

3 Questions to Know If You're Truly Confident

Don't discount the importance of self-compassion.

"To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance," Oscar Wilde said. It might be the beginning of lifelong happiness, too. Studies from pioneers in positive psychology, including Edward Diener, Ph.D., and Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D., have found a strong link between confidence and happiness. Even globally, in collectivist countries that value group identity over individual ones, healthy self-esteem has been found to be a major predictor of life satisfaction. But the quality-over-quantity adage stands when it comes to self-esteem. Give your well-being a boost by asking yourself these three questions to determine the quality of your confidence.

Does your confidence have conditions?

If your sense of self-worth relies on your relationship status, job, income or weight, your confidence is conditional, says Elizabeth Lombardo, Ph.D., author of *A Happy You: Your Ultimate Prescription for Happiness*. Conditional confidence works well when those conditions are met (you got the promotion or you fit into your skinny jeans), but when your situation changes, so does your self-esteem and emotional well-being. What happens if you gain a few pounds or you're let go from a job? You're back at square one without the self-love to help you bounce back.

Work on building unconditional self-worth instead, Lombardo says. "Unconditional confidence is based on applying your values and strengths and appreciating the life you create by doing so." Is your life—your work, the way you spend your free time, the people you hang out with—aligned with your values? If not, bring them together because that's where unconditional confidence begins.

Are you confident in some areas but not others?

It's normal to be a confident athlete but decidedly unconfident when it comes to public speaking. Or maybe you're sure of yourself at work but self-conscious in social situations. That's OK. You don't have to be confident with everything. In fact, people who act sure of themselves in all situations are probably either faking it or overestimating their abilities. Being secure in your innate worth as a person, even if you're terrible at tennis or shy at parties, is what matters. True confidence, according to Glenn R.

Schiraldi, Ph.D., author of *The Self-Esteem Workbook*, is an “honest, appreciative opinion” of yourself that accounts for your strengths and weaknesses.

So how does that translate to happiness? People who believe in their innate worth “strive for excellence with less pressure or fear of failure, since coming up short of a goal does not diminish who they are as a person,” Schiraldi says. When you aren’t afraid of failure, you try more new things and pursue more goals than people who are.

Do you believe in other people’s innate worth?

True confidence is not just about your estimation of yourself. It’s also about how you value others. “People who are high in healthy self-esteem are also high in healthy humility,” Schiraldi says. “They recognize that all people are valuable and have much to learn.” And valuing other people for all of their strengths and weaknesses is how social bonds are sparked and solidified. The people you associate with and appreciate every day—your friends, family, neighbors and co-workers—are the cornerstones of happiness.