

Fearlessly Communicating and Talking with Confidence

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“Joshua tackles a key element of conflict resolution: fear and how it results in conflict avoidance. He advises to reality check our fears and see the value of speaking up and his comments on self-talk are bang-on with respect to communicating effectively in conflict.”

Gary Harper

<http://www.joyofconflict.com>

Professional trainer, writer, and speaker and recent author of 'The Joy of Conflict Resolution'.

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Fearlessly Communicating and Talking with Confidence

Introduction

I'm going to start off by telling you about the problems I had in communicating confidently. I haven't seen much variation between people who lack confidence when talking with others so if you're short in the confidence department or just want to have more confidence in your conversations, you'll definitely be able to relate and learn from my experience. You do not need to go through life lacking confidence and feeling dominated by others and situations.

From an early age, I was always the quiet boy. I'd sit in school knowing the answers to a question but would be too afraid to answer. I couldn't talk to someone new. I wouldn't look someone in the eyes if they looked back at me and I'd hardly argue with anyone. Yes arguing is a bad thing, but I avoided arguing not because it was the right thing to do, but because I was too afraid to speak up and voice my opinion.

I was passive and unconfident letting people verbally trample over me. Being so passively accepting like I was is dangerous for your mental health. You can probably see that talking with confidence is strongly related to assertive communication. I'll try to stick to the confidence side of things as you can read more about assertion in the [assertive skills section](#).

There's a difference with not engaging in an argument for the sake of the relationship and not engaging in an argument because you're afraid. When you have an unhealthy fear you'll avoid communicating yourself, become emotionally hurt, and nothing good will result. You'll know the truth in side of you if an unhealthy fear and a lack of confidence exists. You'll be unhappy, extremely frustrated, scared, and feel like you want to explode. You'll hardly voice your opinions and emotions in conversations because of fear. That was me.

I was miles from communicating confidently.

I didn't have confidence in myself even though I knew I had something interesting, useful, or helpful to say. It wasn't safe to do so. There was a hidden psychological barrier that kept pushing me away from communicating confidently. If you're lacking or have lacked confidence, you know what it feels like. It is a cage in your mind that has you trapped. Your mind tells you you're not allowed to leave the cage because it's unsafe.

Becoming confident is far more about working on your inner self than what you verbally express. Verbal and non-verbal messages that express your confidence will be created once you develop confidence with your inner self. I'll teach you later on how your inside becomes your outside.

Birth of Fear

The hidden psychological barrier I'm talking about is fear. The primary attribute in you that is stopping you from communicating confidently is fear.

Like kryptonite to superman as fear is to communicate confidently. Fear is the acid that eats away confidence. Fear is the one tonne bolder that holds back a person from being confident. Fear is the

Achilles of self-confidence.

“The primary attribute in you that is stopping you from communicating confidently is fear.”

You will build more confidence once you remove the “kryptonite, acid, or one tonne bolder” that is fear. To become confident you need to have little or ultimately no fear. To remove your fears the first step is to look at your fears and understand their “birth” to see what created them.

Let’s look at what fear is first then we can analyze their creation. Fear is defined as an unlikely emotion towards a *perceived real or fake threat*.

Read that out loud again.

It is a perceived real or fake threat.

Perceptual Process

Let’s look at the first italicized point of fear. Perception has three stages.

You are firstly exposed to the information. When in a conversation, exposure is being next to the person whom you can hear. Exposure is just a matter of coming within range of the stimulus.

Secondly is attention. It occurs when a stimulus activates one or more of our human senses. In our conversational example, you have attention to the person when you think about what is said. If the person begins to bore you or you are afraid of what the person is thinking of you, you are not thinking about the exposure and so the perceptual process would stop at this stage as you are not paying attention.

The third stage of perception is interpretation. It is the process of adding meaning to the stimulus through your thinking or feelings. The thinking often analyses the stimulus against past experiences. Using the conversational example, if the other person recently abused you, you will interpret what he is saying differently to someone who is a great friend to the other person. You can see how interpretation and experiences can affect your confidence in situations.

You are better equipped in becoming more confident by identifying what experiences and thinking is affecting your interpretation of the situation. It is analyzing the situation as to why you are not confident.

Also, if you are feeling unhappy or other “negative” emotions when interpreting the situation with your feelings, you are more likely to experience negative actions such as poor confidence. You’ll learn more about negativity and its effect on your confidence later on. It is the interpretation stage of the perceptual process which is the major focus in overcoming fear and building confidence.

Real or Fake Threat

The perceptual stage of interpretation leads us nicely into the second italicized point in the definition of fear which is a “real or fake threat”. We fear because threats are damaging to our mental and physical well-being. Fear is a safety barrier used to protect us psychologically and

physically. If it wasn't for fear, we'd all walk into a pit of snakes without a concern for safety. Fear protects us but too often it holds us back from reality and excelling in performance with whatever we do. We are especially held back when a psychological fear is present.

The interpretation stage in perception tells us that different messages and understandings can be drawn from the same situation.

Say there is a car accident with many witnesses whom are asked to recall the event. Each witness will most likely have a different recollection of the event to each other because of interpretation. While some interpretations of the situation will be true, most interpretations will be fake.

What this means for building your confidence is a fake understanding is holding you back. You are psychologically erecting an invisible barrier to the situation which instills poor confidence within you. The psychological barrier doesn't exist. It is completely given birth based on your wrong interpretation or perception of the situation.

When you have feared something and have ignored the fear, how often have you found it to be the truth? It hardly ever is! Franklin Roosevelt in the 1933 first Inaugural Address said "we have nothing to fear but fear itself." We all subconsciously make-up garbage. That is the main point I want you to take out of the perceptual process. As feelings, thinking, and experiences are used in interpreting the situation, it makes perceptions a very shaky and unreliable source for reality and the truth.

What you interpret from a situation is not necessarily reality and will most likely be no more than an invisible psychological barrier you are giving birth to inside of yourself in developing confidence to communicate.

It's a common characteristic in those who are stubborn or righteous to lack self-confidence. You may perceive these stubborn people as being overly confident but they actually lack the confidence to welcome other's point of views. These people shield themselves from other's opinions by failing to listen. They lack the confidence in their own perspectives to welcome other people's input continuing with their stubborn ways. Confident people are welcoming and not fearful of others.

Being Needy and Seeking Approval

I'd say the most common fear unconfident people have is the need for other's approval. When you give out the need for approval, people will sense that you are needy and unconfident. No one likes to be around these needy people. This is determined through the unconfident person's perception so what may seem like reality is in fact unreal. You think you need another person's approval, but confident people don't need this.

When you rise above the need to be approved by other people your confidence will soar. Your uncertainty will stop, your worrying will stop, and your fear of acceptance will stop once you do not need other's approval.

A confident woman is her own woman. If the people she is engaging with have nothing that she wants, she is then able to be herself and not worry about what others think.

The same is for us guys except we have an extra source of motivation for not caring what others think. Attraction expert [David DeAngelo](#) sees a primary mistake guys make when trying to attract women in their lives and even once they do attract women, is the guy's clinginess and desire to

have the woman's approval. David explains thoroughly how big of a turn-off this is for women. Surely this awakens a guy's desire to not want other's approval and especially amongst women.

Surprisingly, once you do not need approval from others, they will actually approve of you! It's all about your inner game creating your outer game. A person who knows they do not need other's approval will give out the message that they are confident and happy with who they are. Now that's something other people will like!

Clarity Forms Confidence

An interesting characteristic you'll notice in people who lack confidence is when they do talk just by listening you are able to tell they lack confidence. They'll often talk quietly and mumble.

To many times people had to ask me to repeat what little things I did say because of my soft and unclear voice. When you're asked to repeat yourself you develop frustration thinking "ah, why don't they just listen?" but the problem lies in you and not them. Acknowledge that you're responsible otherwise you'll never solve your problem.

Here's how I solved poor voice clarity and volume. I didn't learn this from anywhere else. This is from pure experience. Once you learn you do talk softly or with an unclear voice and once you desire to solve the problem, whenever you talk do so with clarity and good volume. You may not do so successfully every time, but you must try.

Nothing revolutionary there.

The true tip is making 100% effort and no excuses when doing this. When you're tired or unhappy you'll want to revert back to your old ways but you must not if you want to improve. You must have zero tolerance for laziness and always put in your fullest effort to communicate confidently.

"You must have zero tolerance for laziness and always put in your fullest effort to communicate confidently."

When you're relentless and make every effort to talk confidently, you're practicing good habits. When you practice good habits, the behavior is reinforced and you're more likely to repeat the good habit. This rule is true for any habit whether good or bad. The communication learning process will rapidly increase if you make every effort to talk confidently and practice good habits.

When you let others overrule you, when you forgo your personal needs continuously, and when you have to repeat yourself because you mumbled all because of low confidence levels, you subconsciously condition yourself to talk less confidently. So when you talk less confidently others begin to overrule you more, you forgo more personal needs, and you lose MORE confidence! It becomes tougher. It's a downhill spiral that can easily take you all the way to the bottom.

Confident Non-Verbal Communication

Once you develop verbal clarity you can take the next step in developing fearless communication which is looking at your body language. You need to have high self-awareness in order to be aware of your body language. It's a matter of knowing what you do in certain situations. When you have

poor body language others can see fear in you. Examples of body language that is counter-productive in developing confidence and how to solve them are:

1. Moving eye contact - people with low confidence levels rarely make eye contact and when they do, as soon as the other person returns that eye contact the person looks away. You do not look silly looking the other person in the eyes. In fact, you look weirder and would be annoying the other person more so when you do not make eye contact.

Good eye contact will show the person you are listening and that you are interested in what they have to say. However, you can have too much of a good thing. Excessive eye contact is non-verbal aggression. Dr. Peter Andersen, author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Body Language*, says you will make the other person feel comfortable with about 60% eye contact.

With practice I found that you will develop an intuition or 'gut-feeling' when you make the other person uncomfortable. As an example when you make too much eye contact, they'll begin to not make eye contact with you or maybe fidget. At the moment, too much eye contact probably isn't your concern as you're trying to develop confident body language but you still should be aware of the problems with excessive eye contact.

2. Weak touch - otherwise known as haptics, touch involves bodily contact. What haptics we are interested in to develop confident non-verbal communication is mostly the handshake. You will rarely use any other haptics other than a handshake in a normal social situation. It's not as if you normally go around patting people on the back or stroking their arm. That's just strange!

What did you feel when someone shook your hand with a soft handshake? I bet you wondered if they cared about you at all or if they lacked confidence to show this concern. This is a 'girly touch'. A good handshake depends on the receiving person. Most of the time you want a firm handshake but occasionally with say the elderly you don't want to be crushing their hand! When greeting ladies be aware that they don't have gigantic and hard hands like many men so just go a little less firm. A firm handshake shows you care and is an initial way of communicating confidence when meeting someone.

3. Stay away - looking at body positions relative to one another now otherwise known as proxemics. What I mean by "relative to one another" is the distance between you and the other person. You are most comfortable with an intimate or well known person being close to you as opposed to someone you just met. However, people with low confidence will have a much wider radius of comfort. A more confident person will not show fear when someone "breaks" their comfortable proxemics. This doesn't mean they are comfortable with the closeness, it just means they don't show the uncomfortably. They desire the other person to stay away but they cope with the situation.

An excellent example of this that I can remember is two Australian Politicians on October 8 the eve of the 2004 federal election. John Howard was greeted by opposition leader Mark Latham aggressively. While Mark Latham did pull John Howard towards him when shaking hands (aggressive haptics), Latham made his body position aggressive by being extremely close and towering over the shorter John Howard. Despite this, Mr. Howard non-verbally stood his ground in confidence by continuing the handshake and smiling towards the cameras. I'm sure John Howard would have felt uncomfortable but he still gave out signs of confidence.

It was said Latham attempted to get revenge for Howard squeezing his wife's hand too hard at a press function which I found to be funny! If only they were both able to read this!

4. Carry yourself - the last non-verbal communication technique I feel is valuable in developing confidence is kinesics. It involves body movement.

Possibly the most important kinesics in confidence is posture. A slouched posture not only screams an unconfident person, but it has a physical and psychological effect on the person with the poor posture. The physical effect of slouching your shoulders forward is it causes your chest to compress inwards. Your chest compressing simulates expelling air causing you to breathe shallowly. This means if you have poor posture you will have poor breathing.

The psychological effect of poor posture is poorer confidence. Using arguably the world's best golfer Tiger Woods as an example, he's taught to maintain good posture as he approaches each shot. By having good posture he is able to breathe correctly and physically get his body into the right state of confidence. From this his mind is able to focus on the shot ahead.

I know once golfer's lose this state of confidence through poor posture, the affects are surprisingly strong. The golfer's chest begins to tighten and everything heightens. They then lose their state of control, calmness, and confidence causing poor performance.

The same relates to everyday life. To practice a confident posture, roll your shoulders forward, upwards, and then back down to almost complete a circle. Watch your shoulders as you rotate them and if they are behind to what they were prior to doing the activity and you are comfortable, you've done the activity correctly.

What Are You Saying to Yourself?

Otherwise known as 'self-talk', your thoughts play a large role in determining your confidence level. When you are afraid of stuffing something up in a conversation for example, you have a million thoughts rushing through your mind "What if he doesn't like me?" "What if I don't know what to say?" "What if I stuff up?" You're blowing your anxiety and stress levels to high levels by using this dangerous self-talk. It's damaging to your confidence and how you perform.

Stop worrying, live in the present, and don't talk negatively to yourself. It's as simple as that. Don't beat yourself up with negative self-talk and criticism. You don't verbally bash your best friend so don't do it to yourself.

When verbally beating yourself up, you feed your subconscious mind bad "mental food". Your mind deserves nutritious positive thoughts. The effects of negative self-talk are damaging to your confidence, esteem, and overall success. How can you expect to win against the world if you're the only person on your team and you're against yourself? You can't do that. It's impossible. You can't expect to develop unstoppable confidence and self-esteem fighting yourself.

Personal development coach Steve Pavlina made an excellent analogy with negative self-talk and you wanting to become fearlessly confident.

Picture yourself driving in your car towards your goal. Think of negative self-talk as the brake and positive self-talk and imagery as the accelerator. When you begin to doubt yourself and let fear enter, you are pressing the brakes slowing yourself down and when you use positive self-talk you accelerate closer to becoming unstoppably confident.

Here's the main point with the analogy. Most people are pressing the accelerator down by being positive but they do not build in confidence because they are also pressing the brakes by using

negativity! It doesn't really matter if you've positive self-talk, imagery, and visualization because the negativity will stop you from becoming confident regardless.

“How can you expect to win against the world if you're the only person on your team and you're against yourself?”

Top professional athletes are completely aware of their self-talk. Take Tiger Woods for example again. The guy's roaring with confidence. How can he sink a putt on the 18th to win a major if he's saying to himself “Oh Tiger. This looks hard. You're not going to be able to get this”? He doesn't do that! If he did, he'd then miss the putt and will verbally bash himself further hurting his confidence to putt well. He doesn't negative self-talk which is a contributor to his confidence and success.

Talk and think positively by using affirmations that are congruent with your communication and self goals. Continually say to yourself “I am confident” and by simply thinking and saying this to yourself, you become a more confident person. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

This technique is actually very helpful in becoming happier. If you want to be happier anytime, just simply tell yourself you're happy and do happy things. You become happier!

You will become more confident by affirming that you are confident regardless of if you are. Your thoughts become your actions and your actions become your reality. Like I've repeatedly said, what goes on inside of you will be seen outside of you.

As corny and weird as this may sound, love yourself. You don't need to be a jerk that is up himself/herself but you do need to treat yourself like a champion. You'll create a higher self-perception and people will treat you better because of this. Treat yourself like rubbish and so will people. You need to be a cheerleader for yourself as others will most likely not be. You are the only person on your team. A lot of these things I've explained such as healthy self-talk will develop once you see and respect yourself like a champion.

Ensuring You Become Confident

I didn't and you certainly won't make a giant leap to becoming unstopably confident. You won't wake up one morning feeling transformed. It's a progressive journey that takes time. You will stuff up but you can actually enjoy it if you're aware that you will make mistakes.

Just like the need to be aware that a marriage will not be perfect before entering into it, you will enjoy progressively becoming more confident and the likelihood of you achieving unstopable confidence will increase if you accept mistakes. Screw ups are a part of life.

An extremely powerful message that will reassure you that you're developing and becoming more confident deals with your thoughts. I've repeatedly explained how your outer game is reflected with what goes on inside of you. To know if you'll become confident in the future, look at your mind today. To see who you are today, look at your thoughts in the past. In general, your future is created from your present against the backdrop of the past.

If you are not confident today, it was because of your thoughts in the past. If you are changing your thinking processes today you can project your mindset onto who you will become in the future. This means in the future, who you become, will be because of your thoughts now.

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