Sarah-J

BECOME YOUR BEST

The Confidence Code

How to Grow, Nurture, and Maintain Your Edge.





Name any other cliché that is meant for something nebulous and hard to define, and it's likely been said about confidence. Probably more than once.

But I'm here to let you in on a little secret. A secret that I've discovered over years in my own career and years of working with clients to help them find their own confidence deep inside themselves. Confidence isn't just an attribute and character trait, it's a skill you can develop - and then it can become very much an attribute.

Call it confidence, call it presence, call it magnetism. Indeed, you often do know it when you see it. Richard Branson. Michelle Obama. They ooze confidence from their pores. They were born with it, right?

Well, maybe.

But maybe not. Maybe it's not quite as natural as we think. Maybe some of it, even just a little bit, is learned behavior. Behavior they've been coached into. Behavior that they know will, more often than not, get them what they want.

I'm here to tell you that confidence can be learned. And you don't just have to "fake it till you make it." This isn't just about acting confidently. It's about actually being confident, and letting that confidence radiate to those around you. Not arrogance, mind you, but a healthy level of confidence that allows you to perform at your best. A healthy level of confidence that boosts your own performance and that of the people lucky enough to be working with you.

Yes, you can learn confidence. Ready to see how? Let's get after it. Because there are times in life when our confidence can waiver – so building a baseline of confidence will help you during those ebbs and flows!

About This Guide

The information contained in these pages will help you find, build, and grow your confidence. It's as simple as that. No matter how low your belief is in yourself, or for how long you've lacked this belief, I can help you find the key to unlocking the confidence that's buried deep within you.

And I promise it's in there.

Research on motivation and success consistently demonstrates that self-confidence has a dramatic impact on reaching your goals and finding success in life. It is such an important skill, if not the most important, to be able to feel calm, secure, and confident in who you are and what you're doing.

Note I said skill. Not always character trait. Not always personality style. Skill. Confidence is a positive belief in your own skills and abilities, and it has its roots in your own well-being and self-acceptance. And it's a skill that everyone needs in life, there is no way around it.

You can build it, and develop it.

Confidence also ebbs and flows. Yes, even Richard Branson and Michelle Obama have moments of self-doubt. It's impossible not to. But with a healthy baseline of confidence, you can weather most of what life has to throw at you.



While our characteristics and personalities are established fairly early in life, and stay relatively consistent throughout our lifetimes, skills don't. And in the following pages I'm going to help you see that confidence is a skill. Just like playing the piano, riding a bicycle, and kicking a ball into a net. Sure, those things may come more naturally to some of us, but we can all learn to do them. Confidence is the same. Yes – there does need to be an underlying positive self-belief in yourself, but you can develop confidence.

And life certainly can throw a lot at you -- the job market, stresses and strains of working and parenting, relationships, divorce, illness and injury, caring for aging relatives, and so much more. Life is complex these days. But you don't have to let those events define you, or determine your confidence.

In this respect, confidence and resilience are very related. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from a negative situation or experience. The ability to get knocked off the horse, and get right back in the saddle. But it isn't blind optimism. Resilient, confident people acknowledge what they've been through. They accept those things. And then they learn from them, and bounce back.

Of course, you've experienced challenges in your life. We all have. And you know what? There are more to come. But the skills I'm going to share with you in this guide will help you bounce back even stronger, more resilient, and more confident in yourself and your abilities.

Who Is This Guide For?

I truly believe that every human being alive today can benefit from learning more confidence skills.

That said, there are some people out there that will benefit even more than the average person from learning about this skill. If any of the following resonates for you, I've written this guide with you in mind:

- You've realised that you're not getting the results you want in life;
- You find yourself in re-occurring situations where you're uncomfortable and unable to perform at your best;
- You consistently catch that little voice in your head telling you you're not good enough, that you made a mistake, that you might as well not try, that you've failed;
- You find yourself regularly lacking motivation;
- You want to change and grow and start achieving more in life but don't feel able to.

Maybe you've decided enough is enough. On some level, something needs to change, because you simply aren't fulfilling your potential. You're not stepping into your capabilities, in one way or another.

I'm so glad you're here. Because I know I can help.

Let's start with a couple of questions:

- How confident do you generally feel (1=low, 10=high)?
- Which areas of life do you feel most confident in -- relationships, finance, business, career, family, friends?



Over the course of reading this book, I want you to be thinking about what you'll do with this information. No matter your current confidence number, hopefully you realised in question 2 that you actually do have some confidence in some areas of your life.

Now imagine if you could export that confidence to ALL areas of your life. While reading this guide, think about what promises you'll make to yourself, what you'll commit to. What confidence goals will you set?

I want to hear from you!

Studies show that sharing your goals with a supportive person in your life -- maybe a trusted friend, a mentor or coach, an accountability partner -- makes you much more likely to succeed.

Please email me at **sarah@sarah-j.com** and tell me what you've learnt and what your confidence goals are. I'd love to hear from you!

What You Will Learn

I hope you've already learned a couple of things in these first few pages!

There's much more to come. In the following sections, you will learn:

- What confidence is and how it manifests in everyday life;
- How to recognise confidence when you're actually experiencing it, and how to capitalise on it;
- Simple, tactical things you can DO to continue to build your confidence muscle and to stay resilient through all the ups and downs of life.

Keep reading, we're about to unlock the Confidence Code.







What Is Confidence?

Before growing in confidence, you need a healthy understanding of what it is. Essentially, confidence is how we feel about our ability to perform roles, functions, and tasks.

Picture someone you know or who have dealt with who lacks confidence. How do they behave? What do they do? How does their lack of confidence impact you when you interact with them? They likely struggle with the unknown. Maybe they're overly needy. They don't know how to handle criticism or failure. Healthy boundaries are non-existent, and so is time management.

Now picture someone you know who has a healthy amount of confidence. How do they behave? What do they do? How do you feel when you interact with them? You get the sense that they're ready for just about anything, or that they could at least handle what life has to throw at them. They just seem to have what it takes. They're engaging. They truly listen, not just waiting for their turn to talk. They're confident enough in themselves to really want to know more about you. Their confidence is infectious, isn't it?

So, who would you rather be? The answer is pretty obvious when you think about it in those term above- and there is more I could write about what confidence and no confidence looks like, feels like.

Imagine you are applying for a new job – you're nervous, and your mind is going into overdrive telling you things like, "Who are you kidding, you're never going to get this job", "There are so many people more qualified than you", "Why are you even trying?"

During the interview, you're shaking and you can't get your words out. You catch yourself repeatedly closing yourself off with your body language -- crossing your arms and legs and turning away from the interviewer. Perhaps you even self-sabotaged your chances and showed up ten minutes late for the interview.

Which is fine, because when you don't get the job you can just tell yourself, "Eh, I didn't really want it anyways." And maybe that's true. Sometimes.

Now imagine you're up for promotion, or you're going to a party, or going out on date. The situation really doesn't matter. Unless you master your self-confidence, life will continue to be a series of disappointments.

Eh, I really didn't want that promotion anyway, I'm happy with how things are. Eh, I wasn't expecting to have a good time at that party. Eh, I've learned to stop getting my hopes up that I'll eventually find "the one".

Gets old, doesn't it?



And the next thing you know, you've slipped into a fixed, closed, victim mindset. "Why does this keep happening to me?"

Don't get me wrong -- there's plenty of room for self-compassion. But stay open and flexible. "OK, that was disappointing. I feel really lousy about that. But I know this feeling is temporary. I still know what I want, and I'm going to figure out a plan."

Or words to that effect. See how empowering that is?

A constant victim mindset will not bring you what you want and deserve. It'll only bring you more misery. So don't get stuck in that frame of mind. Changing how you think, what you do and how you show up will feel uncomfortable at first. But I promise – your life will improve.

I can attest to this personally – and so can my clients.

Get this right, and you'll feel in the flow, ready to rise to the challenges of life and not take setbacks too personally. When you do find yourself in challenging situations, you'll know you have the ability to get through it, that you value yourself, and that you'll come out the other end a better and wiser person for the experience.

Here's what I've experienced, all thanks to healthy self-confidence. And this is just the tip of the iceberg!

- Authentic, lasting relationships with others -- friends, family, partners, colleagues
- Greater success at work and with contracts -- opportunities arriving at my doorstep
- New clients
- Promotion
- Increased financial abundance
- Greater self-compassion and personal growth -- resilience
- A can-do mindset
- Increased, wider, and deeper business network
- More fun -- one of my core values in life!

Finally, I've experienced a greater sense of happiness and core belief in myself each day – regardless of what's happening around me.

Remember – we can only control (master) and influence certain things in life. Guess what's at the top of that list? YOU.

You can influence and master how you show up and how you feel about yourself. Not to mention who you hang out with. Happy people tend to surround themselves with -- guess what -- happy people. So, limit those energy vampires in your life -- and exorcise those doldrum demons.

But if you are not self-confident – you will quit way too easily. And where will that get you if you quit everything you try?

But don't just take my word for it:

The best news of all is that confidence is a skill. So, no matter where you are on the self-confidence scale, things can get better. You can make them better. And the results will follow.

Self-confidence is considered one of the most influential motivators and regulators of behavior in people's everyday lives. (Bandura, 1986).







Remember, It's A Skill That Can Be Learnt!

Nobody is born confident. We all start out the same way -- completely and totally reliant on our caregivers to satisfy our every need. Yes, with a secure, healthy upbringing we can be furnished with healthy self-belief and esteem which leads to confidence, but sometimes it's just not that way, and life experiences can knock us off course.

So, it can be learned. It must be a skill we pick up along the way. And what can you do with a skill? You can learn it. And improve it.

So, what's stopping you?

We tend to fall into the trap of thinking everyone is paying close attention to us, watching us, judging us. The truth is, we're the only ones doing that to ourselves. You're the only person truly judging you and holding you back. And you can change this. Studies indicate that confidence is all about our perceived ability to do something. It's our self-belief regarding a task or an activity, not an overall statement about our worth or value as human beings.

So yes, you can have a baseline of confidence, but you will be more confident and have more self-belief in certain areas than others. Even the most successful people in the world have doubts. And if you are stretching and challenging yourself – you may have the odd doubt – but you don't have to let it hold you back.

Confidence levels can be a result of our upbringing. What were you told when you were younger, by your caregivers? Did they boost and build your confidence? Or tear you down? Regardless, it's not too late to learn confidence. Yes, you may be starting out with a deficit depending on your early life experiences, but you can still get there.

Even if you're near the lowest end of the confidence scale possible, there are one or two areas in your life where you actually do feel confident. Or at least don't completely lack confidence. That's evidence that you can do it. You have the ability to raise your confidence. You just need to learn how to apply it to other areas of your life.

So, don't globalise the statement – 'I'm not confident'. Start with the questions I asked earlier and learn from your past experiences. What did you do well, how can you apply that learning elsewhere?

I also want you to change your self-talk. Start telling yourself – say it out loud, in your mind, write them down and progressively make the statements stronger and bolder as time goes on.

Do this every day, like you're going to the gym for your brain:

- I don't feel confident for NOW but I'm gaining confidence
- I am confident, I believe in myself and what I deserve
- I am becoming more confident day by day
- I believe I can achieve my goals, and I am taking steps forward each day

Or write your own in your own words.

So, the good news is with a bit of persistence and motivation – you've got this.

10 Techniques to Charge Your Confidence, and Keep It

I love scuba diving. I used to do crazy deep dives — I'm talking 100 meters crazy deep. But I didn't strap on my gear for the first time and dive to that depth. I had to practice for years. I applied a learning mindset, broke down my training into a plan, and learned about the equipment I needed.

Even though I had hours upon hours of practice, did I get nervous before a big dive? Hell yeah, I did! But that fear was only natural. I knew I had done everything possible to prepare for each of those dives.

I also knew if I made a mistake, I would learn from it and carry on. That is confidence! Being willing to take the time to learn and grow, facing the fears of putting your new skill into practice, and looking at mistakes as growth instead of failures.

This same idea has been true in my career. I had no idea how to be a good leader the first time an organisation gave me the opportunity to lead. Without a programme to help me learn, I decided to seek out support from different tools and resources to help me understand leadership.



That's what I want to give you — tools and resources to help you understand confidence and how to boost it.

Below are the tools I've discovered through my own experiences and the clients I've worked with. These techniques are also backed by research. I've done the homework, so you don't have to.

Just like any new habit or skill, expertise takes time. A lot of time, and a lot of persistence and motivation. Stick with it. There will be setbacks, but just consider those opportunities to practice your resilience.

Also, as you start implementing these techniques, your confidence will indeed increase. People will notice, particularly important people in your life who are close to you. It's a natural fact that humans don't like change. And when some people close to you start to see changes in you, no matter how positive, they will resist.



Press on anyway, this is a part of change. It's part of what makes it hard. Just recognise the people you truly care about, and who truly care about you, should love the "more confident" version just as much as they loved the "less confident" version.

Without further ado, here are the twelve tools to turbocharging your confidence.

Tip #1:

Focus on Your Favourite Attributes

Can't think of any attributes you love? Then ask a friend to point out one or two they admire in you. And don't stress about that other person who seems to possess an abundance of amazing attributes. Even if you don't have as many as someone else, believe me, you have at least one top-notch attribute.

Think of it as your superpower. What is something you're just really good at doing? Are you someone people love talking to because you're a stellar listener? Do your friends come to you with new ideas because supporting others comes naturally to you? Does your boss give you more responsibility than your coworkers because you thrive under a challenge and lead well?

You get the picture. Think of at least one of your favourite attributes and focus on it.



Tip #2:

Express Gratitude



Each day think about — and if you have the time, write out — at least three things you are grateful for. Studies show when we focus on what we're thankful for, it improves our happiness and — you guessed it — our confidence.

This changes our perspective on life because the more we express gratitude, the more we'll find to be grateful for.

Tip #3:

Help Someone Else



The first obvious benefit of helping someone is … you help someone! But why does this boost your confidence? Because it enables you to get out of your head and increase your sense of pride for who you are. When you help another, you're using skills to aid that person in accomplishing something they might not have accomplished on their own.

Don't feel overwhelmed with this — you don't have to do something extravagant every day. Just pay attention to what's going on around you, and you'll notice little ways to help others. Maybe a coworker needs help solving a problem. Or maybe it's as simple as a neighbour needing assistance bringing in their groceries.

Yes, even simple ways of helping someone boosts your confidence because it reminds you how you have skills and abilities others need!



Tip #4:

Learn from Mistakes and Setbacks

Setbacks are actually a sign of progress. They show we are stretching ourselves and not just doing the easy, simple things. Everyone experiences setbacks, so don't grow discouraged. Learn from them.

Think back on mistakes you've made over the years. How have you learned from them? How did you get through them? What skills and abilities did you apply, and how can you apply them now?

If you're currently in the midst of a setback, accept the challenge. Ask yourself, "What can I do now? What can I learn from this?" These questions and the actions that result are so much better for your confidence than falling into the "why me?" mentality — that thought process only gets us stuck.

Tip #5:

Practice Positive Self-Talk

We all fight against those thoughts that tear down our self-esteem. When you catch yourself thinking those kinds of thoughts, flip it around and, instead, empower yourself. Even if you don't feel confident at the time, choose a phrase you like — "I've got this," "I am finding a solution," "I am growing in confidence" — and keep repeating it.

What's your phrase? Take that phrase and say it out loud, write it down, think it over and over again. This will help you retrain your thought patterns. There's even science to back this up: You can actually create new neural pathways in your brain when you practice affirmations and positive self-talk.



Tip #6:

Adopt Good Posture and Body Language

Stand up straight, pull your shoulders back, and hold your head up high. If you need some extra practice, try this pose for self-confidence: Stand in front of the mirror and put your hands on your hips, keeping your legs a bit apart. Hold your head high and look at your stance in the mirror. Yes, it will feel weird at first, I know! But the more you practice this stance, the more you can implement body language like this whenever you feel nervous or a lack of confidence.

Harvard Business School professor Amy Cuddy calls these “power poses”. She noticed that students actively involved in her classes tended to display them, while quieter students demonstrated far less confident body language. It’s clear that attitude influences body language, but Cuddy wondered if the reverse could be true. Could body language actually influence confidence? In her studies, she has determined that indeed it can. Self-confidence increases when you adopt a “power pose”.

Also, don’t hold back the smiles. Smile at those around you — and even yourself in the mirror! Smiling actually lowers blood pressure and stress along with improving our moods. A confident smile can even be more attractive than good looks. Dr. Monica Moore studied flirting, and discovered that the people who were approached most in “singles situations” (i.e., bars and shopping malls) were those that made eye contact and smiled with confidence.



Tip #7:

Get Out of Your Comfort Zone

Try taking a few risks this week — this will empower you! Be bold with your decisions. Maybe it's time to try something new. Maybe you want to stretch yourself with what you're already good at. It could be as simple as changing your routine or trying a new hobby.

Whatever you decide, choose an area where you feel less confident, and try something new with it.





Tip #8:

Rehearse and Prepare

If you have an interview, a social event, a speaking gig — take time to prepare. What journey do you need to make to get the results you desire? What questions do you need to prepare for an interview? What kind of notes do you need to have with you? What will you wear?

The more you can rehearse and prepare, the more confidence you will feel heading into whatever event you're attending. If something didn't work out the way you envisioned, change up how you prepare next time.

Tip #9:

Acquire New Skills

If you need a confidence boost in an area you're unfamiliar with, get your hands on resources, books, and research to grow your knowledge on the topic. Who can you talk with to glean more info? Is it time to find a mentor?

When it comes to something new — a new job, a new role within your company, etc. — be as well informed and prepared as you can be. This helps decrease the mystery of starting something new, helping you feel more confident as you go.

But no matter how well informed you are, always be prepared to learn new things along the way.



Tip #10:

Be Around Positive People

Minimise your time around people who drain you or put you down. It might even be worth it to walk away permanently from those people. While we all need to offload and vent now and again, you don't need to stay around someone who is constantly belittling you or dragging you down.

Stepping away from those relationships will boost your confidence as you remember your worth and honour yourself. And the more time you spend around people who encourage you, the more you will see those superpower attributes you possess!

Tip #11:

Exercise Isn't Just for Physical Health

Some interesting research has found that exercising outside in an attractive, pleasant setting can actually significantly increase several positive effects. While exercise alone decreased blood pressure, increased self-esteem and had a positive effect on 4 out of 6 mood measures, exercise in a pleasant outdoor environment resulted in significantly increased self-esteem measures. So, get out there and get your heart rate rising!

Tip #12:

Dress the Part

In her book, Mind What You Wear: The Psychology of Fashion, Professor Karen J. Pine shares the results of her study, which asked students to wear Superhero clothing when spending time among their peers. She hypothesised that wearing such clothing might impact the thoughts and moods of the wearer, leading to increased confidence. Not only did this prove to be true, but the wearers also reported perceiving themselves to be physically stronger, more likeable and even superior to other students. She also found that other types of clothing impacted the self-confidence of the wearer. For instance, those who were asked to wear a white coat demonstrated increased mental agility.

It isn't just clothing that can make you feel like a superhero. A study published in the Journal of Cosmetic Sciences found that men who used cologne exhibited an increase in both self-confidence and self-perceived attractiveness.





Start Now

Start putting these tips into practice today. Don't let your past, under-confident self-dictate the future. And remember, there are billions of people who struggle with boosting their confidence — you're not alone in this. Even those people who appear to ooze confidence likely have to work at it.

Your first step can be making a confidence goal. Make sure it's something that feels realistic to you, something you actually want to do. It can be a big, definitely-out-of-your-comfort-zone goal, or something simple to start with.

For example, maybe you want to boost your confidence with speaking to new people. Start with preparing one question to ask each time you talk to someone new. After you've done that for one month and have begun forming it as a habit, build upon it. Next you could join an online networking programme, and once a week meet new people and ask them questions.

As you figure out what's right for you, check in with yourself on how your confidence is doing. It also helps to share what you're going through. But only share your goals and dreams with people you trust, people who will empower and encourage you.

This is where coaching comes into play. A coach will not judge you, but instead will listen, challenge you, and help you progress toward your goals.

Then, all that's left is celebrating your success.

If you want to put your newfound skills into practice, then I'm here to share my expertise on this topic. **Get in touch** for more info on my coaching and workshops.

About The Author



Due to significant early challenges in her own life, Sarah has always been tenacious, entrepreneurial & unafraid to speak her mind. At times being the only woman in the boardroom amongst international corporations in her early 30s, she is a beacon of strength for leaders and individuals.

In Sarah's former career, she was a leader in corporate affairs but founded Sarah-J Coaching to help individuals & leaders become their personal best in life and their careers. She has dubbed the phrase 'regroup, reboot, and reinvent' - a three-step change process - having helped to pull out individuals from the trenches & into their own spotlight through her transformative and action-based coaching approach.

Sarah Jones - Published author, speaker, accredited personal & executive coach helps motivated, ambitious professionals & executives improve their career, find a new career, and help teams accelerate success & performance.

Her book 'From Vulnerable to Invincible' helps readers identify how to step into their challenges, reframe & learn, to launch themselves to success.

She also regularly contributes to the media such as BBC, The Guardian & Sky. She regularly speaks and has delivered empowering talks for Pearson Business School and Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH).

Visit http://www.sarah-j.com for more information or email sarah@sarah-j.com for more information. (Tel: +44 7531 228089)