

Building Your Sense of Confidence


I was recently asked about how new Dominants can gain confidence. The answer however is not just applicable to Dominants, but to everyone regardless of role or lifestyle. The secret to building confidence is simple, at least in theory... but it's not necessarily easy to execute. I will explore some of the key concepts here.

Like any of my writing, it expresses my own practical life experiences and the research I've done over the years. It is by no means exhaustive or definitive, and I try to speak of what I have direct knowledge with a bare minimum of speculation. As always, there are exceptions to the rules, and generalizations are made with that understanding. Remember, in any group or dynamic, there is always a bell curve in effect.

Enough with the preamble...

Emotional Call to Action

Before we begin, we must first understand a basic reality of human emotions. Our feelings and emotional impulses are survival mechanisms. Normally they exist to help us avoid danger or act quickly. Even feelings like lust, infatuation, or love (be that caring, nurturing, etc) are survival based emotions – at least when you realize that survival is more than about the individual, but about the need for the species to survive. Emotions, every emotion known, are there to drive us to act in some way, shape, or form.

One could say that our emotions are the human experience to  dissonance, the gap or difference between the current state

(the right now) versus the future, be it needed or expected (expected does not necessarily mean wanted, it can be unwanted/feared expectations as well). When we experience a powerful emotion, it's normally the result of something specific. Even if we can't readily identify it, the presence of the motion is attempting to close the gap, harmonize the dissonance. It does this by attempting to demand a need for some kind of change. When we resist or are confused about the action in question (and hence hesitate) the more likely we are to feel apprehension – a message that we should be acting, not “waiting”.

So if emotions drive us to act, what action are they demanding? As intimated, it depends on the signal of the emotion. Some emotions drive us to Fight, Flee, Freeze, Fuck, Feed, etc... They are a call to action. In some cases this action drives us away from a situation; in others it drives us closer. Nevertheless, they are still actions to which we are being driven.

However, we are not purely feeling beings, we are also thinking beings. Were we purely emotion and instinct, we would not be Human. Part of the struggle of the human experience is balancing the emotional and “rational” – the age old struggle of heart and mind. Emotions don't care about that struggle – they are demanding change. It is the job of Reason to help figure out how to act bearing in mind the immediate need, the future, and consequences, values, etc. The mind builds a storyboard to put these pieces of the puzzle together, and if it can't, then it's likely to try to pause and beg for more time to “figure it out”. Meanwhile Emotion is screaming for you act – hence a building of apprehension and anxiety.

So the trick, when we feel an emotion, is being mindful of what change or action is needed and clearing away confusion to the best of our ability. Sometimes that's as easy as flipping a coin, heads or tails, and listening to our immediate

reaction to the answer to provide the clue. Other times, it needs to be boiled down and dwelt on over time.

Confidence

Confidence is a feeling we get when we mentally compare our current state versus what is being expected of us in the future. When the math comes up fine, the numbers work out, we're "comfortable" with the answer. The equation is balanced or is "very nearly balanced" – at least enough so that it's not bothering us. Confidence is therefore a feeling of being within a comfort zone of capability or competence. The future demand will not ask or require of us more than we believe we can supply in knowledge, expertise, or act upon. Again, the focus is the action – Confidence says "yeah, I can DO that". However, when the math comes up short we are experience a sense of vulnerability.

Vulnerability

When we feel a lack of confidence, the numbers are coming up short, the equation is not balanced. The math is saying more is being asked of us than we believe we can supply. Essentially, a lack of confidence is an insecurity that we can't meet the task before us, and is joined with apprehension to motivate us to act.

When we feel insecurity or "lack confidence" then that information is telling us "umm, I don't Feel as if I can DO that".

Resolving Dissonance

The answer is then closing the gap between Confidence and Capability/Competence – address the dissonance and the problem is resolved. But how? Well the simplest way is answer the call to action by building your capability or

competence such that you now feel properly prepared to meet the challenge. However, one can also attack the problem from the other angle, trying to manage the feeling.

The Lie

This section will be unpopular to some, for others it will ring very true. Take it or leave it as you will. There is a great misnomer in western culture that is pervasive and causing great harm to those trying to succeed in their efforts. This lie is that you need Confidence to succeed. Wrong – so very very wrong.

To succeed at any task you need a great deal of competency in a given area of interest or study, and the capability to execute it with proficiency. The Confidence comes AFTER the skill has been built and practiced with enough of a track record to push the response to the demand in your emotional favor. The observation that successful people have a great deal of confidence ignores the passion and hours they pour into their efforts, the sacrifices made for that focus and obsession, and the failures made along the way.

If you think of those in the performing arts, public speakers, etc. – even with years devoted to developing their skills, some still experience a lack of confidence. This often persists right up until the final moment, until there's no room in the mind to dwell on it, and the performance has begun or director calls "action!"

Another inconvenient truth is people are usually much worse at accurately evaluating their own level of proficiency, capability, or competency. This is why peer review and expert feedback is so critical, and why your credibility and reputation means more than we'd care to admit. To help

baseline your own internal interpretation versus others, its always good to get outside insight and assessment.

However, for arguments sake, let's assume you have the competency; you have the feedback, but still feel you lack confidence. Then it's up to us as thinking beings to manage the emotions, or build different skills in how we experience them.

The Doing: Building Competence

Building confidence is best addressed by building your capability or competence for the tasks at hand. Doing this is no different than learning any other skill or dealing with any other test of knowledge. It requires focused learning, practice & training, and evaluation.

Learning

- Being studious and incessant about learning and researching all you can
- Go to classes, demonstrations, and guided workshops to learn from experts
- Find and approach someone as a mentor to get 1-on-1 coaching
- Take notes so you are committing it memory through


Practice & Training

- Review material and hone your skills with continued practice, drills, and experimentation
- Continue to sponsor workshops for dedicated practice time and fill-in blanks or learn differences in approach

Evaluation

- Seeking feedback and constructive critique from those well established and with strong reputation such as community leaders and mentors
- Getting fresh perspective from your Peers and your Partners

The Feeling: Embracing Vulnerability

Even with all the practice and skill that can meet the  challenge and exceed expectations of the task, we can still feel apprehensive, anxious, and insecure. Normally these responses are learned, acquired early in life and propagated well into adulthood. The self-critical voice kicks in tearing down your efforts or self-worth. Or perhaps the berating self talk, picking on tiny errors and magnifying them disproportionately. Anything along these lines is a replication of a highly critical or threatened influencer that has taken up residence in your mind.

I recommend eviction and execution – and then try to do the following:

- Feel the Fear, Do it Anyway – prove that voice wrong!!
- Game Face – Fake it till ya make it, or better, till you become it
- Turning around feeling of anxiety and perceive it as Excitement
- Meditate, become comfortable with the fear/apprehension
- Mindfulness in understanding this is just another face of Vulnerability, and being open is the only way to experience, learn, and improve.

Warnings

I would remiss if I didn't mention some of the warnings associated with trying to manage ones sense of confidence or lack thereof. There are mental traps to avoid, whether you feel very confident or trying very hard to build confidence. Here are some quick points:

- Better to feel low confidence and driven to improve, than not
- Nothing is more dangerous than the highly confident incompetent
- Being vulnerable is not weak, its allowing for eventual mistakes so you can learn & improve
- You must be open to critique in order to improve, ego has no place
- People are generally poor judges of their own levels proficiency – seek feedback!
- Setbacks always happen, it's how you manage your responses that will matter most

Closing

So to close out this particular article, I want to recap the most important elements as those things essential to building confidence in your chosen path.

- Research & Acquire knowledge with constant review
- Practice, train, drill – what you put in will be what you get out
- Seek feedback and review from mentors, peers, etc
- Prepare for the feelings of anxiety, use it if you can,

brute force if you must

- Give back to community by volunteering in workshops to share and stay practiced

-Sir Vice

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