

# How to build confidence

## Andrew Fuller

Confidence is one of the most powerful, and one of the most elusive, qualities that creates success in life.

Building confidence means that we develop the courage to try out new things. Unless we are exceptionally talented, most of us approach new activities with a slight apprehension, which is usually followed, by bewilderment and confusion. Our first attempts may be feeble but if we persist we often gain a sense of mastery. If, however, someone rescues us when we are bewildered we learn that someone else can do what we cannot. This is why rescuing children when they are struggling with a new activity is toxic to confidence.

There are several steps to creating and building confidence.

**Trust your child-** Nothing builds confidence more than trust. One of the best ways of communicating your trust is to ask your child for help. Requesting assistance communicates to a child that you regard them as capable and competent. Letting your children cook with you can be a good place to start.

**Live a bold and adventurous life-** One of the best ways to develop confidence is to live an expansive life in which you do different things,

eat new foods, go to strange places, see new shows or movies and try out things you wouldn't usually have a go at.

For parents this means encouraging adventure and teaching safety along with way. Kids are more durable than we give them credit for.

**Develop a yes bias -** This means developing a personal motto that generally says "why not?" For example, if someone says let's go to France, you try to say sure let's find out a way we could do that. If a child says I want frog legs and ice cream for dinner. You say you find the frogs; I'll get the ice cream.

**Trust your own intuition.** If you're full of self-doubt, your kids will be too. Practice trusting your intuition and hunches and follow them wisely.

**Don't fall into the avoidance trap.** When you avoid something you fear, your fear grows. What is avoided looms larger and appears more daunting, what is attempted lessens in size. While it might seem like a kindness to help people opt out of things they are fearful of doing, mostly it just makes them more fearful.

*"It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare. It is because we do not dare that things are difficult."* - Seneca

**Follow the 80/20 rule** -No one is confident at everything all the time. We all have hesitations and setbacks. Aim to be bold and confident about 80% of the time. In many areas of life, it is the predominant pattern that counts long term.

**Know that first past the post isn't always the best.** The person who can achieve a skill first is often not the best at that skill long-term. In fact there are considerable advantages in being a little bit older when you start new activities.

**Set Probability Goals.** A probability goal is a challenge that includes an error margin. For example, a parent might say to a child, "Let's see if you can throw a ball into a hoop on the group 7 times out of 15 throws". As a child becomes more skillful we might then increase the challenge of the task by moving the hoop further away and say, "Ok it's harder now. Let's see if you can throw the ball into the hoop 9 times out of 20". Probability goals help us learn how to challenge ourselves and also make it less likely that we will give up if we don't get 100% first time.

**Little steps lead to giant leaps.** When we focus on our strengths we build the confidence to tackle areas where we are not so capable. Most highly skilled and confident people deliberately practice skills that they are not good at. They go out of their way to put themselves in challenging situations so they can become more skilled. For example, top golfers often put golf balls into the

trickiest part of a bunker so they have to develop the skills to make those shots. People only learn to deliberately practice skills that they are not so good at when someone has clearly told them that they believe in them and that mistakes are the only way to get better at something. If we can't learn to make mistakes, we can't learn to improve. People who make no mistakes do not usually make anything.

**Build a have-a-go culture-** People often express their insecurities by claiming that they can't do something or by comparing themselves negatively with others. For example, "I am the world's worst dancer" or "I'm no good at Maths". When someone makes comments like these, acknowledge their feelings and help them to express them verbally. Ask them what makes them feel that way. Accept their fears or insecurities as genuine but don't agree with their self-assessment. For example, you might say, "I get it that you are struggling at Maths, how can we work on it to make it easier? Confident people make plans to improve in areas they initially find difficult.

**Be on a continual treasure hunt -** devote your life towards looking for the best in yourself and in others. Focus on successes, skills and abilities. Be resolutely positive and follow the role model of Thomas Edison who after trying 10,000 times to develop an electric light bulb said, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."