

Urban Putty

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Confidence in the Workplace!

In its February 1, 2003 edition, *Inc* magazine includes an article entitled, "The New Face of Confidence". Writer Leigh Buchanan interviewed approximately fifty active CEO's, looking for their views on confidence.

After a major self-confrontation he calls "being stripped naked," one CEO reported, "I just feel in my gut every day that I'm going to do the right thing. I have to keep focused on my values and being straightforward and truthful. That's where I derive my confidence now. It's not something I have to pump myself up for."

Another draws confidence from an unexpected source: her employees' loyalty. "During the dot-com boom, I was afraid every day that people were going to leave me for another \$5000 in salary; now I'm sticking by them in tough times and that's increasing their loyalty, which is so important to our future."

Some company founders described confidence as a kind of epiphany that visits them in isolated moments. Others called it a constant source of strength but only in discrete areas. Others say it was a pervasive presence that infused everything they did.

M.B.A. students, notes Buchanan, "Can read financials, but they don't know how to work off sheer guts and willpower."

Another shocking observation from Buchanan: "A check of the indexes of management books at Barnes and Noble turned up no listings for confidence."

While there are a few phrases which some entrepreneurs equate with confidence, like

"perseverance; the knowledge that I will never give up", "the assurance that I am being absolutely honest with myself", "confidence in about one thing: clarity" or "confidence is simply knowing you can make crap happen."

At The Acorn Centre, we view confidence somewhat differently. With respect, when we watch someone walk into our office, we know instantly whether this person is confident, or just putting on an air of confidence to protect an otherwise fragile self-concept.

The person who has already been metaphorically stripped naked metaphorically is almost invariably not putting on any airs, because s/he already knows that that was the way they lived, before the event.

And when we have been stripped naked, and found to be not the real person we thought we were presenting, there is no looking back. No attempt to restore that false front will succeed. This pretense may not be part of our consciousness, but its vibes are available to everyone else.

There are, after the 'stripping,' several more steps to bottom, a level of confidence that is not predicated on performance or on the specific results of conventional success or the approval ratings of others. A transitional question we might ask ourselves goes like this: "Am I reacting to things outside of me or listening to my true self and values from within?"

It is in becoming acquainted with our inner life and voices and becoming comfortable with the gifts of these experiences that we deepen our understanding of ourselves. We then reduce our dependency on the perks of power: education, rank, income, address, title, roles.

At this point, when all the perks have been reduced to their healthy perspective, when we have detached from our 'critical parent

voice' and found our own inner wisdom, and have become comfortable with who we truly are ... then we begin to hear the sound of our fullest voice, in true confidence.

Life's Second Half

In the first half of our lives, we run frenetically after the extrinsic rewards, pasting them energetically on our masks, as our unique way of proving ourselves to ourselves and to those watching from outside.

In the second half of our lives, however, we shift our perspective to the intrinsic rewards of spiritual peace and contentment, to reflection and the wisdom which can only come from becoming willing to accept ourselves fully, even through the gifts of our 'goofs' and our guilt and our shame.

There is profound meaning in all of these nuggets of memory, of trauma and loss, the voice of which seeks to be integrated into our souls. It is only through both an openness to the randomness of these bubblings from below and a growing discipline in reflecting on where we came from, the nature of our births, our parents, our shaping incidents and influences that our soul can and does emerge.

For some, this may look like Phoenix rising from the ashes. However, there is no need to consider ourselves as having been burned to destruction for this process to become incarnate. Many of us are, or have been, living in the unconscious bonds of scarcity and in the expectations of both our critical parents and our harshest task-master, ourselves.

By surrendering these illusory but very real influences, and replacing them with the genuine voices of our inner lives, genuine confidence can be realized. There are no records to be either set or broken; **we are more than enough, right now, with all our baggage, and all our triumphs, and all**

our richly supporting families and friends and associates.

This kind of confidence will never accompany the testosterone / adrenaline / orgiastic rush of the power-trip, the performance high, or the romantic conquest.

One of the reasons that the North American economy is so desperately zooming along with apparently no give in the 'shock-absorbers' of personal, family or corporate lives is this missing ingredient. That is the confidence that comes only from people who can bring it to the table...those who are open to their own wisdom, vulnerabilities, and giftedness, without the protective cover of unconscious insensitivity, insensibility and arrogance.

(If you would like to talk about this, please call us at 1-866-511-4769, or visit our website, theacorncentre.com)