

Stop Self-Doubt in Its Tracks and Build Self-Confidence

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Way too many people walk through life carrying the heavy weight of self-doubt. Deep down, they fear that they are missing some essential quality that would make them truly successful socially (worthy of love) or in other aspects of life (e.g. professionally, sports). They worry about friends and loved ones leaving them; or thinking less of them because of something they've done or failed to do. They feel down on themselves, lacking the self-confidence and assertiveness to accomplish, or appreciate meeting, goals.

If either of these describe you, it's important to understand that you don't just feel this way. You actively maintain these painful experiences and self-perceptions through the ways that you think. Believe it or not, this is good news. It offers you a way to feel better about yourself... by changing how you think and relate to yourself.

Three ways you maintain low self-confidence are with selective attention, selective memory, and selective interpretation. I explain what each of these are in detail below; along with how to recognize the ways that they hurt you and how to change for the better.

Selective attention: People who are insecure often only notice situations or feedback that confirms their lack of value. They often downplay their strengths – *Oh, anyone could have painted that.* And they barely notice other people's appreciation of them.

Think about it: Is this something you do? Consider the past week. Did you tend to pay attention to things that show you lack value or make you feel inadequate?

Choose to attend to more positive feedback about you: Choose to consciously listen for positive feedback. You will be inclined to minimize the importance of it. For now, that's okay. The important step here is to recognize that it exists.

Selective memory: Another way that people keep themselves feeling unloved or inadequate is that they fail to remember evidence of them being worthwhile or successful people. They can't remember anything particularly

good that they did; and don't remember any meaningful positive feedback – which is easy to do if you have selective attention.

Think back over the last week: In what ways did people show that they appreciate and care about you? (Maybe they texted just to say hi.) What good things have you accomplished? (Professionally, it can be as small as listing and organizing your to-dos. Socially, it can be as simple as smile and be friendly to others.)

To help with remembering the positive, look at your calendar; recall each day; jog your memory. It can be helpful to keep notes daily that you look over at the end of the week.

Selective interpretation: When you believe that you aren't truly capable or worth of love, it's easy to interpret everything in that light. Your partner is tired at the end of the day, so he must not really want to be with you. Your supervisor returned your report with suggestions for making changes; so she must not be happy with your work. What you fail to recognize is that your way of making sense of these situations may be more about your insecurity than them not caring or thinking positively of your work.

Ask yourself: Is there another way to make sense of what's happening? If they did care or value your efforts, how would you make sense of their actions? You might even want to share your concerns and directly ask if you are right. With your partner, you might say, "You seem quiet and withdrawn every night after work. Are you bored with us? Or, are you angry with me?" With your supervisor, you might say, "I appreciate your feedback and will make those changes to my report. But I'm wondering if I think I'm essentially on track or whether there are specific areas where I should be working to improve." (This approach has the distinct advantage of offering you the possibility of praise or direct feedback about how you can improve and be even better at report writing.)

Greater awareness of how you feed your insecurity may not make it go away, but it will loosen its grip on you. You can then build more security and confidence by actively choosing to attend to, remember, and think more positively about feedback. However, this takes effort and a willingness to challenge yourself. I can almost guarantee that if you approach this exercise seriously (e.g. complete it on a regular basis, write about it in a journal, talk with a trusted friend about it), you will get in some inner wrestling matches. It will be a struggle. But, with time, effort, and persistence, you will leave self-doubt behind as you walk forward in your life with confidence.

Full website reference:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/making-change/201212/stop-self-doubt-in-its-tracks-and-build-self-confidence>