

MODULE 1:
WHY IS IT SO
HARD TO BE
CONFIDENT?

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By learning more about factors that influence our confidence levels and recognizing which ones are holding us back, we can improve our confidence and achieve greater success in life.

In this module, we will explore some of the most common causes, such as:

- Self-Esteem
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Self-Consciousness
- Imposter Syndrome
- Self-Hatred
- Feeling Rejected
- Self-doubt

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Self-Esteem: Self-esteem is an important component of mental health. It is not only a measure of how much we value ourselves, but how much we like ourselves as well. Self-esteem is a person's attitude toward himself or herself. It can be defined as either a positive or negative evaluation of one's worth.

- We live in a society that places a high value on personal achievement. We want to be successful and we work hard to achieve our goals. When we achieve something, we experience a "feel-good rush." This becomes our baseline for happiness. So, we always want more and more of these good feelings. For example, after buying a new car, we want to buy something even better--a newer model. We keep striving to get higher and higher.
- The problem with tying your self-esteem to achievement is that you will never feel good enough. There are always new goals to achieve and new challenges to overcome, so you will never reach a stable level of positive self-esteem.

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A few various factors that can influence our self-esteem are:

- Genetics
- Personality
- Life experiences
- Age
- Health
- Thoughts
- Social circumstances
- The reactions of others
- Comparing yourself to others

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Low Self-Esteem:

Below are some signs of low self-esteem

- Focusing on failures and perceived weaknesses
- Pessimistic outlook, sees the glass half-full
- Socially withdrawn, unwilling to participate in social activities
- Poor self-image, self-critical
- Follower, not leader
- Indecisive, avoids making decisions
- Poor ability to deal with criticism

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Because self-esteem impacts so many aspects of life, it can be important for people to manage their self-esteem wisely. When people experience successes or setbacks, both personal and professional, these events can influence how they feel about themselves.

The way we feel about ourselves is often established at a young age. A family life fraught with disapproval can follow a person into adulthood. Low self-esteem can affect a person's behavior in a variety of ways. For example, a person may avoid new experiences or shy away from tasks that appear too difficult because he or she feels incapable of success.

MODULE 1: WHY IT'S SO HARD TO BE CONFIDENT: EXERCISE

USING THE ATTACHED WORKBOOK ANSWER THE FOLOWING QUESTIONS AS TRUTHFULLY AS YOU CAN:

1. I WAS REALLY HAPPY WHEN...?
2. SOMETHING THAT MY FRIENDS LIKE ABOUT ME IS...?
3. I AM VERY PROUD OF...?
4. MY FAMILY WAS VERY HAPPY WITH ME WHEN I...?
5. IN SCHOOL/AT WORK I AM VERY GOOD AT...?
6. SOMETHING THAT MAKES ME REALLY UNIQUE IS...?

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Feelings of inadequacy:

Have you ever struggled to feel good about yourself? Do you wonder if you're good enough? Feelings of inadequacy tend to arise when we feel we are not as good or capable as other people. These feelings do not necessarily reflect our actual abilities or achievements. In fact, these feelings may be more a reflection of low self-esteem than any objective measure of ability or competence. A sense of inferiority can cause different reactions in people. Some withdraw, while others become aggressive.

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People who feel inadequate may experience:

- Anxiety, particularly with regard to performance.
- Heightened sensitivity and self-criticism.
- Reluctance to accept or trust in the affection of others.
- Low self-worth.
- Perception of failure.
- Fear of rejection.
- The inability to accept praise.
- Feelings of powerlessness.

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Self-Consciousness:

According to those who study self-consciousness, it's human nature to focus on ourselves sometimes and to focus on others sometimes. The extent to which we focus or self-reflect on ourselves is thought to indicate our level of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness can have either negative or positive outcomes. Moderate levels of self-consciousness can be helpful, boosting our motivation and increasing our self-confidence. However, high levels of self-consciousness can result in negative emotions such as shame, embarrassment, jealousy and guilt, making us obsess over every blemish. Over time this can erode our self-confidence.

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Here are some questions you can ask yourself to get a sense of your level of self-consciousness:

1. Do I constantly reflect on myself and my actions?
2. Do I always re-examine all my emotions?
3. Am I always worrying about what other people think of me?
4. Am I threatened easily?
5. Do I seek the approval of others?
6. Do I get intimidated easily?
7. Do my mistakes make me feel guilty or ashamed?
8. Do I experience embarrassment easily?

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Imposter Syndrome

People who feel they are undeserving of their achievements and the high esteem in which they are generally held may have imposter syndrome. This is not an official diagnosis, but it is common among accomplished people who believe that they aren't as competent or intelligent as others might think--and that soon enough, people will discover the truth about them. People who experience imposter syndrome are often reluctant to take credit for their successes, instead attributing them to luck or other external factors.

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Imposter Syndrome: A variety of factors can contribute to feeling like an imposter. The following are some possible causes of imposter syndrome.

- **Major Transitions or New Chapters** - Such as starting a new job right after graduation, or a major life event, such as the ending of a relationship.
- **Societal or Familial Stressors:** You may have been treated by others in ways that made you feel less than worthy. How you view yourself can be affected by how others treat you.
- **Stereotypes or Prejudices:** Stereotypes can lead members of certain groups to doubt their competence, causing imposter syndrome.
- **Links with Mental Illness:** Imposter Syndrome has been linked to self-doubt and failure, anxiety and depression.

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Research has identified five types of people who experience imposter syndrome. Each type shares the core signs and symptoms of imposter syndrome, but their behavioral patterns vary based on how they evaluate self-competence.

- Perfectionists
- Superhero's
- Experts
- Geniuses
- Soloists

After reading about the various types of imposter syndrome, did any stand out as being especially relevant to your experience? Or do you feel like a blend of two or more types describes you best? I personally feel like both a Genius and a Soloist.

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Self-Hatred: Also known as **self-loathing** refers to the underlying belief or feeling that one is simply not good enough. It's common to have low self-esteem and feel worthless when you suffer from self-loathing. Negative thinking can influence how you view the world; you may ruminate on the negative things, minimize the positive ones, and believe that no one loves or cares about you. However, all people are worthy of love and bring value to the world--including you. Through self-compassion, you can learn to forgive yourself and be less harsh in your self-criticism. Self-care comes from a place of acceptance and being gentle with yourself when you make mistakes.

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Self-loathing symptoms and signs -

- **All or nothing thinking** - everything in your life is absolute; black and white, good or bad.
- **Negativity bias** - tend to live more pessimistically than optimistic.
- **Low self-esteem**
- **Emotional reasoning** - your feelings, regardless of what they are, are facts and there must be something wrong with you.
- **Difficulty accepting compliments** - Instead of accepting compliments graciously you discredit them.
- **Sensitivity to criticism** - Along with not being able to accept compliments, you find it hard to accept any kind of criticism.
- **Self-critical** - You attack your own character when you make any kind of mistake.

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How to stop self-loathing -

- **Journaling** - This can be a cathartic way to get all your thoughts out of your head and on paper. This is a highly recommended way to begin any healing process.
- **Talk back to your inner critic** - Think of your inner critic as some kind of bully that you finally have the courage to stand up to. Battle that inner negativity with positive thoughts and counterarguments.
- **Practice self-compassion and self-acceptance** - learn how to shift your mindset, and be more gentle with yourself. Accept and love yourself unconditionally and soon you will see that it is a normal experience.
- **Consider the people in your inner circle** - It's imperative that you surround yourself with people with the mindset you are trying to achieve. Those with negative mindsets will keep you down.
- **Practice Meditation** - If you are having a difficult time separating yourself from negative thoughts, beginning a meditation regime could be beneficial.
- **Seek Therapy** - When all else fails, consider seeking help with changing your mindset.

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Feeling Rejected: What is it, and how to deal with it?

The feeling of rejection can be painful. It involves being excluded from a social relationship or interaction, and can be active or passive: for example, bullying or teasing someone, giving silent treatment, or ignoring people. We might respond to rejection with feelings of hostility, dejection, withdrawal, and even jealousy.

Rejection is a universal experience, and it can be painful. But knowing where rejection comes from, and implementing some strategies for dealing with it, can help you feel less hurt by this human experience.

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Examples of Rejection: These are just a few examples of what rejection can look like.

- **Work examples -**

- You don't get the job you really wanted
- Someone else gets the promotion you wanted
- Your coworkers go to lunch and they don't invite you
- Everyone in a meeting ignores you when you share your ideas

- **Familial Rejections -**

- Your relatives share inside jokes that you are not made privy to
- Your family forgets about you when they take a family photo
- Your family goes to restaurants that they know you can't eat at (if you have health issues or dietary constraints)

- **Relationship Rejections -**

- Your partner breaks up with you
- Your partner says "no" to a marriage proposal
- Your partner doesn't invite you when they hang out with their friends
- Your partner doesn't want to attend your important life events

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We can always benefit from learning to deal with rejection in healthier ways. This can help us decrease both the emotional and physical pain that accompanies rejection. We might use these strategies to handle job rejection, romantic rejection, or social rejection from friends or family. Here are some ways:

- **Write about your rejected feelings** - Try processing your feelings of rejection by writing them down.
- **Practice accepting rejection** - Acceptance means you acknowledge and accept yourself, your thoughts, and your emotions. Then act on them accordingly.
- **Focus on the positive** - allowing yourself to acknowledge the rejection can help you access the positive emotions more easily.
- **Emotionally distance yourself** - using an outsider's point of view; such as a fly on the wall, can help the negative emotions go away quicker.

Rejection is inevitable, but with the right coping measures we can reduce the painful emotions we feel from being rejected.

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Self-Doubt - Self-Doubt is a mental state in which the mind remains suspended between two or more contradictory propositions, and is uncertain about them. Doubt on an emotional level is indecision between belief and disbelief. It may involve uncertainty, distrust, or lack of conviction on certain facts, actions, motives, or decisions. People who have a lot of self-doubts tend to have a wide range of expectations for their performance. They may expect poor performance at some times and excellent performance at others. These people cannot confidently state their level of competence, and they are often not sure whether they will be able to achieve the outcome they desire. When we're plagued by self-doubt, we often deal with it in ways that are automatic and unconscious. Here are some of them:

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- **Self-Handicapping** - Self-handicapping is a strategy that helps us avoid accepting responsibility for our mistakes or failures.
- **Overachieving** - Overachievement is a strategy that helps prevent mistakes, failures, and bad decisions.
- **Imposter Syndrome** - is when we feel like the success we've experienced is not an accurate reflection of our underlying abilities.

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How to overcome self-doubt - Self-doubt is closely linked to self-esteem. The following are some tips to stop self-doubt.

- **Positive self-talk** - Positive self-talk is a tool for improving mental health, enhancing performance, and increasing happiness.
- **Positive affirmations** - Positive affirmations incorporated into our daily lives can help us be more sure of ourselves,
- **Practice self-compassion** - If we are kinder to ourselves when we make mistakes or fail, we may experience less negative impact.
- **Find your strengths** - It is more helpful to focus on your strengths rather than your weaknesses.
- **Build self-trust** - You can build your self-trust by doing what you say you're going to do, being honest with yourself, and doing what you believe in.