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Case study

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From Fake Confidence to Ethical Confidence

A Journey of Self-Discovery and Growth



Confidence is often hailed as the cornerstone of success in any field, whether it be personal development, career growth, or athletics. However, confidence is not a one-size-fits-all concept. It is essential to understand the different dimensions of confidence, particularly how one develops it, whether it is authentic and ethically grounded, or whether it is simply a product

of overconfidence that can lead to negative consequences. Through my experience coaching a team of basketball players, I learned valuable lessons about the role of confidence in athletic performance and personal growth. In this article, I will explore the implications of both ethical and manipulative overconfidence, how they affect decision-making and growth, and how to cultivate authentic, ethical confidence through mind-heart alignment.

The Role of Confidence in Achieving Success

First, let's establish what confidence truly means. Confidence is the belief that you are capable and competent in reaching your goals, whether they are personal, professional, or athletic. Confidence is essential because it helps people make clear decisions, face challenges, and move forward in the pursuit of their goals.

There are several key benefits to confidence:

- **Positive Perception:** Confident people are often perceived as capable, trustworthy, and competent. This perception can open doors to opportunities in personal and professional life.

- **Better Decision-Making:** Confidence helps individuals make decisions with clarity and conviction because they trust their abilities and knowledge.

- **Resilience:** Confident people are more likely to bounce back from setbacks and failures, believing they have the strength to overcome challenges.

- **Influence and Leadership:** Confidence inspires others to believe in you, and effective leadership often stems from the ability to inspire confidence in others.

- **Self-Motivation:** Confident individuals are more likely to take risks, push boundaries, and grow personally and professionally.

Confidence is not an innate trait that some people are born with and others lack. It is a dynamic quality that evolves over time, shaped by various experiences and influences.

How Confidence Develops



Building confidence is a lifelong process that begins early in life. The journey to confidence involves several stages, each of which plays a critical role in shaping one's self-assurance.

1. **Early Childhood (0–5 years old)**

Confidence begins in infancy, where the foundational experiences of safety and trust are established. Children who are securely attached to their caregivers develop a sense of self-worth, which forms the foundation of their confidence. Positive reinforcement, such as praise for accomplishments and encouragement to explore their environment, helps build a child's belief in their abilities.

2. **School Years (5–12 years old)**

As children enter school, they develop cognitive, emotional, social, and physical skills that further shape their confidence. The mastery of new academic skills, social interactions, and physical activities plays a significant role in building self-esteem. Learning to solve problems and manage responsibilities also contributes to a growing sense of self-assurance. There was a mid-30s guy who came to me and said that he lacked confidence. When we backtracked his journey, he remembered a turning point when he was 6 or 7 years old when his uncles labeled him with names he never liked. He said that was when he lost his confidence.

3. **Adolescence (13–18 years old)**

Teenagers face a unique challenge in developing confidence as they navigate the complexities of identity formation, social relationships, and emotional growth. During this period, young people begin to define

who they are, which plays a significant role in building long-term confidence. Academic achievements, social interactions, and sports can provide opportunities to demonstrate competence and build confidence in one's abilities. Teenagers also try to navigate their energy through their parents. Parents' roles change during this time and can create stronger patterns that influence beliefs, whether positive or negative, which mature into future mind patterns. This period often shapes how they view themselves and the world. For instance, one young person I worked with had been bullied by a coach, but his father played a key role in helping him rebuild his life. This is a time when parents and coaches must remain observant, understanding how their words and actions impact the developing mind. I observed a 16-year-old client who had lost confidence, and through careful observation of his language, I noticed he was reinforcing negativity in his own self-talk. This was a pattern he had created over time, leading to a loss of confidence. Observation is crucial.

4. **Young Adulthood (18–30 years old)**

During young adulthood, individuals take on greater responsibilities in work, education, and relationships. As they face new challenges and make life-defining decisions, they develop a more mature form of confidence, based on their ability to navigate these challenges. The experiences of learning from mistakes and successes during this period lay the foundation for greater self-trust and personal growth. If the above factors have been positively

shaped, a strong mindset is created by now. They will know how to increase focus, become accountable, and accept feedback as a tool for growth. If these lessons have not been learned yet, the individual must make a conscious effort to learn, whether through reading, coaching, or self-development.

The Impact of Overconfidence: A Lesson from Basketball

One particular experience stands out in my coaching journey. I was coaching a team of adult basketball players, ranging in age from 16 to 30. To assess their mindset and connection to their performance, I asked the team a simple question: "How many of you believe in the power of connecting your mind and heart to achieve your goals?" Sadly, only one player raised his hand. This lack of connection left me questioning how to communicate the power of aligning mind and heart.

During practice, I asked the head coach to show me the team's best player. He pointed out Nihan, who immediately expressed high levels of confidence. When I asked him how many successful shots he would make in one minute if I gave him a task to shoot 20 attempts, he confidently answered, "21." His answer left me stunned. I knew that he was overly confident, but I didn't want to discourage him. I believed his overconfidence might be masking the reality of his true abilities. When the task was completed, he managed to make only 7 out of 15 attempts, equating to a 50% success rate—far from the 21 shots he confidently predicted.

At that moment, I realized that Nihan's confidence was not rooted in self-awareness or an honest assessment of his skills.

Instead, it was an overblown, potentially manipulative belief in his own abilities. This led me to share with the team that aligning their mind with their heart is essential for setting realistic and achievable goals. If you fail to honestly assess your abilities, overconfidence can blind you to your true potential and cause you to underperform.

The Dangers of Overconfidence

Overconfidence can be harmful in many areas of life, particularly in decision-making. When an individual has an exaggerated sense of their abilities, it can lead to several negative outcomes:

- **Poor Decision-Making:** Overconfidence can cloud judgment, leading to unrealistic assumptions, incomplete information, or the belief that success is guaranteed.

- **Ignoring Feedback:** Overconfident individuals may ignore constructive criticism, stunting their growth and learning potential.

- **Damaged Relationships:** The arrogance associated with overconfidence can strain relationships with peers and mentors, as it makes collaboration difficult.

- **Failure to Prepare:** When someone is overly confident, they may skip necessary preparation, assuming that success will come easily. This often leads to failure.

- **Underestimating Challenges:** Overconfidence can lead to the underestimation of potential difficulties, resulting in poor performance and unnecessary struggles.

The eventual outcome of overconfidence is often a significant drop in performance when faced with real challenges.

Building Ethical Confidence

To break free from manipulative overconfidence, individuals need to adopt a more authentic and ethical approach to building confidence. Here are several strategies:

1. **Start respecting yourself and your talents:** This is how you connect the skill as a gift from above and hold humility closer to your heart, leaving pride, ego, and everything else behind. There was a cricketer who came to me with the desire to buy a Ferrari. But when he connected with his heart and mind, he transformed into a true legend, and the Ferrari flew out the window. It was never there anymore, and he began to appreciate the sport more deeply.
2. **Embrace Self-Awareness and Humility:** Understand your strengths and areas for growth. This self-awareness is the foundation of genuine confidence. This is where you become your own coach and identify areas to grow by creating strong baselines. Recognizing both strengths and weaknesses is crucial for fostering an authentic sense of self-worth.
3. **Adopt a Growth Mindset:** A growth mindset encourages resilience and adaptability. When you connect with your core through meditation, breathing, and other mindful practices, you develop discipline. Consistently applying these practices will help you grow mentally and emotionally. This foundation allows you to face challenges with a sense of calm and clarity.
4. **Seek Constructive Feedback:** Use feedback to improve, rather than

defending your ego. Constructive criticism helps build a more accurate sense of self. This is also a transformation of your mindset. Accept feedback not just as a suggestion, but as a valuable opportunity for growth. When you agree with your mind to work on feedback with a specific deadline to revalidate, you will truly understand the value of this gift.

5. **Build Emotional Resilience:**

Emotional resilience is key to coping with setbacks and failures. It allows you to bounce back stronger and more capable. I was coaching a tennis player who would get angry and distracted by spectators. We had to work together on understanding his triggers and the kind of words he needed to hear. Over days and weeks, we framed new strategies to rebuild his mental strength. Meditation played an essential role in helping him regain focus.

6. **Surround Yourself with Support:**

Engage with people who motivate you and hold you accountable to your goals. This is crucial. There was a kid who was not progressing as expected, and he shared how his teammates often talked about their average performances. It's essential to associate with people who reflect the outcome you want to achieve. Surround yourself with those who inspire and push you toward growth.

Conclusion

Confidence is not something that can be faked or manufactured through inflated beliefs or manipulative tactics. It must be built on a foundation of self-awareness, continuous learning, and ethical behavior. True confidence is a reflection of one's abilities, values, and mindset, cultivated over time through experiences, feedback, and resilience. By aligning the mind and heart, individuals can develop authentic, ethical confidence that will carry them toward their goals and beyond.

Remember, the path to true confidence requires consistent effort, humility, and an openness to feedback. Only then can you break free from the trap of overconfidence and develop the mindset that truly leads to success.

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