

# WISE CONFIDENCE

Overcome Self-Doubt and  
Build Lasting Self-Esteem

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# Start Here

*If I have lost confidence in myself, I have the universe against me.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Do you sometimes feel that you are playing too safe? Do you fear that if you continue like this life will pass you by, and your dreams will be left unfulfilled? Do you feel somewhat restricted by your limiting beliefs and thought patterns and wish you could feel more comfortable and empowered in your own skin, without being arrogant or cocky?

Imagine you had total confidence in yourself, in all areas of your life—in a way that is balanced and wise. What would you try? What possibilities would open up for you? How different would you feel from the inside?

Ask yourself this question: *What would I dare to pursue if I knew I could not fail?*

Are you pursuing that thing now? If not, a lack of self-confidence is likely the culprit. When you have greater confidence in yourself, you set bigger goals and live a bigger life.

Confidence is essential for both growth and well-being. Confidence is not arrogance—it is integrity. It is showing up as *one*, as a fully integrated, energized, and empowered individual. It is being on your own side, again and again. It is having unwavering faith in yourself, no matter what, knowing that you are capable of achieving what you aspire. It is taking bold steps, betting on potential, and working hard to fulfill it. It is being your authentic self and having fun with it.

The world has broken your self-confidence. Society has given you a mistaken idea about who you are and what you are capable of. If you are like most people, you have internalized that limiting identity, and now you live under the shadow of fear and self-doubt—the two biggest enemies of self-confidence. It is time to reclaim your power, your true self.

This book is an invitation for you to develop confidence from the inside out, instead of relying on hacks, empty formulas, and Band-Aid solutions. Not a confidence that comes with the side effects of conceit, unpreparedness, selfishness, impudence, and delusion. No. We're talking about a sense of confidence that is healthy, balanced, and deep. This is what I call *wise confidence*.

In this journey you'll develop a new self-image, powerful awareness tools, and a more optimal way of navigating the world. Aspiration, Awareness, and Action are, indeed, the three pillars of self-confidence. There might be genetic, environmental, or traumatic factors that make self-confidence difficult for you, but none of that can stop you. Once you digest and implement the three pillars, you'll have a core of confidence that will make the other factors irrelevant.

## **MY STORY: I SHOULDN'T BE CONFIDENT, BUT I AM**

Some people never have any issues with self-confidence. They were born to parents who supported their dreams, cherished their presence, complimented their skills, celebrated their successes, and helped them build up a core of self-love and self-belief. Other people had to deal with more adverse environments—an overcritical parent, emotional manipulation, bullying at school, or a dominating family member.

In the first case, as you are shaping your personality, everything around you is sending you encouraging messages: “You are good. You are worth it. Your opinions and desires matter. You can do anything you set your mind to.” In the second case, your environment is shaping the opposite beliefs in you: “You're not good enough. You are worth nothing. What you think or feel doesn't matter. You are alone.”

The environment I grew up in was more akin to the latter. I had a narcissistic mother—unpleasable, dominating, and emotionally unavailable.

A mother who panicked and yelled for no good reason, who was more concerned about arbitrary household rules than our well-being, and who always had a word of criticism to offer when what we needed was encouragement. On top of that, being a shy and skinny kid, and relatively short for my age, made me a target of repeated bullying at school. That was the hand of cards I was dealt.

To be fair, not all was bad, and I know many people have it much worse. We did have financial support, and we were taken to classes we were interested in, like piano, English, swimming, and karate lessons. But the fact remains that emotionally and psychologically I was on my own. I had to raise myself. Self-esteem and self-confidence were not given—they had to be won.

Realizing this fact was the turning point for me. I don't know how or why, but when I was about nine years old, something inside of me woke up and said, This is not who I am. I am strong. I am valuable. The world may be against me, but from now on I will choose to always be on my side. I'll take care of myself.

That moment was more of an internal shift rather than an inner dialogue. The words were not fully articulated, but that was the underlying feeling. Even though I didn't know it at that time, I was beginning the process of *living from the inside out*. I was throwing away the need for external validation, and instead choosing who I wanted to be. In a way, that was the beginning of this book.

I share this personal story to make a simple point. Whatever your past and upbringing, there is a possibility open for you: you can reinvent yourself. You can find out who you are, or choose who you want to be, and live your life in alignment with that purpose, from the *inside out*, regardless of the conditions around you.

Given my upbringing, I should be struggling with self-confidence and self-worth. In fact, several of the people who have come to me for coaching have had a similar past, and they were not in a place of confidence and well-being. Some were struggling with crippling anxiety, others with self-doubt or self-sabotage, and almost everybody with an overbearing inner critic.



So here is the thing: your past doesn't need to determine your future. Changing your core conditioning won't be easy, of course, but it's possible and extremely valuable. To embark on this journey, all that is required is a deep desire to change and a willingness to take full responsibility for your healing and your growth. In my case, I refused to be a victim or see myself as a victim. I took ownership of my life, of my purpose, and of my happiness. It is my sincere hope that you are ready to do that too.

## WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS BOOK

I've read several books on self-confidence, and in general terms they all emphasize three things: reframing negative thoughts, facing your fears, and applying quick fixes to feel more confident in the moment. But there is much more to it than that; these topics are just three of the chapters in this book.

*Wise Confidence* puts together several effective approaches for developing confidence in a concise, comprehensive, and accessible framework. It combines lessons from psychology, mindfulness, spirituality, and personal growth literature. This book goes deep yet remains completely practical. It is based on research, but it's not an academic read. It is inspired by spiritual insights, but it's not a mystical book. It will give you some work to do; it is not about Band-Aid solutions or pop psychology feel-good platitudes. It's also not the "yelling in your face" type of motivational book.

The framework covered in this book, with the underlying concept of *living inside out*, is applicable not only to self-confidence but to any self-transformation journey. This is especially true for chapters 5 to 13.

My purpose here is to give you everything I've got in the space available. I'll hold nothing back. That said, there are further resources that can't be included in a book—such as guided meditations, personal mentoring, and interactive tools—and when the shift we are discussing could benefit from one of these, I'll let you know where to go to learn more.

I'm a spiritual guy, so you will see references to concepts from spiritual traditions here and there. They will be briefly explained in the text so we keep the focus on the main conversation. If you are not familiar

with them, don't worry; this doesn't harm your comprehension and practice of the book. But if they do resonate with you, they'll add a layer of meaning and impact to the work.

The order of the chapters in this book was chosen purposefully. We'll start with the most fundamental work, your identity, and build up from there. This is the first pillar. The other two pillars complement and consolidate the foundational work, and they can also be used as stand-alone tools. Different things work for different people, so explore freely and find what works for you. (For a quick overview of the pillars, see chapter 4.)

Self-confidence is a skill that can be learned—a skill that YOU can learn. This book was created to be the best manual you can find. It was not designed to be the first self-confidence book you read. It was designed to be the last.

Let's begin.

# 1.

## What Is Wise Confidence?

*The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics  
are always so certain of themselves,  
and wiser people so full of doubts.*

—Bertrand Russell

*Half the battle is in the conviction  
that we can do what we undertake.*

—Orison Swett Marden

*Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

What do you think of when you hear the term *self-confidence*? Do you associate it with self-assurance, self-esteem, and self-belief? Or do you associate it more with arrogance, pretentiousness, bravado, ego, and conceit?

Perhaps you feel that being unapologetically confident means fooling yourself and taking too many risks, leaving life to eventually give you

a painful “correction.” Many people believe that self-doubt is a sign of intelligence and that having confidence and optimism makes one “naïve.” Others believe that with confidence comes an overbearing or domineering personality, that we become selfish or even aggressive. You may also have a sense that self-confidence goes against your spiritual beliefs, practices, or goals. Some of us may subconsciously reject confidence because we don’t want to step on other people’s toes or take up too much space. Believing in yourself and fighting for what you want may go against years of ingrained conditioning and against the image others have of you.

Does any of this resonate? If you lack self-confidence, it is likely that you have some resistance toward becoming more confident. The purpose of this chapter is to show you a different approach to self-confidence and to give you a model of confidence that you can say a wholehearted “yes” to. I call it Wise Confidence.

### THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

When you have self-confidence, you believe in yourself, and you show up to every challenge in life with courage, optimism, integrity, and determination. When you lack self-confidence, you fall into its opposites: fear, pessimism, insecurity, and self-doubt.



Let's unpack these concepts.

Self-confidence is, first of all, an act of self-belief. The opposite of self-belief is self-doubt.

When you doubt yourself, you give away your power. You think that you can't do things, that you are not good enough, that you "shouldn't," that your goals will "never happen." You hesitate and cannot meet the challenge at hand with your full capacity.

Self-doubt prevents you from jumping in wholeheartedly by telling you that you don't have the needed skills, intelligence, time, resources, or experience to get the job done. You defeat yourself before you even try. And while it's true that self-belief may not guarantee success, self-doubt often guarantees failure.

Self-confidence is your ability to believe that you can accomplish the task ahead of you, regardless of the difficulties. It is the unshakable conviction that you can do anything you put your mind to. It is betting on yourself, betting on success, and at the same time knowing that you can stomach any failure. It is often a result of being aware of your strengths, skills, and potential.

It is easy to be confident when we are making progress and achieving goals. But our confidence easily shakes when we experience setbacks, especially if repeatedly. If you don't want your self-confidence to be shaken by failures, you need to cultivate a sense of self-worth that is not dependent on any particular person or outcome. It needs to be based on something essential—something within you that transcends circumstance. There may be uncertainty in the outcome, but there is no longer uncertainty in yourself. (You'll learn more about this in later chapters of this book.)

The second element of self-confidence is courage. The opposite is being held back by fear. Courage is always being ready to face the world, no matter what challenges life brings. With courage, you believe that if a challenge comes your way, it's because you *can* overcome it, in one way or another. And as a result, you face it with full energy.

When you trust your capacity, you are motivated to take action, and you have the strength to face your fears and move forward. When you

are confident, you naturally act more courageous; when you act based on courage, you naturally become more confident.

Self-confidence is the willingness to take steps toward goals that you care about, even when doing so makes you anxious. So it has the virtue of courage built in.

The third element of self-confidence is optimism. Its opposite is negativity.

When we feel confident, we know what we are capable of, and we anticipate being successful. The word confidence comes from the Latin word *confidere*, meaning “with trust.” Acting with trust usually means we are not completely certain of the outcome, yet we choose to take a leap of faith and bet on a positive result.

It is very hard to be confident if your mind is filled with thoughts about how things will go wrong. When that is your mindset, you are emphasizing the obstacles, challenges, and risks, assuming they will be greater than your capacity to overcome them. Optimism is, thus, contained in confidence and is a *fuel* for confidence. When you fully trust your capacity, you are optimistic; on the other hand, when you are optimistic, you tend to trust your skills more.

The fourth element of self-confidence is integrity. The opposites are self-criticism and self-sabotage.

The word *integrity* means “being whole and undivided.” For the purposes of self-confidence, having integrity means that the *whole* of you is moving forward. In other words, there is no part inside yourself that is sabotaging the action you want to take.

Being *whole* means you do not second-guess yourself, beat yourself up, argue for your limitations, or mentally defeat yourself before you even begin. Instead, you are on your own side. No part of you is saying that you shouldn’t be doing this or that you won’t succeed. Instead, you show up as *one*.

Integrity results in you being wholeheartedly focused. When there is no internal contradiction in you, when you believe in yourself rather than doubt yourself, only then can you show up for the challenge with your full capacity.

When you fully believe in yourself, you are *one*—all parts of you are on the same team. When you doubt yourself, you are two—your energy is divided and conflicting. Self-confidence is about being one, undivided.

The fifth and final element of self-confidence is determination, or willpower. Its opposites are hesitation, passivity, weakness, and inertia.

Confidence requires you to believe that you can exert some level of control over the environment, yourself, and your outcomes. If you believe you have no free will or that everything is pre-determined, you can't really be confident that your actions will matter. Similarly, if you believe your actions matter but you are not really committed to the change you want to make, you'll likely not feel very confident that it will happen.

When you act with wise confidence—meaning you are not just fooling yourself and being naïve—there is an internal resolve to move forward despite competing stimuli. This is willpower. It includes your capacity to override unwanted thoughts and feelings and shift your internal state. The willpower aspect of confidence is the dynamic conviction that says, “I *must* succeed,” “I *can*,” and “Sooner or later, I *will*.” It is a form of inner commitment or resolve. Fill every corner of your mind with such determination, and there will be no space left for self-doubt.

In the philosophical tradition of Yoga and Hindu Tantra, confidence is seen as an expression of the power of the mind, called *manas shakti*. Confidence, willpower, concentration, and faith are all expressions of the power of our mind. When led by any of these, you experience determination, courage, motivation, and heightened energy. You feel comfortable holding fast to your values and goals, and you are not easily shaken. You are then willing to commit to the task at hand and pay the price of achievement.

Can you feel the fire that comes from that?

Some people may experience resistance or confusion with willpower's statement of “I must.” Here, “must” is not something that comes from outside of you and forces you to do something. It's also not a form of conditioning that says you have to do something to become “good enough” in the eyes of others (or of yourself). “I must” is a *choice*. It is you focusing all your energy on a single goal, with full conviction and commitment. When you feel the power of “I must,” you create a