

The confidence game: how to play like a winner

THESE FIVE SIMPLE TIPS will increase your self-assurance — and that's the key to accomplishing your goals

MARY M. MITCHELL
REUTERS

Confidence. The dictionary defines it as trust or faith, being sure, I believe it means feeling good about yourself, especially in regard to accomplishing something. That something can be a new job, a new assignment, a performance review, networking or a meeting with coworkers.

Here are a few actions that will result in real payoffs in our confidence quotients.

Move

No, not to a new job or neighbourhood. Move your body. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Park farther away from the store you're about to visit. Walk. Run. Ride a bike. Do yoga. Lift weights, even if it means doing your reps with a five-pound bag of flour in each hand. Work up a sweat. You'll feel better.

The bottom line is, when we feel better, we become more confident. Exercise clears the brain and the lungs, making room for newer, better and possibly bolder thoughts. It gives us more energy. And — let's face it — energy is attractive. Energetic people magnetize others.

Nothing enhances your overall appearance like being fit. A good regimen of exercise will improve not only your posture, but your personality. I believe that fit people look more focused and more confident.

Exercise not only increases strength and endurance. I find, too, that it helps defuse anger and frustration, and gets creative juices flowing.

Take a look at what you are wearing

There is no such thing as neutral clothing. Everything you put on represents a decision you have made and is a reflection of your good taste, your good sense and your style. Remember, we judge others more on the basis of what we see than anything else. If your attire is inappropriate, colleagues are apt to question whether you know the rules of the game and whether you are or are not likely to be a significant player. Your superiors are apt to conclude that the quality of your work will match the quality of your appearance.

When you're considering how to dress for a work situation, ask yourself:

- Who am I?
- What role am I playing?
- How do I want to be perceived?
- Where am I?

Who are the people I want to impress favourably?

We're not talking fashion statements here; we're talking about what works in a given environment to be effective.



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Chris Watte Reuters
Michaele Jean displayed the characteristics of confidence when she was Governor General and has carried it over to her new roles as the Special Envoy for Haiti for UNESCO and as Chancellor of the University of Ottawa.

Grooming is everything. Develop four key relationships and you won't go wrong.

■ Tailor: A good fit can make an inexpensive garment look like a million dollars, while a poor fit can make even an Armani look sloppy.

■ Dry cleaner: The chemicals can be damaging to fabrics, so go to a reliable establishment and inspect your garments before leaving the shop.

■ Shoemaker: We all notice other's shoes, mostly because we often get nervous and end up looking at the floor. Keep shoes well soled, shined and in good repair.

■ Dentist: A clean, bright smile makes us feel better about ourselves.

Breathe

Find sanctuary inside yourself. There is honour in standing still. We are so time-crunched, information-bludgeoned, downsized and multitasked that it's spiritually suffocat-

ing. Who we really are comes from the inside out. Without a way to "go inside" and focus, we add to our environment's chaos rather than its harmony.

Learn "belly breathing": Lie down on the floor, be quiet and place your hands on your tummy. Breathe from your belly, letting it rise and fall like a bellows. Babies breathe this way, and we know how self-confident they are. I've learned to belly breathe on elevators, in restroom stalls and in the middle of crowded rooms when I need to calm down and focus. No need to "om."

Be disciplined

Keep your agreements. Be on time. Be mindful and in the present.

That is a gift to yourself as well as to others. Whatever we think and feel now creates what happens in the future. When we stick to the "now" and don't chase rabbits, we are involved

and aware of opportunities. Others we deal with will sense that we're fully with them. That has tremendous impact on the quality of our personal and professional relationships.

Give and receive

Give whatever you hope to receive in turn. If you want more co-operation and respect, give respect and co-operate. If you want to succeed, help others succeed. If you want more joy, be more joyful. When we circulate our positive energy, we create more and more to enjoy.

Be open to giving to yourself. Honour your own worthiness to receive, or no one else will.

Perhaps as you read this, you are thinking, "Yeah, so tell me something new. I know this already."

To paraphrase one of my teachers: Although we all know what to do, successful people do what they know.