

Five Things to Do Now to Be More Self-Confident

By Mary Mitchell

Confidence. The dictionary defines it as trust or faith, being sure. I believe it means feeling good about yourself, especially in regard to accomplishing something. Which something? It can be a new job, a new assignment, a performance review, networking or a meeting with co-workers.

Here are some things we can do right now and see some real payoffs in our confidence quotients.

1. Move

No, not to a new job or neighborhood. Move your body. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Park farther away from the store you're about to visit, and walk the distance.

Walk. Run. Ride a bike. Lift weights, even if it means doing your reps with a five-pound bag of flour in each hand. Work up a sweat. You'll feel better.

The bottom line is this: when we feel better, we become more confident. Exercise clears the brain and the lungs, making room for new, better, possibly bolder thoughts. It gives us more energy. And let's face it; energy is attractive. Energetic people magnetize others.

Nothing enhances your overall appearance like being fit. A good regimen of exercise will improve not only your posture but your personality. I believe that fit people look more focused and more confident.

A recent national survey showed that a majority of working women interviewed believe that becoming physically fit and participating in sports will help their careers.

Exercise not only increases strength and endurance. I find, too, that it helps mightily to defuse anger and frustration, and it gets the creative juices flowing.

2. Attire and Grooming

Take a look at what you're wearing. There is no such thing as neutral clothing. Everything you put on represents a decision you have made and is a reflection of your good taste, your good sense, and your style. Remember, we judge others more on the basis of what we see than anything else.

If your attire is inappropriate, colleagues are prone to question whether you know the rules of the game and whether you are or are not likely to be a significant player. Your superiors are apt to conclude that the quality of your work will match the quality of your appearance.

When you're considering how to dress for a work situation, ask yourself a couple of questions: Who am I? What role am I playing? How do I want to be perceived? Where am I? Who are the people I want to impress favorably?

We're not talking about fashion statements here; we're talking about what works in a given environment to be effective.

Grooming is all. Develop four key relationships and you won't go wrong. They are:

- **Tailor.** Good fit can make an inexpensive garment look like a million; while poor fit can make even an Armani look sloppy.
- **Dry cleaner.** Dry cleaning is not good for fabrics, so make sure yours is reliable and that you never take your clothing out of the shop until you've inspected it.
- **Shoemaker.** Everybody notices shoes, mostly because we get nervous so often and end up looking at the floor. Keep shoes well soled, shined and in good repair.
- **Dentist.** A clean, bright smile goes a long way to making us feel better about ourselves.

3. Breathe

Find sanctuary inside yourself. There is honor in standing still. We are so time-crunched, information-bludgeoned, downsized and multi-tasked that it's spiritually suffocating. Who we really are comes from the inside out. Without a way to "go inside" and focus, we add to our environment's chaos rather than its harmony. Learn "belly breathing": lie down on the floor, be quiet and place your hands on your tummy.

Breathe from your belly, letting your belly rise and fall like a bellows. Babies breathe this way. And we know how self-confident they are. Men breathe this way, too. I've learned to belly breathe on elevators, in restroom stalls, and in the middle of crowded rooms when I need to calm down and focus. No need to "om".

4. Discipline

Keep your agreements. Be on time. Be mindful and in the present. That is a gift to yourself as well as others. Whatever we think and feel right now creates what happens in the future. When we stick to the "now" and don't chase rabbits, we are involved and aware of opportunities.

Others we deal with will sense that we're fully with them. That has a tremendous impact on the quality of your personal and professional relationships.

5. Give and Receive

Give whatever you want. If you want more cooperation and respect, give respect and cooperate. If you want to succeed, help others succeed. If you want more joy, be more joyful. When we circulate our positive energy, we create more and more to enjoy. Be open to giving to yourself. Honor your own worthiness to receive or no one else will.

Perhaps, as you read this, you are thinking, "Yeah, so tell me something new. I know this already."

To paraphrase one of my teachers, we all know what to do. Successful people do what they know.