

## Q "Help! My self-esteem needs a boost!"

Sick of self-doubt? You're in good company: As many as 92% of American women say they lack confidence in certain situations. Luckily, top experts promise it's never been easier to feel more self-assured all day, every day!

### 1 Rev self-assurance with your mind!

The biggest confidence-busting culprit? Negative self-talk, say experts Sherry Gaba, L.C.S.W., and Keith Johnson. Here, discover how to change your thinking:

#### Nix negativity with visualization!

The next time you can't stop beating yourself up, sit quietly for five minutes and picture a loved one's face, says Gaba. British researchers found that this spurs your brain to produce more oxytocin, a bonding hormone that helps fire up feelings of self-worth! Plus, just reminding yourself of someone who believes in you will soothe away anxiety.

#### Ask yourself this question!

"What's easy for me that's difficult for everyone else?" Whether it's your baking skills, knitting prowess or computer savvy, pinpoint the areas where you excel. Doing so powers up your ego and doubles your confidence, one study found. Stumped? Call your closest friend and ask her what your biggest strengths are; hearing them from another person can make you believe them! Also helpful: Write down a list of your successes. Seeing your accomplishments in black and white can spur you to achieve even more!

#### Bring out your inner coach!

And quash your inner critic! It's as simple as changing your internal dialogue from "I can't" to "I can"! The way you talk to yourself is so powerful, it can be the difference between success and failure, says Johnson. Consider: In a recent study, volunteers who told themselves they could complete a complicated puzzle did so in half the time as those who worried they couldn't do it!



### 2 Use your body to undo uncertainty!

Adopting the right body language can take you from a feeling of doubt to one of empowerment! Here, Johnson and Gaba's advice for moving your way to a more confident you:

#### Nod to believe in yourself!

During any important conversation, try nodding your head a few times as you're speaking. Researchers found this simple movement boosts your belief in what you're saying, increasing your self-esteem by as much as 30%!

#### Tilt your head back!

Angling your face slightly upward changes your thought process by signaling your brain that you're feeling upbeat. As a result, it produces more confidence-boosting hormones! And a slightly raised chin is a sign of pride, showing others that you are self-assured.

#### Perfect a powerful posture!

One study reveals that keeping a straight spine and holding your shoulders back enhances your belief in yourself! It may be that slouching signals your brain that you're depressed, while keeping your spine straight tells it that you're more assured—triggering you to act that way.

### 3 Instant self-esteem boosters!

Need a quick dose of confidence? Johnson and nutritionist Lona Sandon share how to fire yourself up fast:

#### Feel empowered with pasta!

Sandon says taking in the right nutrients can make a huge difference in your confidence level. And whenever she's got an important event coming up, she piles her plate high with pasta



#### Slip on shades!

Wearing sunglasses delivers a quick confidence boost! Shielding your eyes prevents people from seeing your true emotions, leaving your feeling less vulnerable, scientists explain.

and other carb-rich foods! Carbs send your production of the "happy" chemical serotonin soaring—and studies prove the better your mood, the more likely you are to trust yourself!

#### Bolster yourself by wearing blue!

Ever wonder why so many company logos are done in this hue? Extensive color research shows that it inspires confidence! In fact, it's so effective that when the insurance company Aflac changed over to a blue logo, their sales doubled. Blue's secret? Looking at any shade of it increases the

number of mood-lifting alpha brain waves, which tamps down doubts and boosts your faith in yourself.

#### Be fearless with peppermint gum!

The scent of peppermint stimulates activity in the pleasure center of your brain—which helps nix racing, negative thoughts. Plus, research reveals that the chewing action lowers your levels of confidence-wrecking stress by 16%!

—Jennifer Leonard

### Our expert panel



**Sherry Gaba, L.C.S.W.**, is a psychotherapist who specializes in women's issues. She helps clients define their life purpose by developing an action plan and has appeared as an expert on VH1's *Celebrity Rehab*.



**Keith "The Confidence Coach" Johnson** has trained more than 127,000 leaders on how to maximize their potential. He's also the author of *The Confidence Solution: Reinvent Your Life, Explode Your Business, Skyrocket Your Income*.



**Lona Sandon, M.E.d., R.D.**, is an assistant professor of nutrition at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. She was the 2010 chair of the American Dietetic Association's Nutrition Educators of Health Professions dietetics practice group.

