

11 SMALL ACTIONS TO BOOST YOUR CONFIDENCE



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If you have low self-confidence, then this is something you should seek to change right away. Low confidence can not only prevent you from achieving everything you can do in life (by preventing you from taking risks and by making you generally more retiring and cautious) but it can also greatly damage your happiness and your enjoyment of life.

Ultimately, low-confidence can lead to depression and mental health issues if it is allowed to continue and it can even end up negatively rubbing off on those around you. For parents in particular, this is a *highly* important thing to address before it hurts your children.

To fix low self-esteem, you should speak with a therapist, a psychologist or a counsellor. In short, someone with training and qualifications will stand the best chance of fixing this deep-seated issue.

But that said, you can also raise your confidence in a number of other ways. Sometimes, small fixes can start to fix your confidence from the outside in and in the short term, this can do a LOT of good. Here are some small actions that will help you to slowly transform the way you come across to others and ultimately, the way you feel about yourself.

1 Body Language

Your body language is one of the single most important tools for conveying the way you feel. Communication is often estimated as being 70% non-verbal or even higher. In other words, what you're saying with your mouth is far less important than what you say with your body. You can talk the talk, but if you're hunched up, then you will convey a sense of anxiety and low confidence. Likewise, if you're shaking, then no one will buy your macho spiel!

So how do you fix your bodylanguage? The trick is to appear relaxed. The more you lie back, spread out and let yourself be vulnerable, the less it appears as though you have something to fear. If you put your arm across the back of the sofa and have one leg casually over your knee, then you'll look relaxed and at ease – as though no one poses a threat to you and as though no one can harm you. This conveys confidence and it also makes you *feel* more confident.

Another body language trick is to try leaning on things. If you lean against a wall, this communicates ownership. Likewise, if you touch someone on the shoulder, this conveys a *kind* of ownership which also comes across as confidence.

2 Smile

Smiling is perhaps the most confident thing you can do. Want to look more confident when you walk? Then smile as you go! Want to look more confident when approaching members of the opposite sex in a bar? Just smile at them from across the room and you'll not only appear friendly, but also as though you're happy to make yourself vulnerable – which again makes you seem relaxed and confident.

Smiling actually makes us feel more confident too due to a psychological phenomenon known as 'facial feedback'. This means that we will often feel the way we look. Smile and you feel happier. Grimace and you feel angrier. Smiling in particular releases serotonin which induces feel good feels. Even if the smile is forced, it still works!

3 Power Positions

Just as smiling can work in reverse to change your emotions, so too does your body language influence the way you feel.

When we are confident, we have a tendency to take up more space. What you might not realize is that when you take up more space, it makes you *feel* more confident. Why? Because it triggers a rush of the hormone testosterone, testosterone being the primary male hormone and also a neurotransmitter that increases aggression and assertiveness.

Psychologists have thus managed to find what are known as power positions. These are positions you can pull with your body that will instantly make you feel more confident and on top of the world.

The most well-known of these is the victory position. Simply hold your hands over your head in a v shape as you might when crossing the finish line victorious in a race. This is a universal position in fact and is something that people do across cultures – even apes are thought to use this signal to demonstrate victory and success!

And apparently, it triggers an immediate increase in testosterone. So the next time you're about to do an interview or go on a date, try going to the toilet first and practicing a few power positions!

4 Breathe

Our anxiety comes from the fight or flight response. This is the sudden release of stress hormones which are triggered in response to danger. That danger can be physical and immediate as in the case of a bear blocking our path, or it can be less immediate and more abstract – as in the case of speaking up in a group and worrying that people are going to not listen to you or laugh at you.

Ultimately, social ostracization in the wild would have led to our eventual demise and as such, this really is a literally threat as far as the body is concerned. Unfortunately, sweating and shaking doesn't help us on a date or in the board room!

And this is why you need to breathe to get your physiology back under your control. Breathing in a slow, deep and deliberate manner will activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which in turn activates the 'rest and digest' response. This is the opposite to the fight or flight state and it is characterised by slower heart rates, slower brain waves and a general sense of calm.

Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth and hold each breath for a couple of seconds at a time.

5 Walk Tall

Going back to body language for a moment, another time we notably convey either confidence or a lack thereof is when we walk. Our walk says a lot about us and if we walk briskly, powerfully and proudly, then we can make ourselves seem confident, large and in charge before we even start speaking!

Conversely, if we walk in a slumped, hunched and shuffling manner, then we will just seem shy, retiring and scared.

To walk taller, the trick that is often described is to imagine that a beam of light is bursting out from your chest. That means you're walking with your chest slightly poised upwards and it means that you should be smiling and walking briskly.

The problem is remembering to do this! Most of us have been walking pretty regularly now since we were... well *one year old*! Thus it's hard to just drop those years of ingrained training and start walking in a wholly different way.

A way around this is to look for triggers to remind you. One of the best of these is walking through a doorway. The next time you cross a threshold, use this as a way to remember that trick and start beaming again.

6 First Impressions

This is especially important because those first impressions mean a great deal. The way you impact on someone when you first meet them makes a huge impact to your overall confidence, esteem and importance in their eyes.

So, practice making that great first impression. That means walking with powerful strides and beaming into the room and it means shaking their hand firmly and with purpose. If you want to seem confident and make the best first impression then there are few things worse than a limp, wet-fish handshake!

7 Eye Contact

Another key component of creating a good impression when you first meet someone and conveying confidence is maintaining proper eye contact. Holding eye contact suggests that you feel equal to the person you're speaking to and it gives you more intensity, makes you seem more honest and in other words sends all of those good social signals that we want to send!

So, try to maintain good eye contact but without being creepy. Hold the gaze for a few seconds, then look away while gesticulating and then hold the gaze again.

And when speaking in front of a larger group, make sure that you look around the group and remember to hold eye contact with each person for a few seconds.

8 Speak More Slowly

One of the things that will help you to seem more confident while communicating is to speak more slowly. We are naturally inclined to speed up as we become nervous and this can lead to us stumbling over our words and seeming less confident and less sure of what we're saying. Of course this is not good!

On the other hand, if you speak more slowly, then you come across as someone who knows what they're talking about, who is confident in who they are and who has *thought* about what they're saying. Because you're giving yourself time, you'll also be less likely to stutter or to pause and need to use um, filler words.

9 Tell Stories

Telling stories also conveys confidence.

And this works in tandem with speaking more slowly.

You see, one of the reasons we speak quickly when we are talking in public is to get it over with more quickly. We speak quickly because a) we aren't naturally fond of talking in public and *we want it to stop* and b) we aren't confident that what we're saying is compelling enough or interesting enough and we're worried that people will stop listening if we don't finish what we're saying quickly!

But if you tell a story then this suggests that you are more natural when it comes to holding court and entertaining a crowd. It suggests you're enjoying it and that you have confidence in your own ability to entertain.

And this effect is felt even more strongly if you slow it down. Not only in terms of how you speak but also in your delivery. That means that you set the scene, you ask rhetorical questions, you use repetition and you create suspense. This is something that the most charismatic people can pull off tremendously and it has a huge impact when done well.

Don't rush to the point, enjoy the moment, linger and have faith in how interesting you are!

10 Gesticulate

Speaking of the most charismatic people, science also has something to say about this topic.

You see, in studies it has been shown that people who are rated as the most charismatic, also tend to gesticulate the most.

Gesticulation means talking with your hands, it means being animated and pointing, gesturing and pacing around as you speak.

And the reason that this is associated with confidence and charisma, is because it makes us seem more engaged with what we ourselves are saying. Now our body language and our words are congruent and our passion can therefore be felt around the room.

The more you gesture as you speak, the more passionate and emphatic you seem to be about what you're saying. And this is highly engaging and impressive – it makes everyone else perceive it as more engaging and interesting too!

11 Be Passionate

The only catch here? That's not something you can fake.

Try to 'fake' your gesticulations and you'll find you instantly become very aware of your hands and not quite sure what to do with them! This of course makes you look a lot more awkward – far from looking more confident!

So instead, you need to focus on genuinely believing and being excited by what you're talking about. Don't speak up unless you have something to say and try to avoid investing too much of your life into things that you really don't care about. If your job doesn't get you fired up *in the good way* then look for other work.

Because here's the secret. When you love what you do and when you're in your natural element, confidence and charisma come entirely naturally!