



## **SECTION ONE**

# **The Stuff You Need to Know**

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# 1 Why Self-Confidence is the X-Factor for Life



**You're about to discover**

The long-term impact confidence can have on your life.

Why a small change can make a big difference.

Why everyone benefits from an increase in self-confidence.

The real upsides of increasing your self-confidence.

## What's the Big Deal about Confidence?

If you were to meet the film actor Tom Cruise, there are probably several things you would notice about him:

His smile.

His eyes.

And probably his height.

He's 5 feet 7 inches (or 170 cm). Some people regard that as being a little on the small side. In some cultures Tom's height would make him below average in height for a man.

Now imagine this. What if Tom Cruise increased his height by 10 percent? Not a huge amount is it?

So what's the outcome?

Well, suddenly Tom goes from being 5 foot 7 inches to being over 6 feet 1 inch (185 cm). He goes from below average height to above average height. He goes from being seen as small to being seen as tall.

And how much did he increase his height by?

10 percent. That's all.

A small change can make a big difference.

The bad news for Tom is that although he can try and appear to be taller than he actually is, the truth is there's not really a lot he can do about his height.

But as you may have gathered, this isn't a book about how tall you are, it's about increasing your self-confidence. And whereas there's not much you can do about your height, there's plenty you can do to increase your confidence.

What happens if you ignore all the advice in this book? What if you don't take steps to increase your self-confidence? Is it really such a big deal?

Well actually, yes.

As you're about to find out.

*Imagine the scene.* You're reading a job advert. It sounds like a great opportunity. You're ideally suited to the job. Well, almost. There's one area of experience that you lack. You focus on this one area.

Then the internal chatter begins.

"There'll clearly be others who apply who are more suitable than me. If only I had more experience. Mind you, I'd hate to be at an interview and get exposed due to my lack of knowledge. Anyway, there'll be hundreds of applicants and my CV is out of date. I'll leave it for now."

*Imagine the scene.* Your boss is keen for either you or your colleague to make a short presentation at the annual company conference. It's being held in Paris this year and it would be a brilliant opportunity to make a name for yourself and raise your profile within the company.

Then the internal chatter begins.

"I hate making presentations. All those people looking at me. I'd be awful with my nerves. What would I say? I don't want to look like a fool in front of all my colleagues – I'd never live down the embarrassment. Sam's really good at presentations, nothing seems to faze her. I guess she'll be the one that gets all the glory. Never mind, these conferences are always a good laugh – and they usually have a free bar on the last night."

*Imagine the scene.* You're at the pub. You and a group of mates have hooked up with a few friends you knew from college. Lisa catches your eye. You've always liked her, but it's been a while since you last saw each other. There's a definite attraction. Lisa looks in your direction and smiles.

Then the internal chatter begins.

"She's way out of my league. She used to go out with Martin. Why would she be interested in me? OK, so she's smiling at me. She's probably just being friendly. I bet she feels sorry for me. I couldn't ask her out. No way. What if she turned me down? I'd never hear the last of it from my mates. Think I'll leave it this time."

So you don't apply for the job. You don't make the presentation. You don't ask the person out on a date.

Has your world ended? No. Are you a failure? No. Will it now be impossible to live a fulfilled life? No.

But be honest. Would a little more self-confidence have helped? I'm not talking about arrogance, brashness or becoming a raving extrovert. I'm talking about confidence. That sense of being OK about yourself. That awareness that it's OK to fail. That understanding that rejection doesn't mean the end of the world.

The truth is ...



We could all benefit from a small increase in self-confidence.

A 10 percent increase could make all the difference.

It means you might have gone for the job. It means you might have made the presentation. It means you might have embarked on a romantic relationship.

### **You Don't Have to Be Ill**

As I'm fond of saying, "You don't have to be ill to get better." You see, I'm not suggesting you have major

## Self-Confidence

problems with self-confidence. Nor am I suggesting that you're paranoid about speaking in public or taking risks. You may in fact be fairly happy and content in life.

But maybe there's more. More to do. More to become.

And what might be stopping you? Not enough self-belief and confidence?

That's where a small increase could make all the difference. Not an extreme personality makeover. A small change. That's all.

Let me put it another way. Have a look at the following diagram.



As the diagram illustrates, a small increase in your self-confidence will, *over time*, make a big difference to where you are in life (B). A further small change and *over time* you will find yourself in a significantly different place (C) from where you might otherwise have been (A).

Your original destination (A) may still be a great place to be, but small changes today can take you further in your journey. B and C could represent activities and opportunities that you never dreamt were possible, but they demonstrate how a small change now can literally transform your future.

Let me put it another way.

You're on a ship heading from the UK to New York. But when the ship sets sail it's just a few degrees off course. If it remains off course you end up somewhere in the Caribbean. That's approximately 1,500 miles from New York.

A small change in direction (or confidence) can lead to a completely different destination.

### *Pit Stop*



- ∞ What could be happening in your life if you were at point B or point C?
- ∞ Write down three benefits to you if your confidence could increase by 10 percent.
- ∞ Imagine one activity or scenario that would happen if you had more confidence.
- ∞ Imagine how you'd feel if you didn't make any attempt to increase your confidence.

It's like most things in life, they add up. Let's say you currently weigh 75 kg and over the next ten years you increase your weight by 2 kg a year. At first you would hardly notice the small increase in weight. But over time you and other people would notice. It might happen gradually and you can adjust your clothes accordingly – but the bottom line is that in ten years' time you would be 20kg heavier. Your life and your health could be radically different from where you are now.

A small increase makes a big difference.

Here's another illustration.

Ever make your own bread? As I've found to my cost, the bread won't rise without yeast.

You only need a small amount of yeast, but without it you've got flat bread.

That's how our lives can be without confidence. We fail to rise. We fail to achieve our potential.

I'll say it again. A small change over time makes a big difference.

This book is about how you can make those small changes to your life and enjoy the benefits of doing so.

### *The Personal Stuff*



“Never forget that the world’s your oyster.” It was a message my mum used to drum into me as a child. To be fair, interrupting me while I was watching *The Magic Roundabout* was overdoing it at times – but she meant well.

What motivated her to keep on repeating this message? Well, I’m not sure my mum had a great deal of self-confidence. Neither did she get a lot of encouragement in her own childhood but I sense that she was determined that her lack should not be my legacy.

From an early age she spotted that I had a talent for and an interest in acting and telling stories. She did all she could to encourage me. She made it clear that waiting around for things to happen wasn’t a great recipe for success. If you want something, go out and get it.

But as you’ll see later in this book, I still grew up with feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. I was plagued by a swarm of self-doubt in relation to my appearance, my weight and my poor manual dexterity.

However, in one particular area of life I felt good. I felt confident. In fact, I felt very confident. That was speaking in front of people.

I had an ability in this area and, more importantly, I had the encouragement to use and develop it. And when ability meets encouragement, you’ve got a pretty potent weapon.

Wouldn’t you agree?

Nevertheless, talent didn’t dramatically manifest itself one day. It grew over time.

It started with school plays. First as a shepherd, but then as Buttons in the school Christmas production of Cinderella (it was one of the leading roles, I promise you). It's influenced my whole life ever since, as the following story illustrates.

I was having coffee with Sue. She worked for a TV company. Halfway through my caffè latte she took a phone call. I surveyed the sights and sounds of Manchester and sought to feign a complete lack of interest in Sue's less than private telephone conversation.

The call ended and Sue brought me up to speed.

"That's a guy I know who works on the *Question Time* TV programme with David Dimbleby. The bloke they normally use as the audience warm-up man has gone off sick. They need a replacement. I'll have to ring Ted and see if he's available."

Ted was not available. They had a problem.

She looked at me. "Do you fancy doing it, Paul?"

"What, me?" I asked, summoning up all my powers to appear humble and rather nonchalant about her request. "But Sue, I'm not a stand-up comedian. I've never been a warm-up man before."

To be honest, it wasn't a genuine objection but more a desire to gain some reassurance from Sue. It worked.

"You don't need to be a comedian. It's a *Question Time* audience. They just need a little bit of er ... em. ... warming up, I guess. Just tell a few stories, get them laughing a little and think of something that involves them talking to each other."

That's all I had to hear. I didn't need any further convincing. I felt confident in my abilities to do a good job.

I even had an idea for an ice-breaker. I'd split the audience into pairs and get them discussing the following: If a Martian came down from Mars (which is presumably where they're from) and asked you to give a definition of the word "politician", what would your answer be?

Once they replied I could give them my answer.

Politician comes from the word "politics" which can be broken down as follows:

**Poli** meaning many

**Tics** meaning blood-sucking parasites.

The next evening I was indeed the warm-up man for the *Question Time* programme. It went really well. The audience loved my definition of politics. I had the opportunity to meet, talk, work and then later enjoy dinner with David Dimbleby. It was a great evening.

But it was an evening that wouldn't have happened if I hadn't had the confidence to say "yes".

I know what you're thinking: "You were lucky. You were having coffee with Sue when she took the call."

You're right, I was. But I don't see that as luck – I see it as an opportunity. An opportunity that I could always have decided to say no to. But I didn't.

The fact is that the world is **your** oyster. The little kid who started off life playing a shepherd in a school play could always end up working with the BBC.

### *Pit Stop*



- ∞ Have you ever had an opportunity that you really wanted to take but you said no rather than yes?
- ∞ What stopped you saying yes?
- ∞ Imagine you had taken the opportunity and it had turned out really well. What would the benefits to you have been?

### Self-Confidence is the Key

As the previous story illustrates, having an opportunity helps. Having ability was pretty important as well.

But ultimately, the key was having the self-confidence to say “yes”. It was having the confidence and belief in my own abilities and potential, even though I had never done that work before.

So did that experience change my life? No, it didn’t. But it certainly enhanced it. By saying yes, I proved to myself what I was capable of doing. It gave me the self-belief to seize other opportunities. I grew in confidence. And I promise you, there will be times when having the self-confidence to take action and seize the opportunity *will* change your life.

The truth is ...



A small  
change can  
make a really big  
difference.

### **Self-Confidence – What it will and won't lead to**

#### **It won't lead to you**

- ∞ Being transformed into Superman or Wonder Woman.
- ∞ Floating through life from one success to another.
- ∞ Being immune to setbacks and challenges.
- ∞ Never having to feel disappointed, despondent or dejected.
- ∞ Taking unnecessary and uncalculated risks.
- ∞ Feeling you must have all the answers.
- ∞ Feeling you always have to be an extrovert when deep down you're an introvert.

#### **It will put you in a better position to**

- ∞ Attempt new things and discover new places.
- ∞ Discover talents you never knew you had.
- ∞ Seize new opportunities.

- ∞ Become a more enjoyable person to be around.
- ∞ Feel better about yourself.
- ∞ Fulfill your potential and discover your purpose in life.
- ∞ Make a positive difference in the lives of others.

### *Pit Stop*



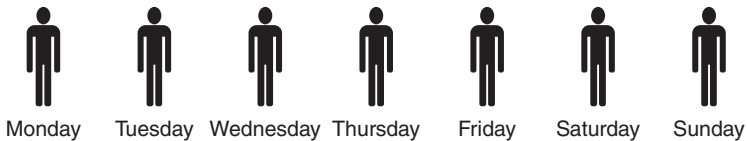
- ∞ Which of the above benefits of increased self-confidence are most important to you right now? (Tick your top three.)
- ∞ Why did you pick those particular ones?
- ∞ What are the consequences for you personally if you don't grow in confidence?

## How Confidence can Help You Make the Most of Life

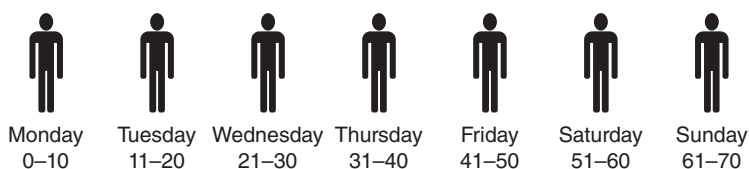
I first used the next illustration in my SUMO book, but it's worth revisiting. Imagine seven people lined up in a row.



Now imagine that each person represents a day of the week.



Now for the potentially scary part. Imagine that each day of the week represents a decade of your life.



So which day of the week are you on in your life? At the time of writing I'm on Friday lunchtime. I've still got the weekend to look forward to, and I'm hoping to add a couple of extra days to my week by having a bank holiday Monday and Tuesday!

It puts things into perspective, doesn't it?

The challenge is to make the most of your journey, whatever day you're on. What that journey looks like and what experiences it involves will be influenced by lots of factors – particularly your level of confidence.

### *Pit Stop*



- ∞ Which day of the week are you on? How does that make you feel?
- ∞ How determined are you to make the most of the rest of your journey?
- ∞ What has a lack of self-confidence prevented you from achieving so far?
- ∞ Look out for ideas in this book to enhance your journey and use them to help others as well.

## It's Time for Some Honesty

Let's turn the spotlight onto you.

Maybe life is going fairly well for you at the moment. Great. But could an increase in self-confidence open up opportunities you're not even aware of yet? A new job? Promotion? New business? New home? New partner? (Although I'm not suggesting there's anything wrong with your current one if you have one.)

Could a good life become a great one?

On the other hand, maybe life isn't going well for you at present. Maybe it's become a bit of a struggle. Perhaps your life feels a bit like a game of snakes and ladders – except there's a distinct lack of ladders on the board.

If that's the case, self-confidence will be crucial to your recovery.

But where do you find it? Where are the ladders? What snakes have led you to the position you're in now?

Read on, because whether your self-confidence seems relatively good or is in need of a major boost, you're about to discover plenty of answers.

Unfortunately though, not all the answers and ideas for developing your self-confidence are particularly helpful – as you're about to discover.

### *in A Nutshell*



- ∞ Everyone can benefit from an increase in self-confidence – you don't have to be ill to get better.
- ∞ Focus on the 10 percent difference – over time it makes a big impact.
- ∞ Increasing your self-confidence doesn't guarantee an easy ride in life, but it will improve the quality of the journey.

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