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Introduction

Want to transform your life and have astounding levels of confidence? The good news is that you can. Because no matter how much or how little confidence you have, you can always have more.

It's a myth that most people are confident. In fact, *many* people report that they would like to feel more confident. People who appear confident may still feel nervous inside. People who are confident at work may be shy when it comes to dating; people who are confident at parties may feel panicky giving presentations. So if you would like to be more confident, you're in good company.

Confidence is not something that you are born either with or without. Confidence is not an all-or-nothing personality trait that you're stuck with for life. We are all capable of feeling more confident. We can nurture and develop our confidence at any age by adopting new behaviors and strategies. Best of all, you already have all the resources that you need—my job in writing this book is to help you to discover those resources within yourself.

Maybe you are looking to develop your confidence in your personal life or at work. Perhaps you just need more confidence in a particular situation, such as speaking in front of an audience or facing up to a colleague, asking someone on a date, or making an impact during interviews. Or maybe you crave more confidence in several areas of your life. You may be only mildly

worried by certain situations or stricken by paralyzing fears. From the boardroom to the bedroom, this book is filled with proven techniques and exercises for boosting your confidence.

This Stuff Works!

To help you become your best, most confident self, I have packed this book with techniques, tips, and scientifically proven exercises. I have drawn on the best from fields including cognitive behavioral therapy, sport psychology, neuro-linguistic programming, and positive psychology. Some of this stuff is so cutting-edge, you could get paper cuts simply turning the pages. Don't worry if that sounds like so much gobbledygook—take it on trust that I've scoured the worlds of academia, business, and life coaching to bring you only stuff that works.

That's because I have been frustrated in recent years that there are books on confidence that simply do not deliver results. I'm afraid there are frauds and quacks who tout fluffy, frivolous ideas that do not have a lasting impact on confidence. Sure, some of their techniques may feel good for days or even weeks—but do they deliver long-term benefits? No. Well, this book is different.

Take note throughout the book of one-off “Take Action” exercises, as well as “Confidence Booster” techniques that you will want to use again and again. Using these, you will learn not only how to project a more confident image, but also how to change the way you think and feel about yourself and the world. The result? You will build a profound and lasting confidence to deal with just about anything that life could throw at you. If you put your trust in Dr. Rob, I won't let you down.

A Personal Story

I wholeheartedly believe that confidence can be built. And I speak as both a psychologist and someone who used to suffer from crippling fears. When I was younger, I was so petrified of public speaking to even a handful of people that I felt physically sick—I literally used to retch as if I were going to throw up. I was so scared that I used to pretend I was ill to get out of doing it. But I've since trained myself to love speaking to audiences of many hundreds of people at a time. And as I sometimes appear on TV, on programs ranging from BBC shows to CNN and *Big Brother*, I now get the biggest buzz from being in the spotlight on live television in front of millions of people.

But I wouldn't say that I'm anything special. I'm an ordinary person who used to suffer from a lack of confidence but applied some techniques to boost it. My message: If I can do it, so can you.

Get Involved

By using this book, you'll learn how to lift your confidence quickly. No matter what your state of mind, I guarantee that investing a few minutes every day on the tools within this book will act like a shot of steroids to your confidence. Almost immediately, you will feel more relaxed and energized. And in the long-term, you will develop such unassailable levels of jut-jawed confidence that you will be able to handle just about *anything*.

BUT—and here’s the but—to get the most out of this book, you can’t just read it and set it aside. You have to *do* the exercises and *use* the techniques. This book can transform your levels of confidence and help you to achieve a more satisfying and successful life. But only if you put in the work! A football coach trains and advises a team but ultimately has to trust the players to deliver on the football field. So think of me as your confidence coach. My job is to offer you the latest in scientifically proven techniques and exercises. But you are the one who has to go out on the football pitch of your own life.

Feel free to work through this book at your own pace. Whether you want to race through it all at once, take the journey more leisurely, or flick backwards and forwards between interesting chapters, the choice is yours. But reading and appreciating how the ideas in this book might work for people in general is not the same as applying them in your own life. So make sure you do the fun interactive activities and exercises. You need to do the thinking, put pen to paper, take action.

Understanding the principles is not the same as using them. So each time you come across an exercise, please complete it before you move on. Each time you learn a new technique, find the time to use it in your everyday life. The more you participate with this book, refer to it, scribble your thoughts in the margins, highlight passages that jump out at you, and note techniques you want to try again and again, the more your confidence will swell. Don’t just read—get involved.

Life-Long Confidence *and* Immediate Needs

I've divided this book into two parts. Part 1 takes you on a journey to build a sense of confidence that will see you through the rest of your life. You will understand how to enhance your confidence, no matter how little of it you currently have. You will work through exercises to open your eyes to untapped strengths and personal resources. You will learn tricks to apply in all sorts of situations, not only to appear more self-assured but also to create a confident mindset.

Part 2 is different because it tackles in greater detail the common situations that many people find daunting. Perhaps you need to stand up and speak in front of a crowd or wow interviewers and get yourself a new job. Maybe you want to fuel your confidence before meeting new people at a party or at work. Or you may be thinking of making a change in your life. If any of that applies to you, Part 2 will help you to get what you want.

Time to Get Started

I would wish you good luck, but you don't need luck. Your fate is within your control. Success depends only on your decision to use the tools within this book. Do the work, and you will gain the confidence. It really is that simple. So enjoy the book and drop me an email to let me know how you get on.

Anyway, are you ready to get going? Let's kick off our journey to craft the new, more confident you.

Dr. Rob Yeung
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Confident Public Speaking and Presentations

Surveys show that more people are scared of having to speak in public than are scared of snakes, spiders, and getting on a plane put together! And I used to be one of them too.

I used to be so worried about speaking in public that I felt physically sick. My stomach churned and I thought I was going to throw up. But I trained myself to get over the nerves. I now give pretty good presentations (and get invited to do so by organizations ranging from colleges and universities to big corporations) and get an enormous buzz out of it as well.

One of the biggest reasons why people lack confidence when speaking is because they haven't done enough preparation—but you have to know the *right* sort of preparation to do. A big part of being confident on the big day comes from knowing that everything that *should* go right *will* go right.

Perhaps you need to deliver a speech as the best man or matron of honor. Maybe you need to deliver a project update to your colleagues. Or you need to win over a new client with a clever presentation. Whatever the speech you're giving, work through these seven steps to help yourself shine.

1 Find Out Exactly What You Need to Do

Your preparation starts by finding out exactly what you are being asked to do.

- **Who will the audience be?** If someone asks you to give a short presentation to “the senior managers,” are they talking about the handful of senior managers within your department or the 237 senior managers from all over the U.S.? Be careful not to

make any assumptions about your audience. The more you know about them, the better you can prepare.

- **How long are you being asked to speak for?** Don't let anyone wave you aside with vague instructions such as "Oh, just say a few words, whatever you like." Get a firm steer on when you should shut up.
- **What is your audience looking to hear?** Consider what the audience is looking for. Guests at a wedding don't want to listen to long-winded speeches all night. They'd probably appreciate a shorter speech so they can get back to the celebrations! If speaking on a work topic, figure out exactly what the audience is coming to hear—are they looking for information or inspiration or a combination of the two?
- **What should the tone of your speech be?** Say you're speaking at a birthday party. Can you be risqué for close friends or strictly PG-rated for the sake of the elderly grandmother or younger nephews and nieces? Speaking to clients, should your tone be professional and formal or friendly and informal?
- **Where will you be speaking?** It makes a difference. If you're speaking in a marquee pitched in someone's back garden, consider whether you'll have a microphone or will have to rely on the strength of your voice to make yourself heard to 200 guests. If you're speaking at a conference, will you have access to a computer and projector or simply be expected to keep the audience's attention with nothing more than a microphone?

Never be afraid to ask lots of questions. Better to get clear guidance on what you need to deliver than be too afraid to ask and give a speech that misses the mark.

2 Engage the Passion of Your Personal Perspective

Okay, what are you going to say? Start jotting down your thoughts. Have a one-person brainstorm. Write words or phrases that come to mind on the topic or people you need to speak about. Don't discount anything. Get it all down, as what appears to be a hare-brained idea could spark off a better one.

The longer you spend capturing thoughts and ideas, the better you will feel. As you get your ideas on paper, you will start to see patterns or themes to link together. Don't expect answers to come to you immediately. Just be happy to collect together thoughts, ideas, examples, questions, websites, quotations, case studies, diagrams, charts, pictures, and anecdotes. The more widely you think and read, the more likely you are to be struck by inspiration.

But the best source of material could be *you*. If you're giving a speech or presentation, you may already know a lot about the bride and groom, the community housing project, the dearly deceased, the client proposal, or whatever you need to talk about. The best speeches often stem from a personal perspective. An audience is more likely to engage with a speaker who talks from the heart. Use the following questions to create a unique starting point for your speech:

- What's your personal experience of the topic (or person you're speaking about)?
- What frustrates you about this topic?
- What do you enjoy about it?
- What's the weirdest/saddest/funniest/stupidest thing you ever heard about this topic?

- What do (or would) your grandparents or a 5-year-old child think about it?

It could be an interesting twist to start your speech with what you used to believe about marriage when you were 6 years old. Or to begin by sharing what your grandmother would make of your company's financial difficulties.

3 Craft Your Speech Structure

Right, you have a bunch of examples, ideas, and anecdotes that you want to talk about. Next you need to assemble them in an order that helps your audience to make sense of them. Imagine if someone presents you with the letters H E P S E and C. Doesn't make sense, does it? But now consider if they were presented in the order S P E E C H.

Think about these ways to order your speech:

- **A chronological order.** Talk about what happened in the past, what's happening in the present, and then what could or should happen in the future. A chronological order is straightforward, and you won't lose anyone as you give your talk.
- **An acronym or word.** This can provide a structure to what otherwise seems a random collection of ideas. SWOT is a popular word for talking through strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. But why not create your own? For example, "I'll talk you through the SURE model—the Scale of the problem, its Urgency, our Response, and I'll finish by Eliciting questions."

- **Theory followed by practice.** Start with the theory and then describe the practice. For example, “The theory about marriage is that you find someone you love and then propose. But I’m going to tell you the horrible truth about what happened to John and Laura in practice!”
- **Problem followed by solution.** State a problem, and then guide your audience to the solution. For example, “I’m going to describe the three problems that are causing us financial grief and then talk about possible solutions for tackling each of them.”

Don’t forget about visual aids. Having something for people to look at while they listen to you is a great way to take some of the pressure off you. Be as daring or conservative as you like—visual aids can be whatever you want. Projecting slides on to a screen can draw the audience’s attention away from you and remind you of what to say. You could whip out a poster-sized photo of the birthday boy or girl aged 18 months to a round of “ahhhh.” You could brandish a copy of your company’s annual report as you talk about the pressures that your team faces.

4 Practice, Practice, Practice!

Psychologists talk about the need to practice “outputting” as well as “inputting” a speech. Sitting quietly and reading your notes (inputting) pushes it into your brain. But you need to practice speaking it out loud (outputting) so you can pull it out of your brain too.

But I’m not talking about any old way to speak it out loud. They say that practice makes perfect, but I disagree. Because only

perfect practice makes perfect performance on the big day. The more you simulate the conditions in which you need to give your speech, the more you will get out of your practice. If the actual presentation needs to be delivered while standing up, then stand while you practice. Project the slides behind you if you're using them. Rehearse out loud and at the right volume as if a packed audience is in front of you.

It's up to you how much you want to rely on notes. Read your notes if you need to do it that way—even famous business leaders, presidents, and prime ministers sometimes read out their speeches. But practice your speech enough so that you don't have to rely on notes for every word. If you look up occasionally and make eye contact with your audience, you show that you know what you're talking about. Even better if you can reduce your notes down to a handful of bullet points on a sheet of paper. Every time you run through your speech, you will learn a bit more and need to rely on your notes a little less. If you want to be good, be sure to practice. If you want to be great, practice a lot.

5 Sort Out the Practical Stuff

Having something go wrong on the big day itself won't do much for your confidence. So it pays to think ahead. To ensure that your speech goes smoothly, consider the following:

- Do you know exactly where the venue is and how to get there? Don't arrive dripping with sweat because you didn't leave enough time and had to sprint up three flights of stairs to find the right room!

- Are you happy with the audiovisual equipment? Do you know how to operate the microphone, laptop, and slide projector? And who can help if it breaks down?
- Do you know where the bathroom is for that last-minute comfort break?
- Can you get a glass of water in case your mouth goes dry?

6 Calm Your Mind and Body

Even when we know our material, the voice in our heads—that darned inner critic—can still torture our thoughts. However, the following Confidence Boosters are especially powerful for tackling pre-speech worries:

- Well before your speech, start visualizing success (see “Using the Movie Screen in Your Head” on pages 56–57) to get your mind used to the idea that you can do it.
- If you experience stabs of panic about speaking, use the FACADe Confidence Booster (see “Giving Form to Your Thoughts” on pages 41–42). Challenge the automatic negative thoughts (ANTs) in your head, and you will see that many of your worries are unrealistic.
- Prior to the big day, create capability-affirming thoughts (see “Creating Your Cool CATs” on page 38) to repeat in the final minutes before you deliver your speech.
- A half-hour or so before your speech, find an empty office, dressing room, or even restroom stall and do a vocal warm-up (see “Performing Vocal Gymnastics” on page 114–115). And check that you are breathing in a natural, relaxed fashion too (see “Diaphragmatic Breathing” on page 105) .

7 Be Entertaining *and* Educational

Okay, time to step up and deliver what you need to say. This final step is a reminder that all audiences are looking not only to be informed but also entertained. No matter how dry or technical your topic, you can make it more enjoyable by allowing your personality to come through. So smile, use hand gestures to illustrate key points, and think about your body language (see Chapter 4). If you look like you're having a good time, your audience is more likely to have one too.

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