

Five Ways to Cultivate Confidence by Angel Johnstone

Many would agree that a lack of confidence is really everywhere today. We see a lot in the news and on social media about the obesity epidemic, the drug epidemic, the drinking epidemic on college campuses, the rape epidemic, the teenage pregnancy epidemic, the suicide epidemic, the divorce epidemic, the poverty epidemic, and on and on and on. In every single one of those problems... I see a direct link to the lack of confidence epidemic. Can you make the connection?

I started asking other people what they thought about confidence. What does it look like? How did they get it? What is the secret sauce? What class did confident people take that everyone else missed?

You know what I got? Dumbfounded looks. "I'm not really that confident" they would say. "I really have no idea". OMG. I realized nobody really has this figured out!

So now what? After a good deal of asking around, I have organized my thoughts about confidence around who has it and what it looks like and how to cultivate whatever nuggets of it you might have. Let's dig right in!

Who jumps out at you when you think about confidence? I always think first about "the pretty people" with good hair and the exactly right ratio of cheekbone to jawbone. But is this kind of confidence elusive and reserved for the genetically blessed? NO! Everyone can improve SOMETHING. Pick one thing that nags at you but is relatively easy to improve. Maybe it is a hairy lip that needs waxing or a new haircut or a pedicure. Here is what strikes me as a little crazy... We spend millions of dollars a year at home improvement stores to make our houses look nice. Right? But we start feeling guilty when we spend money on a wrinkle erasing cream. WHY? What is better about green grass and pretty flowers that is worth the investment more than an investment in looking years younger and feeling better?

Invest In You

Yes, YOU! Because the tiny, almost imperceptible shift in your confidence over this "little change" radiates outward from you tenfold like sunshine. Have you ever had a "good hair day"? Or felt amazing in a new outfit? YOU ACT DIFFERENTLY! And that is totally normal! Go ahead - tackle something on your "I wish I _____" list. You will thank yourself later.

Some other people that are confident may not be raving beauties but they know something. See, when you know something better than the people around you, you tend to be confident about that stuff. No one can tell you that you don't know it. What do YOU know? I contend that there is something you and you alone know better than anyone. Not sure that I'm right? No problem. Just go learn something. Anything. Basket weaving, wake boarding, stamp collecting, sign language, gardening ... it doesn't matter.

Know Your Stuff

The “seeds of greatness” are within your grasp – grow, learn and then OWN what you know! No one can take away your knowledge and experience. And no one can stop you from learning more. Build your confidence by building your knowledge. The confidence you get from knowing your stuff can transfer to other areas of your life very easily.

What if you are still learning, still improving but need to show up to an important event with more confidence than you feel? It is important to be able to muster more confidence for important moments like job interviews, speeches at your friend’s wedding, asking for a raise or a date or anything really that is outside of your comfort zone.

Prepare and Pretend

Have you heard “fake it till you make it”? I am not saying you should take an acting class but there is something to be said for that philosophy because it does work... at least for a little bit.

Here’s the truth - we buy in to charismatic and excited people. Ever go to buy something and you get the “new salesperson” on the floor? Hungry, friendly, super helpful and smiling these newbies will shower you with kindness. They stumble, get their words wrong, apologize a lot and they run out there all full of enthusiasm without knowing much but guess what? They SELL stuff! And that success forces them to learn, gathering the experience and knowledge to fill in where exuberance isn’t enough. Act as if you are the smart, successful, beautiful person that you want to be and low and behold, the world will accept that as your truth. As you move forward with excitement, learn and make sure you are shoring up your knowledge! Soon you will find yourself BEING the person you were acting your way into being!

There are some confident people that are simply moving. They are honestly a little too damn busy to be worried about what people are thinking. If you don’t like what they are doing, it doesn’t even really register because they are too engaged in doing it. This is anyone with a mission or a dream or a goal that is bigger than themselves. What is sad, is that most people don’t have one of these. Most people stopped dreaming at some point. And that is ENTIRELY an epidemic of lacking confidence. If you have no confidence that you can achieve, you will eventually stop even dreaming about it. It becomes a downward spiral – you stop believing you can do it so you stop doing anything that brings you closer to it.

Find Your Fire

One way to cultivate confidence is find something that really fires you up. What makes your blood boil?

Write down the last 3 things you reposted on Facebook because they REALLY ticked you off. You could rant and carry on an argument all day on them. If you aren’t a Facebook user, go ahead and list any 3 things that always grind your gears. These are the things the people in your family know NOT to mention if wanting a polite dinner. If you ran things, what are the first things you would fix?

We are taught that these emotions – anger and frustration – are negative but really they are informative. They are a window into the thing most people are searching to find – their PASSION!

Passion is not safe. Passion is supposed to get your heart pumping, get you starting to sweat, get you energized... that fight or flight thing kicks in. You are ready to jump in. You are not hesitating, you are just engaged – mind, body, soul. You are “all in”. Take what makes you mad and figure out how you can channel that to some way of fixing that issue. Volunteer, write an editorial, write a blog, or sponsor an organization that fights against that thing that makes you spit nails... do SOMETHING positive with your “negative”. Find that passion and be all in. You will find confidence in that head space every time!

Ever met a person that has been through some heavy stuff? They are a little broken, and bit bruised. They have taken some hits and come out the other side. There is a calm confidence created under stress and is forged in the heat of despair. This is the kind of confidence we make movies about... with the same theme over and over. If you get back up, you are unstoppable.

Why do we seem fascinated by the “get hit, get back up” story? Because we have ALL had some experience where we got knocked down. And sometimes it hardens people in a good way – resilient, strong, can take whatever comes at you. And sometimes it hardens people in self destructive ways – guarded, shy, standoffish, afraid to get hurt so pushing people away.

Think about the times you have been tested – a sudden illness, the death of a loved one, the disappointment of a failed relationship, the end of a career, a financial disaster. How did you get through it? What did it change inside you? Do you act differently now than you did before? In what ways? Do you still need to?

Many times, people that are confident are so because they have already lost so much, they simply have nothing more to lose. Getting back up and talking about what happened to them isn't nearly as bad as what ACTUALLY HAPPENED. They got through it. So the confidence they have is relative to the life they have lived.

Bless the Test

For many people, the trauma they lived through turned out to be a blessing - a stepping stone to better things. With time, they came to understand the big picture and bless the test. You might not be there today, but someday. For today, simply repeat “I am still here”. You survived. You don't have to be fearless. Go ahead and cry because you don't have to look good. You don't have to ACT resilient. You don't have to know or learn anything more than what you have been through. Your only mission need be your breathing again tomorrow. And you can be ticked off at everything. But, tomorrow may be a brighter day and if it is, enjoy new confidence in it. You are stronger than you imagine.



About the Author:

Angel Johnstone is a hardworking single mom with a mission and a busy life. Her passion is making women feel more confident so that they can grow from the simply mundane to the gravy train! If you enjoyed this piece, please give her a like on Facebook at ConfidencelsCatchy by Angel Johnstone to get confidence building tips throughout the month one of her video resource groups. Check in at www.confidenceiscatchy.com to be kept up to date on fun and effective confidence building ideas that can help you cultivate confidence in your life!

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