

the gall to ask the question ‘why not?’ This person can easily be you. Dare to believe in the strength that you have, because you do actually have it.

Exercises

Exercise 1: The diamond I am

One of my favourite motivational exercises is as follows. I ask a person to tell me who they are, what they love and hate, what their dreams and ambitions are, what they have achieved and what they are most proud of. Then I instruct them to think of themselves as a diamond, much as we did earlier in this chapter. Then I ask them their name. Rather than just saying for instance ‘I’m James Elliot’, the instruction here is to instead say something like, ‘I am *the* James Elliot, the one and only, the authentic individual, the man pushing forward towards his own goals, doing what only he can do, in only the way he can do it, and understanding that this is what makes him the rare and precious diamond he is.’ Sounds silly, but it works. It really, really works. From Olympians, to Special Forces, to people with all types of troubles, the same is true for everyone who comes to me as a client: the most important part is that they appreciate themselves, and that they verbally enforce this to themselves. Give it a go and repeat the exercise every time you feel the need to boost your Confidence pillar.

Exercise 2: Write a letter to yourself

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As discussed earlier when we talked about impostor syndrome, dismissing your brilliance is common. There are several reasons for this, among them the cultural implication that being really proud of who you are is often mislabelled as 'arrogance'. But it isn't at all, and the reason people are so willing to quickly label you as 'arrogant' for being proud of something you've done is because your achievement might be a reflection of their lack of success. There is a wonderful line from the series *Blackadder Goes Forth* (the one in the trenches with the incredibly powerful ending), where Lieutenant George reveals some unbelievably good paintings that he has made, and Blackadder says, 'But, George, these are brilliant, why didn't you tell us about these before?' George responds, 'Well, you know, one doesn't like to blow one's own trumpet' and Blackadder says, 'You might at least have told us you had a trumpet.' This quick wit is a nod to this conditioning, which is a particularly British thing. We undersell ourselves, don't consider our achievements and growth, and that conditioning is most prevalent in our own heads.

To get you started on unlearning this conditioning, write a letter to your younger self. I love giving clients this exercise as homework because it plays a key role in building confidence and brings them closure. You need to pick a point in time when you felt at your lowest, broken and beaten by life, when you couldn't see a way out. Now, be the person you needed in your life at that time. Tell your younger self about who they will become. Tell them about all the brilliant things that have happened, the things you've achieved, the stumbling blocks, the fulfilled dreams and the missed chances, the ups and downs, victories and losses. Tell them how this shaped who you are now, and that all of it led to this person, this diamond, that you are today.

Write with detail, gusto, momentum and authenticity.

Don't care about spelling or grammar, just write what's in your heart. This can be a very emotional process. It can be triggering, you could cry or be angry or remorseful, but ultimately, you will be proud of yourself at the end.

The point of this exercise is for you to realise that you are so much more than how you perceive yourself. You are more than your trauma, your pain and suffering, your loss, your regrets. That is not who you are. Instead, see the brilliance that's inside you. You are a force of nature. You are designed to grow, to fill a space and to explore. Tell your younger self this, and see what happens.

Exercise 3: Thought court

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, we can define anxiety as a simple mathematic equation of overestimating the likelihood of the worst-case scenario multiplied by underestimating our ability to cope. This really comes down to confidence, because as discussed earlier, we tend to underestimate ourselves regularly.

The key here is to learn to look at this equation as objectively as possible. Instead of the worst thing that could happen, let's look at the likeliest thing to happen. I would like to introduce you to an exercise that I call 'the thought court'. The thought court is an imaginary court of justice that you create in your mind. In this court, I would like you to put your negative thought processes on trial, and place yourself in the role of the lawyer trying to convince a jury that the negative thought is incorrect. You need to be as objective and persuasive as possible in your role in the court, otherwise you will not convince the jury, so you need to come up with real,

factual and tangible evidence to persuade them. So, in this situation that you're facing, what is the actual, real-life, most likely thing that is going to happen? Doesn't this scenario actually make more sense than the doom scenario you were picturing before? Isn't it objectively more likely to happen this way instead? Then, think about your own abilities. Isn't there plenty of evidence already to show that you are actually quite capable of dealing with whatever the likeliest outcome is? Haven't you proven yourself already through countless other challenges to be tough, resilient and competent? So why would it be different this time?

You will soon realise that the previous scenario you were fearing is not very likely at all to happen, and that you are in any case completely able to deal with whatever will come at you. Case dismissed.

Summary

Developing confidence is a really difficult thing to do. What it means to each of us is so subjective, and our negative internal dialogue can rip it down. We all have unique experiences and circumstances in life, and because life is not a level playing field, building confidence isn't either. But for you do to be resilient, you need to have confidence. Confidence will help you face challenges and handle adversity. It will help turn surviving into thriving. We need to believe that we have the capabilities to manage whatever is thrown at us. We need to believe in who we are, in what we are – flaws included. No diamond is perfect, and neither are you. But a diamond's flaws and inclusions are what make it unique and it is beautiful because of it, not in spite of it. See yourself as a whole, and celebrate all your qualities.

You can develop your confidence by interrogating your

negative thought patterns, celebrating your wins, never comparing your achievements to others, and actively practising self-belief. Keep telling yourself you are capable, and the more you do so, the more you will start believing in yourself, and the more resilient you will become.