

How to build Self-Confidence

"What makes you weep, my friend? In you is all power. Summon up your all-powerful nature mighty one and this whole universe will lie at your feet. It is the Self alone that predominates and not matter."

Swami Vivekananda.

Though the potential strength is hidden within us, we are not able to utilise it. Right attitude, positive thinking, and firm faith alone can help us to manifest this hidden strength within. How do great people achieve success in life? They cultivate certain qualities in order to awaken the hidden confidence within themselves. Why not we also give a try if we wish to be great and successful in life?

The qualities needed to be cultivated to build self-confidence are

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| <i>1) Conviction</i> | <i>7) Commitment</i> |
| <i>2) Hard Work</i> | <i>8) Discrimination</i> |
| <i>3) Will-Power</i> | <i>9) Definite Goal</i> |
| <i>4) Self-respect</i> | <i>10) Love</i> |
| <i>5) Long preparation</i> | <i>11) Concentration</i> |
| <i>6) Communication</i> | |
| <i>12) Strength</i> | |

1) CONVICTION:

The very first step in climbing the ladder of self-confidence is firm conviction about one's own ability. People are afraid of accepting challenges and responsibilities because they doubt their capacity to perform well; they underestimate themselves and lose wonderful opportunities in life. Such doubting Thomases will never be able to say

with confidence that they can do anything and everything. So, never doubt your inner strength. You may not be aware at present, but believe that infinite power is lodged within you and will come out with all its glory when you sincerely call upon it by way of positive attitude. Swami Vivekananda said, "Never mind failures, they are quite natural, they are the beauty of life, these failures. What would life be without them? I never heard a cow tell a lie, but it is only a cow-never a man. So never mind these failures, these little backslidings; hold on to the ideal a thousand times and if you fail a thousand times make the attempt once more."

How true it is! Thomas Alva Edison, one of the greatest scientists, who made a series of inventions, had great conviction in his capacity. He had made over 1000 experiments before he succeeded in inventing the electric bulb. Though he was born in a poor American family and was dull in his studies, nothing could obstruct his path or prevent him from great achievements because of his firm faith in his inner strength.

"Great convictions are the mothers of great deeds."

Swami Vivekananda.

2) Hard Work:

Nothing great can come unless we work for it. Dreams can never become a reality without hard work. "Fortune approaches him who is industrious. It is the weak-minded who says 'fate gives'. No acts are done by mere desires; they are done only by diligence. The deer doesn't enter the mouth of a sleeping lion. Men obtain the desired fruit by speak of destiny only. Neither the lazy nor those who depend solely on destiny fulfil their objective. Therefore, one should persist in self-effort by all means." These are the words of scriptures.

"Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration," says Thomas Alva Edison. There are many stories of success. Among them was a world renowned speaker, Demosthenes. How could he achieve that? He had a strong desire to become a powerful speaker. It was not an easy task for him. He had a stammer, added to that he was not able to speak long sentences at a stretch due to stage fear, a feeble voice and many such difficulties. But he could succeed only through hard work. As per the doctor's advice he placed beads of flint on his tongue and tried to utter words clearly and loudly. He would stand before the sea and deliver speeches in a loud voice. He spent almost 15 hours a day studying books of various interests and became a reservoir of knowledge. To perfect his manners and gestures, he would stand before a life-size mirror and deliver his speeches, bolting the room from inside. Hard-work and sincere effort ultimately resulted in success, and he became a powerful and effective public speaker. Let us have a high dream and work hard to manifest that hidden power within. By constant efforts success is bound to come.

"To succeed, you must have tremendous perseverance, tremendous will.' I will drink the ocean, 'says the persevering soul,' at my will mountains will crumble up.' Have that sort of energy, that sort of will, work hard and you will reach the goal."

Swami Vivekananda.

3) Will-Power:

We are experts in taking vows and breaking them within no time. It is easy to take vows but difficult to keep them up. We need the will of Bhisma, who took a vow of life-long celibacy and practised it diligently. Weak minds always search for excuses. The mind is fickle and restless by nature, always ready to compromise and vacillate. Those who possess a strong will and are determined to achieve great

things never listen to their minds. They make their minds work for them to achieve higher things in life.

King Vishvamitra was arrogant and created problems for sage Vashistha; but when he was humiliated by Vashistha, realising the strength of spiritual knowledge, he decided to become a brahmarshi. He was caught in the web of lust when Menaka tempted him into indulgence. He had to overcome all the impediments, such as anger, hatred, jealousy, pride, envy, delusion for the attainment of that state. He could succeed because of his tremendous will-power. He was never disheartened by failure. His determination and will power helped him to awaken confidence which in turn led him to success.

"You must not say that you are weak. How do you know what possibilities lie behind that degradation on the surface? You know but little of that which is within you. For behind you is the ocean of infinite power and blessedness."

Swami Vivekananda.

4) Self-Respect:

It is a well-known fact that men of hard work, knowledge, wisdom and perfection are always honoured and respected everywhere, whereas the ignorant, inefficient, lazy and dull people always face humiliation and insult. There are people who, in spite of being humiliated, insulted, warned several times, issued memos, scolded for their blunders and even punished, never try to improve themselves. They are people with a thick skin. They suffer from all kinds of physical and mental tortures but don't want to change their attitude due to lack of self-confidence. But sensitive people consider humiliation worse than death and always try to improve in order to protect their honour and self-respect. Love for dignity and honour helps them to

manifest hidden confidence within themselves and they rise to the occasion, and prove their mettle by accepting challenges in life.

The great poet Kalidasa was an illiterate and a dullard. Some pundits, who had been defeated in arguments by a highly intelligent princess Vidyottama, got her married to Kalidasa in a deceitful manner out of jealousy. When the truth came out she felt greatly disturbed and admonished Kalidasa for his ignorance. His honour was at stake. He felt deeply hurt and humiliated. He took it as a challenge and decided to become a learned man. This feeling of self-respect ignited his confidence. He left home and returned only after he had become a man of profound learning.

5) Long Preparation:

It's not enough to manage things, but it is important to manage them well. Great things happen not out of magic or miracles but out of systematic preparation. Those who do not prepare well and try to manage things haphazardly always meet with embarrassment and utter failure. Most of the people keep on thinking about goals but do not pay attention to the minute details which will help them to achieve it. We all know that on 11th September 1893 Vivekananda became a world famous figure when he addressed the parliament of religions in Chicago. But we forget that success didn't come even to the great Swamiji overnight. Preparation started from the day he came into contact with his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, at the age of 17. Sri Ramakrishna knew that his disciple Narendranath was going to become a world teacher, and he moulded his life accordingly. Training of the guru, first-hand knowledge of the people during his wandering days, deep study of scriptures and different branches of knowledge, his love and compassion for the entire mankind, spiritual discipline and realisation of the ultimate reality were the factors behind his success. Without proper preparation no person can be confident of success.

"Pay as much attention to means as to the end."

Swami Vivekananda

6) Communication:

Many have achieved success only through the power of perfect communication. There are people who can be compared with a huge reservoir of knowledge and information, but not always effective and inspiring due to lack of the communicative ability. If you can speak even a few words with confidence that will impress people and if you can impress people by your effective communication, it will boost your confidence. Many people talk, some are able to express, but only a few can convey their ideas in an effective manner. Conquering people through arguments may give you confidence but will never lead to success. Convincing people through loving, affectionate, polite and pleasant language not only gives you confidence but leads to success. You may not be highly qualified or scholars, still you find a place in the hearts of many. The power of your magic words will keep the listeners spell-bound.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the first Home Minister of Independent India, had a herculean task before him. At that time India was divided into 554 states ruled by different kings and nawabs. 'Divide and rule' was the policy of the British Government. Patel was against it and wanted to unite India. To convince 554 kings and to make them surrender was not an easy task. He was confident of his ability to convince them about the great cause. He could successfully accomplish that because of his effective communication. Except one or two, all were convinced about his views and surrendered their states to make India a great united power.

"It is only a few that understand the language of the brain, but everyone understands the language that comes from the heart."

Swami Vivekananda.

7) Commitment:

Commitment and confidence always go together. The moment we forget our commitment to a particular cause, we lose faith in ourselves and try to justify our weaknesses. How many people remember that they are the citizens of free India and are committed to serve the cause of the nation? Very few indeed. We can count them on the tips of our fingers. Mahatma Gandhi could have settled down in South Africa, but his commitment to his country forced him to return. Though the people did not believe him in the beginning, he was confident that he could win freedom for India through the power of non-violence.

Even when he was a student and wanted to go to London for higher studies, mother Putali Bai was not wholeheartedly willing to send him there fearing that Mohandas may not be able to resist temptation in a foreign land, and spoil his life. She wanted him to promise that he would never touch wine, meat and consequently associate with women during his stay there. Without a moment's hesitation, Mohandas agreed to her conditions. It was not an easy task for him. Many times temptations came, but his commitment to his mother saved him from all dangers and gave him tremendous confidence to overcome all difficulties in his path.

"Let the sages blame or let them praise; let the goddess of fortune come or let her go wherever she likes; let death come today, or let it come in hundreds of years; he indeed is the steady man who doesn't move one inch from the way of truth."

8) Discrimination:

Sometimes even the so-called learned scholars lose confidence when they fail to discriminate between the real and the unreal, the right and the wrong, vice and virtue due to lack of discrimination. Knowledge alone can make us free from all types of fears. Fear is the greatest enemy of man. People tell lies when they are afraid of punishment. A little sickness makes them depressed due to fear of death. They try to run away from the problems of life when are afraid of failure. Arjuna, a great warrior and hero of the Mahabharata war, went to the battlefield with the intention to fight. But at the crucial moment he was overpowered by grief and fear and lost confidence, sat down, throwing away his bow, depressed and despondent and refused to totally confused. Sri Krishna restored that knowledge again and made it clear to him that the soul is immortal and eternal whereas the body is mortal and ephemeral. There is no birth or death for the soul. Therefore, there was no need for him to be despondent. Ignorance of his real nature was the cause of depression. When Sri Krishna dispelled it in a trice by granting himself-knowledge, he gets back his lost confidence and became victorious.

"The earth is enjoyed by heroes-this is the unfailing truth. Be a hero. Always say, 'I have no fear. 'Tell this to everybody-'Have no fear'. Fear is death, fear is sin, fear is hell, fear is unrighteousness, fear is wrong life. All the negative thoughts and ideas that are in this world have proceeded from this evil spirit of fear."

Swami Vivekananda.

9) Definite Goal:

Many youngsters are not very clear about their goal in life. We can't begin our journey unless we are clear about our destination. We cannot proceed even a step unless we decide where we want to go. A clear-cut goal and a one-pointed concentration alone help us to manifest tremendous confidence.

We want to do many things simultaneously. Without singular devotion to the ideal, no great things can be achieved. Kalpana Chawla, born in a small town in Haryana, became the first Indian woman to travel in space only because she had fixed her goal when she was a mere child. Her biographer writes, "Kalpana would lie on her back and look at the glittering stars in the skies during summer nights. Presumably, this was what ignited her dream to journey into space. "She set her goal and never deviated from it though her advisers, parents and even the college principal tried to dissuade her from her choice of aeronautical engineering and suggested to her that she go for more popular fields like mechanical or electrical engineering. But the young Kalpana refused to be convinced and finally achieved her goal overcoming all the obstacles in her way. Her one-pointed devotion to goal gave her the required confidence to succeed in life.

"Take up one idea, make that one idea your life; think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success."

Swami Vivekananda.

10) Love:

Love is that magic word which works like a tonic to manifest instant confidence even in a moment. Love makes impossible things possible. Abraham Lincoln, the greatest president of the United States got that confidence and courage to fight for the abolition of slavery

through love. It was his unselfish love for mankind which promoted him to act. His loving heart could witness the sufferings of human beings who were treated worse than animals.

A young Irish woman, Miss Margaret Noble, inspired by the speeches of Swami Vivekananda in London, decided to come to India and help Swamiji in his mission of upliftment of Indian women. What was that force which made her renounce everything and follow Vivekananda to India? It was her love for India. Swami Vivekananda could instil that love in her heart. This love in her heart for the masses and the women of India gave her great confidence to overcome all obstacles in her way. She served India by starting a school for girls in Kolkata and also took active part in India's freedom movements.

"Love opens the most impossible gates; love is the gate to all the secrets of the universe. Every step that has been really gained in the world has been gained by love."

Swami Vivekananda.

11) Concentration:

God has given a unique instrument called the 'mind' to all living beings including animals. But He bestowed his special grace only on human beings in the form of freedom. Animals are controlled by nature; human beings are capable of conquering nature. This conquest is possible only through the power of concentration. Swami Vivekananda said, "Herein is the difference between man and animals- man has the greater power of concentration. The difference in their power of concentration also constitutes the difference between man and man. Compare the lowest with the highest man. The difference is in the degree of concentration. This is the only difference."

Concentration leads to perfection, perfection to confidence, confidence to success and success finally leads to happiness. The concentrated mind is like a perfect instrument for achieving success in every walk of life. Creativity, talents, originality, scientific discoveries and inventions, fine arts and even spiritual truths discovered by the sages are the product of a concentrated mind. Especially for students and youth concentration is a must. It is impossible to acquire knowledge and working skills without adequate concentration. A restless mind leads to confusion, frustration, failures and various disasters.

How could Swami Vivekananda climb the pinnacle of success? Through the power of concentration. In his own words," Just two or three days before the entrance examination, I found that I hardly knew anything of geometry, so I began to study the subject, keeping awake the whole night and in twenty-four hours I mastered the four books on geometry."

Because of this power of concentration Swami Vivekananda could master many subjects and become an encyclopedia of knowledge. Professor Wright of Harvard University was so deeply impressed by his erudite scholarship that he insisted that Swamiji should represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions, Chicago.

On hearing from Swami that he was denied that opportunity since he could not produce the required credentials, the professor himself introduced Vivekananda to the organizing committee in glowing words." Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together. Asking him for credentials is asking the sun to state its right to shine!"

Concentration gave Narendranath knowledge, knowledge gave him confidence finally leading to success and made him the world conqueror Swami Vivekananda.

"Concentration is the essence of all knowledge; nothing can be done without it. Ninety percent of thought force is wasted by the ordinary human being, and therefore he is constantly committing blunders; the trained man or mind never makes a mistake."

Swami Vivekananda.

12) Strength:

Life is not always smooth like a bed of roses. Happiness and misery are two sides of the same coin. One needs to develop mental strength to digest them. Many a time a weak mind that is unable to withstand suffering invites only untold miseries. What happened to Dronacharya, when he heard the news of his son Ashvatthama's death? He lost confidence on account of grief and finally lost his life. Anger, grief, hatred, jealousy, ego, fear, inferiority complex are obstacles which make a person weak and bereft of confidence. But there are people who maintain equanimity even in the midst of crisis. When Sardar Patel was arguing his case in court he received a telegram carrying the news of his wife's death. He was not perturbed by this and continued to argue till the end of the day, won the case in favour of his client and then broke the news of his wife's death. That is the sign of a healthy mind. Such people never lose their self-confidence even in the midst of a crisis.

Is anyone free from problems in this world? Without struggle, there is no meaning for life. We have come to this world only to conquer difficulties. Today, our youth are becoming so sensitive that for petty things they feel depressed and commit suicide. Success and failure are inevitable in life. Such a rare human birth is not meant for

committing suicide. We have no right to destroy this body. It is a precious gift of god given to us to make the best use of it to achieve great things. Failures in examinations, a little scolding from parents, a petty quarrel with friends, a temporary financial problem, failure in love affairs, inferiority complex, unemployment, dowry harassment, these are the common reasons which forces people to commit suicide. It is a great sin to commit suicide. It is not less terrible than committing murder. We are not the owner of this body, we are only the keeper. Therefore, we have no right to destroy it.

For every problem there is a solution: we need only a little patience and confidence. Let us develop mental strength and courage to face the problems of life and they will disappear in no time.

All the powers in the universe are already ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes and cry that it is dark. Know that there is no darkness around us. Take the hands away and there is the light which was from the beginning. Darkness never existed, weakness never existed. We who are fools cry that we are weak; we who are fools cry that we are impure. Thus Vedanta only insists that the ideal is practical, but that it has been so all the time; and this ideal, this reality, is our own nature. Everything else that you see is false, untrue. As soon as you say, "I am a little mortal being," you are saying something which is not true, you are giving the lie to yourselves, you are hypnotizing yourselves into something vile and weak and wretched.

Swami Vivekananda.