is important too – possibly more so for women of course.

Make-up

If you haven't bought new make-up or changed what you use for the last five years, take a trip down the high street and see the advances for yourself. Again, this doesn't have to be expensive and could help you look years younger!

Belts & ties

Finish your outfit/suit off by wearing a belt whenever possible. If you are wearing a tie, tie it so the tip just touches the top of your belt.

ACTION

- Clear out old, badly-fitting clothes
- Only wear clothes you feel good in
- Polish your shoes
- Revisit your hair and make-up
- Wear a belt

Confidence Factor 8

Who Are You?

Adopt a role

When you are feeling unsure of what to do, or how you'll be perceived, assume a role. One I've practised many times myself is that of 'hostess'. Be the one to introduce people to others; that way you'll be seen to be in charge. Offer drinks to those around you or help serve the food if you're at a social function.

In a work situation, remember that you fulfil a role there. If you weren't there what would happen?

The smallest cog in the biggest wheel has an important role to play.

If you have a crisis of confidence, separate yourself from your role. If for example a customer or your boss is angry, it's not personal. Their anger is towards something you did or an action that your company has taken. Talk through the differences internally to regain your confidence (see *factors 4 and 5*).

ACTION

- Adopt a role
- Be the host or hostess
- Separate yourself from the issue

Confidence Factor 9

Create a Confident You

Act as if ...

This is similar to adopting a role, with the difference that it's an act, not a real role.

'Fake it to create it' works well here, but stay true to the real you! This is not about creating a false persona, but about creating self-confidence and self-belief in the true you.

If you're not feeling confident, think about what a confident person would do, and act as if you are that someone.

The results here can be astounding.

Those who act as if they are full of confidence find themselves creating it. They are frequently thought to be extremely confident and have a greater sense of self-belief as a result of the belief others had in them ... all due to acting.

"Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall"

Confucius

Find a role model, maybe a TV character, a celebrity or someone you know personally and who you think is confident.

Watch what it is they do that instils that belief in you. Listen to the words they use. Observe how they behave and spot the small actions as well as the obvious ones. Then talk and act the same way.

ACTION

- Find a role model
- Act as if you are confident

Confidence Factor 10

Use the Power of Your Mind

Visualise what you want to happen

The mind is hugely powerful and visualising things can have a big impact on performance.

A common mistake if you're suffering from a lack of confidence is to imagine all the things that could possibly go wrong.

You need to visualise what you want to happen, not what you don't want to happen.

Before you go to bed at night think about the next day and what's going to happen. See it in the positive, i.e. going right.

Imagine everything going just the way you want it, even if you really think it won't.

Take the meeting you have coming up with that angry customer and imagine him being calmed down by your explanations. Or take the report you need to have finished and imagine it being completed quickly and easily.

You'll be amazed at the results.

Visualisations don't have to be in full colour or even with pictures.

Simply use your imagination and self-talk to run through the events in a positive way, be that in words, pictures or whatever works for you.

Then go for it.

Create your own Confidence Factor!

ACTION

- Visualise what you want to happen
- Spend time each day focussing on future events in a positive way
- Imagine things going right

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

10 Steps to Boost Your Confidence

1. Take slow, deep breaths.
2. Stand tall and be aware of your posture.
3. Put a smile on your face.
4. Think the right thoughts.
5. Choose your words.
6. Make a confident first impression.
7. Dress for success.
8. Adopt a role.
9. Act as if ...
10. Visualise what you want to happen.

Recommended Reading

The Confident Manager

Kate Atkin

ISBN 978-1-906316-15-0

Mindstore for Life

Jack Black

ISBN 0-7225-3264-4

The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success

Deepak Chopra

ISBN 0-593-04083-X

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

Stephen R. Covey

ISBN 0-684-85839-8

Feel the Fear and do it Anyway

Susan Jeffers

ISBN 0-09-974100-8

The Little Book of Confidence

Susan Jeffers

ISBN 0-7126-0826-5

Awaken the Giant Within

Anthony Robbins

ISBN 0-743-40938-8

Authentic Happiness

Martin Seligman

ISBN 1-85788-329-2

What Others Say ...

'Kate presents her sound knowledge in a fresh, uncomplicated style. She is very enthusiastic in her work and it is great fun to attend her seminars. You will leave with the feeling 'let's do that now'.

Dr Oliver Frey

'Dear Kate,

I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed your presentation at the CIPD Event. The room was buzzing with enthusiasm, not just for the subject, but also you as a highly skilled Presenter, who brought the subject to life. The information imparted was so useful. The impact of your performance on individuals was clearly visible as the attendees left the event appearing to walk taller and, from a casual observer's point of view, looking much more confident. I certainly felt much better when I left than when I walked into the room.'

CIPD Leicester Branch Chair

'You have a unique capacity to quickly and openly rewire the mind; you did it three times for me in our meeting. I found you and your company an absolute pleasure.'

Oliver D'Amboise-Stacey CEO, Coldface Ltd

About the Author

Kate Atkin was born in Lincolnshire and grew up on an arable farm.

After the death of her older sister she left her job with Barclays Bank to backpack around Australia and New Zealand. Travelling alone over those months, Kate learnt how to make friends quickly with other travellers and to expect the unexpected. More importantly, she found an inner strength, a sense of self-belief and confidence she hadn't had before.

On her return Kate rejoined Barclays and in 1997 moved to their training team. In September 2000 she established her own business Aspire 2. A bold step some said, but as Kate puts it 'there was an inner drive, something I knew I had to do'.

Kate now helps people overcome their fears and speaks on confidence across the UK and overseas. She is a world debating champion, an award winning speaker and past president of the PSA East (Professional Speaking Association).

This booklet is the culmination of self-development, which enabled a shy schoolgirl to become an international speaker. May it help you make the changes you desire.

Topics covered by Kate in her keynote and workshop presentations include:

Present Yourself with Confidence

Impact and Influence

Maximising Energy for Performance

Effective Networking

To make a booking or to talk to Kate about training, speaking or coaching
call +44 (0) 7779 646 976 or
email kate@aspire-2.com

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This pocket manual can be produced and jointly branded to incorporate your organisation's details.

