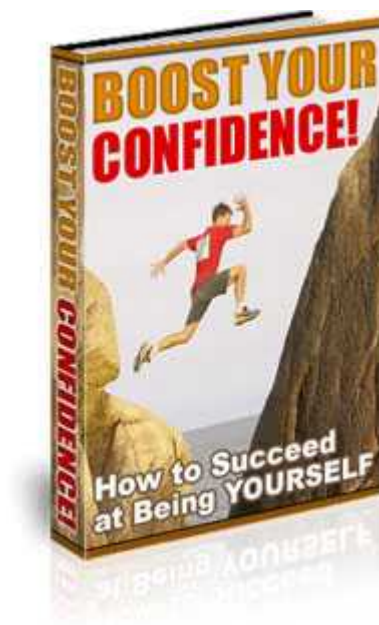


BOOST YOUR CONFIDENCE!

How to Succeed
At Being Yourself



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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Undoubtedly, there are instances wherein all of us wish we could go into a store and ask for “a pound of self-confidence please” (or rather, 500 grams of self-confidence!). And sometimes there are instances when it feels as if we could do anything, deal with any obstacle, take on any task or job. So what then is confidence and how can we obtain some of it when we've run out or just aren't feeling up to par?

Have you ever tried to look at yourself in the mirror and squirmed at your image? If you feel guilty of this habit, then I would recommend you to stop. If you are not contented with yourself, it only shows that you have no self-confidence. If you lack self-confidence, then how do you imagine others to have confidence in you?

Lots of people, old or young, have insecurities about several aspects in their lives. It could be of their physical appearances, speech, lifestyle, behavior, practices, work or even family. Even at interviews, confidence helps you in clinching that job. Consider a situation where two applicants go for the interview where one is confident and certain while the other is an anxious wreck. No rewards for guessing who amazes the interviewer and obtains the job.

Self-confidence is often listed as one of the qualities of effective managers. From your personal experience you can perhaps distinguish the difference between managers with a high level of confidence and those who seem less sure of themselves. Why then would self-confidence be so nearly

related with being effective? It is probably because a person's self-confidence shows confidence in their own decision, and directs others to put their confidence, too, in this judgment. It is also probably because self-confidence is frequently used to overpower the fears, hindrances, opposition and setbacks which can confront the best of plans. People with a high degree of self-confidence are normally more likely to be successful – all other aspects being equal – than those who work in a less confident manner.

It can be as (if not more) significant to take a look at how self-confidence can be weakened or lost as how to gain it. When people are caught out or tripped up that's the time when they will experience de-skilled, disheartened, discouraged, and unconfident. It only takes one incident where someone is humiliated, embarrassed, caught 'napping', quite uncertain what to do next, and any confidence they possess goes right out the window (and then is actually difficult to recover).

It's the complicated or risky circumstances that wear away confidence, and although it might be a beautiful fantasy to imagine going through life escaping such circumstances, it's basically impossible: they're out there prowling, waiting to trip you up anyway.

Once you determine the types of concerns and situations that weaken your confidence, and as importantly, recognize the things you can do to change those scenarios, then you are really on the way to building a stronger, more solid confidence.

Why Do Resolutions to Improve Ourselves

More Likely Fail?

“ There is no value-judgment more important to man – no factor more decisive in his psychological development and motivation – than the estimate he passes on himself.”

- Nathaniel Branden

Many people are frequently placing themselves on some new self-improvement program. They wanted to lose weight, quit smoking, begin exercising, read faster, or start aerobics. When most people enter on such programs, it is because they are discontented with themselves and believe that if they can modify some practices, they will be contented.

The false impression here is in believing that if their external changes, they will feel better on the interior. There is enough truth in that notion to lead them far astray. When they receive honors and degrees, a good feeling *does* complement the accomplishment, and they can conclude that by changing things on the exterior – by giving all the things that other people seem to like – their interior world will change.

But as a matter of fact it works the opposite. Most change begins on the interior and works outward. It starts with self-knowledge and self-enhancement. It has to do with changing our thoughts as well as our lifestyle; and if we can improve the way we think, if we can address ourselves and imagine ourselves differently, then an enormous deal of our behavior will definitely fall into place.

This book aims to provide steps for converting that inner world. Here you will discover simple, useful, logical, time-tested procedures that

thousands of successful people have applied to change self-doubt into self-confidence. Some are daily exercises to build up your self-image; others are laws to fall back on when your self-regard is too reliant on your successes and failures.

This book also discovers the nature of self-confidence and determines some of the ways in which self-confident people work. We will interrogate whether self-confidence is always a positive and helpful trait, and we will look at the relationship between self-confidence and ability. Lastly, we recommend some methods to gaining, developing and building self-confidence.

This book will also teach you how to:

- Build an assurance about your self-worth or self-esteem
- Develop internal strength and capacity
- Develop your uniqueness
- Find a place to outshine
- Help others become more confident
- Improve your self-confidence without falling into the trick of self-worship
- Increase and build your network of love

Changing the way you feel about yourself cannot just happen overnight, and it will not happen without any effort. But it is realistic, and confidence is a product accessible to everyone. Dr. Karl Menninger once wrote, "Fears are educated into us, and they can, if they wish, be educated out."

CHAPTER II

What is Self-Confidence?

“Unwarranted fear is the door that stops progress toward that which we want in life and it is the door that closes on self-confidence.”

- Kevin Hogan

Easy to identify, yet probably difficult to define, conceptualize, and measure – what does self-confidence mean?

One of the main requirements to success, happiness and reaching your goals is confidence. Having enormous self-confidence will also be useful in just about every part of your life. Let's get straight to the point – you were not born with self-confidence, that is, self-confidence is not something innate – this can be taught, nurtured and built over the years, at any stage in life. Confidence is the personal ownership of no one; the person who has it learns it – and goes on learning. Your degree of confidence is truly the outcome of how you perceive yourself - which is eventually how people will perceive you. How people interrelate and respond to you is a reflection of how you perceive yourself. Therefore if you don't have a high degree of self-confidence or a huge deal of self-esteem – then it's mostly because you are concentrating on your negative traits and on what you are doing wrong. In other words, you are being your own worst enemy! The good thing is that you can alter this and improve your self-confidence.

The most talented person on earth has to build confidence in his talents from the foundation of faith and knowledge, like anybody else. The device will be different from one person to the other, but the necessary job is similar. Confidence and attitude are accessible to all of us according to our

skills and requirements – not somebody else’s – as long as we make use of our talents and develop them.

Self-confidence is an approach which lets individuals have positive yet reasonable viewpoints of themselves and their conditions. Self-confident people trust their own skills and abilities, have a general sense of influence in their lives, and believe that, within reason, they will be able to do what they desire, plan, and anticipate.

Having self-confidence does not necessarily mean that people will be able to do everything. Self-confident people do have expectations and standards that are realistic and reasonable. Even if some of their standards are not met, they remain to be positive and to accept themselves.

People who are not self-confident rely extremely on the consent of other people in order to feel good about themselves. They have a tendency to prevent taking risks because they are afraid to fail. They usually do not expect themselves to succeed. They often place themselves down and tend to disregard or overlook remarks and praises paid to them. On the other hand, self-confident people are willing to risk the disapproval of others because they normally believe in their own skills and abilities. They tend to accept themselves; they don't feel they have to conform in order for them to be accepted.

Self-confidence is not essentially a general trait or characteristic which permeates all aspects of a person’s life. Usually, people will have some aspects of their lives where they think they are quite confident, for instance, academics and sports, while at the same time they do not feel confident at

all in other fields, for example, personal appearance, social relationships, among others.

How is Self-Confidence Initially Built?

Several factors have an effect on the improvement of self-confidence. The attitudes of parents are vital to how the children feel about themselves, especially in children's early years. When parents give acceptance, children receive a solid basis for feeling good about themselves. If one or both parents are extremely critical or demanding, or if they are overprotective and if they discourage steps toward self-reliance, children may come to think they are incompetent, insufficient, or inferior. Nevertheless, if parents encourage children's steps toward independence and accept/love their children when they commit mistakes, children will learn to accept themselves and will be on their way to building self-confidence.

Amazingly, lack of self-confidence is not automatically connected to lack of ability. But, it is usually the effect of concentrating too much on the impractical expectations or standards of others, especially parents and society. Influences of friends can be as powerful or more powerful than those of parents and society in determining feelings about one's self. College students re-examine principles and values and reflect on their own identities and thus are particularly vulnerable to the friends' influence.

Self-Confidence and Effectiveness

Self-confidence is frequently related with success. Success leads to self-confidence, and self-confidence frequently appears to lead to success. We should be cautious, however, that we don't over generalize. Other than self-confidence, people generally need particular abilities to be effective and efficient. These differ, depending on the circumstances. They may be technical skills connecting to the specific project or job they are dealing with, or they may be more general skills – such as those of interviewing, providing feedback, or evaluating strengths and weaknesses. In some instances people may be overconfident, or unreasonably self-confident, and this may cause them to ignore difficulties, or they may fall short to spend enough time and effort on preparation or performance.

In order to continue and maintain the right degree of self-confidence is a matter of balance. This may partially be a matter of timing. There are instances to confess to ambiguity, to invite the views and suggestion of others, to admit to lack of knowledge and to research facts. When all this has been done and you have made a judgment, it is time to affirm your situation with confidence and be prepared to justify it.

Self-Confidence and Ability

Self-confidence and ability go together. We are almost certainly to feel confident when we are faced with circumstances we know that we can handle – maybe because we have dealt with them in the past. We are less likely to feel self-confident when we deal with circumstances for the first time, when

we are hesitant of our ability, and we are least likely to feel self-confident when we face circumstances where we know we have little talent, because we have failed in the past. We can see this simple connection: skilled performance results in success and leads to improved self-confidence. In the same way, unskilled performance leads to failure, which may result in decreased self-confidence and lead to even poorer performance on the next occurrence.

Improve Knowledge and Abilities

Generally speaking, the best method to increasing your performance and your self-confidence is to work on improving your knowledge and abilities. For instance, consider the case of Aaron and Chris. Aaron and Chris were both appointed as new members of a safety committee. For a time they both kept fairly quiet in the business meetings and left most of the conversation to the more experienced members. Within four months, however, Aaron had become much more active in asking questions, volunteering information, and even challenging some of the opinions of other members of the committee, whereas Chris still took a back seat, seldom putting forward his opinions, and always in favor with the majority. The main difference between Aaron and Chris was that Aaron had striven hard to collect data on the matters that involved the committee and he would closely always put time into preparing for the business meetings. Chris had not exerted a special effort to learn about the background of the committee, or the technical and legal concerns facing it. He attended the business meetings

and sat through them, without having done much – if any – preparation. As a committee member, Aaron was seen more effective and self-confident. This is not an extraordinary story. We are more effective and hence more self-confident in any circumstances if we have spent the time and effort to learn about it. This learning generally starts with the acquisition of information. At times people do not take the initiative, or will not take the time or effort that is required to learn about what they ought to recognize to be effective and efficient.

Self-Esteem

Part of self-confidence is a general trust in oneself – a liking for oneself – or self-esteem, also referred to as self-worth. American psychologist Eric Berne used common everyday language to illustrate the esteem in which we regard ourselves and others: we may think of ourselves as OK or Not OK. According to Berne, we all go through a stage in our very early lives of low self-esteem – of thinking that we are Not OK. After that we may come to like ourselves more, and hold ourselves with higher esteem – a perception of feeling I'm OK. Berne saw that there were people whose usual position of themselves is I'm OK (i.e. high self-esteem) and then there were those whose usual view is I'm Not OK (i.e. low self-esteem). This level of self-esteem may differ at any one time, depending on the situation. Attaining success in a task or job may increase one's level of self-esteem. Likewise, failure or criticism may have a negative impact. Independent of these situations, some people have a higher customary degree of self-esteem –

hence self-confidence – than others. A significant area of self-esteem can be an ability to recognize between our self and our actions.

Positive Thoughts

The thoughts that we send ourselves can influence our self-esteem and our self-confidence in any particular position. A person's mind may send them negative thoughts when they are confronted by a challenge, such as:

- “I’ll never be able to do this!”
- “Everyone’s going to laugh at me!”
- “I’m very stupid!”
- “I’m a hothead, and my anger is going to get me in trouble one of these days.”
- “This is so unfair!”
- “Anyone else but me could do this right!”

These negative and depreciating thoughts have a propensity to weaken one's self-confidence and cause it more difficulty to function effectively.

There are three positive ways of overcoming these negative thoughts.

- Search for the truth.

At times the negative thoughts include deceptions and exaggerations.

Is it actually true that “Anyone else but me could do this right?” Is it

actually true that “I’m very stupid?” These two messages are most likely untrue – and they are absolutely useless.

- Face up to the fears.

At times the threats in the negative thoughts are wrong – or improbable to happen. On other instances it may be that they will occur, but will they actually be so terrible? We might believe: “Everyone’s going to laugh at me!” However if this is the worst that can ever happen to us, why not give it a try?

- Send positive thoughts.

Substitute the negative thoughts with more positive messages. These should be realistic, reasonable, and should be able to support what we can actually expect to achieve.

Beliefs that Continue to Influence Self-Confidence

Self-confidence – like being famous and wealthy – is something we believe everyone else possess. In spite of that, feeling insecure about ourselves is probably the most ordinary problem of humankind. The majority of individuals in society believe “You have to be born with it.” This is absolutely untrue. You can learn how to be confident, just like learning how to cook or drive a car.

Secondly, people are likely to believe once they lose their self-confidence that it’s gone for good. It’s not true. It may take time to win your self-confidence back, but once you defeat your insecurities it’s less likely that you’ll lose your self-confidence once again.

Thirdly, people believe that you can only have self-confidence if you are able to conquer a new challenge. There is more to confidence than achieving something new.

In response to external control, people build several assumptions; some of which are positive and some are destructive. Several assumptions that can hinder self-confidence, as well as alternative ways of thinking, are as follows:

| BELIEFS | ALTERNATIVES |
|--|---|
| <p>“I should always have love and approval from every important person in my life.”</p> | <p>This is a perfectionistic, unreachable goal. It is more reasonable and desirable to build personal expectations and principles that are not thoroughly dependent on the consent of others.</p> |
| <p>“I must be completely capable, adequate, and superior in all significant aspects of my life.”</p> | <p>This once more is a perfectionistic, unreachable goal and suggests that self-worth or self-esteem is identified by accomplishments. Achievement can be satisfying however it does not make you more worthy. Instead, worth is an inherent characteristic and all people have it.</p> |
| <p>“My past remains all important and influences my emotions and</p> | <p>Whilst it is true that your confidence was particularly susceptible to external</p> |

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| behaviors in the present." | control during your childhood, as you grow older you can achieve awareness and viewpoint on what those influences have been. In doing so, you can decide which influences you will continue to allow to take action on your life. You don't have to be helpless in the challenge of past incidents. |
|----------------------------|---|

In order to increase self-confidence you have to believe in yourself. If you believe in yourself, then you can succeed in anything and everything you set your mind to. You may not succeed the first time you try, but you need to keep trying until you do succeed. Quick success does not exist in our society.

Success only comes to those who work hard to get them. You'll get nowhere in life if you do not motivate yourself. You have to build a lifestyle that is appropriate for you. Don't settle for anyone else's lifestyle or for a lifestyle that's underneath your expectations.

Self-Conquering Thought Habits

Subscribing to these destructive beliefs leaves you susceptible to the following self-conquering thought habits:

- All Or Nothing Thinking.

“I am a total failure when my performance is not perfect.”

- Seeing Only Dark Clouds.

Failure lurks around every area and comes to be expected. For instance, a single negative aspect, piece of criticism, or passing remark darkens all truth. “I got a C on one biology exam, now I’ll never get into medical school.”

- Magnification Of Negative or Minimization Of Positive.

Good things don’t count closely as much as bad ones. “I know I won seven chess games in a row, but losing this one makes me feel awful about myself.”

- Uncritical Acceptance Of Feelings As Truth.

“I feel ugly so it must be true.”

- Overemphasis On “Should” Statements.

“Should” statements are frequently perfectionistic and reflective of others’ standards instead of expressive of your own needs and desires. “Everyone must have a career plan when they go to college. I don’t have so there must be something wrong with me.”

- Labeling.

Labeling is a simplistic procedure and normally expresses a sense of blame. “I am a loser and it’s all my fault.”

- Difficulty Accepting Compliments.

“You like this outfit? I think it makes me look fat and terrible.”

Steps for Building Self-Confidence

The following strategies may be useful to overcome such self-conquering thought habits. Consider these steps as the building blocks for greater confidence in any aspect of your life.

1. Begin with writing a journal.

One benefit in self-analysis is by using a personal journal or diary. Try to ask yourself what is making you feel or think like you cannot get to a point in your life that you want to achieve. Write any thoughts that come to mind. Also, write down what the meaning of self-confidence is to you.

Dr. Gordon MacDonald, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship president, speaks about the significance of keeping this spiritual practice: "For many years I have kept a daily journal of what I am doing, why I am doing it, and what the results are. Just forcing it onto paper makes me ask what is going on in my life." That method will guarantee a particular quantity of impartiality, for when we look at our feelings and our lives on paper, it is easier to see our faults and the aspects where we are misleading ourselves.

Bear in mind, practices such as this do not work for everyone, and if, after experimenting with a journal, it does not increase your self-confidence, merely scrap the idea.

2. Concentrate on your strengths rather than on your weaknesses.

Confidence comes from within. You have to concentrate on the positive things about yourself. Remember the past is over; you can only change the

future. Write down ten positive things about yourself. Go through your journal and look at all the positive things about yourself. Concentrate on your potentials. These are the reasons you should love yourself and have high self-confidence in yourself. Give yourself credit for every positive thing you have written about yourself. Remember, you're somebody special.

3. Accept and love yourself.

Learn to accept and love yourself for who you are as a person. Everyone has their own distinctive abilities, qualities and characteristics. We are all born differently for a reason. Don't ever compare yourself to others.

Note also the things that make you unique. Instead of wasting mental energy strategizing how to be more like the herd, you might do better to use some of your thinking time on how you want to set yourself off from the crowd. In your journal, for example, it might be effective to make a list from time to time under the title, "How I Seem to Be Different." Write down the interests and preferences that make you distinct.

You must also make a list of all your positive traits and strong points on your journal. By doing this, you are telling yourself that you too have praise-worthy characteristics like others. You will like yourself and feel confident about yourself after this.

4. Remind yourself of past successes.

Confidence builds on past success. Because you had success before, you can (and will) have it once more. We strengthen our confidence in any

interest when we remind or review ourselves of past successes. If you are trying to develop confidence in a new aspect, past success can still be useful in strengthening our confidence. For instance, if you had success in doing something new in the past, recall those experiences when trying something else new – even if it is in a completely different part of your life.

5. Motivate yourself.

Whether it is for a presentation or for an interview, remind yourself that you can do it. Encourage yourself each day and soon you will find your confidence level increasing. Another helpful way for motivation is that after work or study each day, you should make a list of at least five things that you did well for that day.

6. Take risks.

Try doing things that you've never tried before. It's always a little bit of a challenge in doing new things and just the act of accepting these challenges, some little and some big, whether we are successful or not, frequently improves our self-confidence. Approach new experiences as opportunities to learn instead of occasions to win or lose. Doing so brings you new opportunities and can improve your sense of self-acceptance. Not doing so turns every possibility into an opportunity for failure, and inhibits self-growth.

People who have a high level of self-confidence do not fear to go out and "do it now." They may have no more talent or capability than anyone

else, but going out and doing “it” is no problem because they feel confident they will succeed. They are less afraid of committing mistakes and utilize more opportunities to succeed than those who have low self-confidence. Self-confident people probably commit more mistakes than those who are not self-confident, but they most likely have far more successes than the average because of their confidence in themselves.

7. Acknowledge your success.

Give yourself credit for everything you try. By emphasizing on what you can do, you applaud yourself for efforts instead of focusing on end products. Starting from a foundation of what you must do helps you live within the bounds of your inevitable weaknesses.

One’s achievements have considerable significance for building a strong sense of self-worth. You must acknowledge your success for every task or job you do. Congratulate yourself each time you succeed. Reward yourself each time you do something that makes you feel satisfied ... go out some place or take it easy for the day. If you don’t do well, correct your mistakes. Be careful about reproving yourself, except in severe instances.

8. Use self-talk.

Use self-talk as an opportunity to contradict destructive beliefs. Then, remind yourself to “stop” and replace more realistic assumptions. For example, if you catch yourself expecting perfection, tell yourself that you can’t do everything perfectly, that it’s only possible to try to do things and to

try to do them well. This also allows you to accept yourself while still working to improve.

9. Read and listen to positive materials.

Fill your mind with positive and affirming messages, thoughts and stories. Read materials that enriches your abilities or knowledge in the aspect in which you want to develop your confidence. Read things that are usually inspiring and affirming, and read biographies of successful people. You will discover that many of them had difficulties in life, came from tough circumstances, and still succeeded. If you have ever thought, "Well, if they can do it, I could too," then you'll understand that we can develop our confidence by reading about stories of successful people. Reading and listening to positive and affirming materials is about reinforcement, encouragement, and learning. All three of these components are required for greater confidence.

10. Visualize your future success.

Corporate executives, Olympic athletes, and successful people in all types of undertakings see future success. Confidence will increase when we visualize ourselves succeeding. Think about it. If you know you will succeed, your confidence will soar, right? Seeing future success does that very thing for us. Our minds cannot distinguish the difference between something real and something vividly imagined. So vividly visualize your success. What will it look like, smell like, taste like, and feel like to have succeeded? Who will be

with you, what will you be hearing and where will you be? How will you be feeling at that instant? Placing this much vivid detail into your mind increases the likelihood of success, and supports greater confidence!

Also, those who are able to see the future most positively utilize their five senses to get as much information as possible. Hear the sounds of the incident, feel the sensations of experiencing the victory, try to smell success in the air as it is taking place. For instance, let's say you have a trouble relaxing in social situations. Imagine yourself at a gathering where you hear the children happily playing in another room. Take in the sight and smell of the carefully prepared floral arrangement. Taste the food at dinner, and visualize yourself performing with confidence and joy.

11. Overcome fears and doubts.

Some people always have an insecurity that they can never be successful in anything they do. Such insecurity will be a disadvantage and would cause you to lack confidence in yourself and in everything you do in your life. So in order for you to get away from this fear, you have to tell yourself that if you haven't try something you can never say that you will fail in it. Be positive and try doing things without any fear or insecurity. For instance, your boss at work is asking you to supervise a group but you fear that you will make a mess out of it. Such a fear will stop you from taking on that job at work. But if you were a confident person you wouldn't think twice about failing and would willingly take on that job. This indicates that a lack of confidence could also have an effect on your career.

12. Accept and reframe failures.

Thomas Edison spent a long time trying to create an incandescent light bulb – to create light from electricity. He is credited with saying, “I have not failed, I have discovered twelve hundred materials that don’t work.” 1,200! Maybe you think you can accept and reframe your failures as learning experiences – as an opportunity to find out what doesn’t work. But would you be able to do so 1,200 times?

If you are always crying over the errors that you made in your life, you will never get anywhere. Always remember that past mistakes and failures cannot be reversed and what’s done is done. Thus there is no use crying over spilt milk. Be aware that failures will happen – and your confidence won’t be as surprised when they come. If you failed once, you should take that failure as a chance to learn. Realize that every failure places you that much nearer to success. When we accept and reframe our failure as a learning experience we decrease our fear and increase our confidence. A confident person always looks past those failures in his life. In spite of everything, failures are simply part and parcel of becoming successful.

13. Self-evaluate.

Learn to assess yourself independently. Doing so allows you to prevent the constant sense of confusion that comes from depending entirely on the views of other people. Concentrating internally on how you think and feel about your own behavior, lifestyle, work, etc. will provide you a stronger

sense of self and will stop you from giving your personal power away to others.

14. Take confident action.

You sought confidence to help you try and succeed in new ways, right? So get out there and go for it! You have to place your confidence to the test. You have to practice. And, while you are taking action, make it a confident action! Keep in mind that if you act confident, you will be more confident. Go through the other steps you have been taking to develop your confidence. If you are driving towards your new action step, remind yourself of past successes, once more. Visualize the successful result, again. Develop your confidence at every step of the way, but remember it should all lead to action.

15. Arrange to spend time alone.

Understand yourself mentally, physically and spiritually. Take some time to relax by yourself in a quiet place. Glenn Gould, a Canadian pianist, believes that "for every hour that you spend in the company of other human beings you need X number of hours alone. Now what that X represents, I don't really know; it might be two and seven-eighths or seven and two-eighths, but it's a substantial ratio."

Even the lives of great people in the past have been checkered with privacy. Jesus, for all his compassion with the sick, the poor and the needy, repeatedly moved away to refill himself and to pray.

16. Attend seminars.

It is good if you attend seminars where professional and motivational speakers offer you suggestions and guidance on building confidence. During the lecture, you can even pick up tips on public speaking from the speakers by observing their body language and the manner they project themselves.

17. Have an enormous number of pride in yourself.

Remember, you're number one! You must learn to accept who you are, be proud of the person you are. Only then will you feel your self-confidence rise up to the skies!

These steps are a regimen for strengthening and building your self-confidence in any life circumstances. Make use of these steps and I am confident, you will be more confident.

CHAPTER III

Tap your Potentials

“ I believe fervently in our species and have no patience with the current fashion of running down with the human being as a useful part of nature. On the contrary, we are a spectacular, splendid manifestation of life. ”

- Lewis Thomas, M.D.

People succeed because they reject to concentrate on their limitations, but instead decide to concentrate on their strengths and on their capacities. Therefore, one of the steps for building self-confidence is to: Concentrate On Your Strengths Rather Than On Your Weaknesses.

In this book I do not like to offer the type of Pollyanna advice or support the kind of thoughtless ideas that one hears from lots of inspirational speakers. They often inform us that we are magnificent, that our opportunities are infinite, and that if we only believe in ourselves we can achieve anything. We are not magnificent in every way, we do not function without some restrictions, and simply believing ourselves as all-powerful will not make ourselves so. When we say to our children that they can achieve anything they desire, we sometimes destroy their self-confidence instead of increasing it, because when their wishes do not come true, they think that there is something wrong with them. It is harsh to tell a tone-deaf boy that he can become a great tenor, or a girl with a below-average IQ that she can become a doctor.

However it is not unrealistic to tell our children that God created them and thus they are very important, that within them lay unused and powerful resources, that they are far more *potentially* than they are *really*. The

positive thoughts are for the most part correct: we do carry within us the opportunity of changing the world by changing our viewpoints, and they are right to talk of the unbelievable capability of the human being. In the last book Einstein wrote, he criticized the fact that only a small part of his potentials had been used. And Admiral Byrd, who was the first person to fly over the North and South Poles, once said: "Few people come anywhere near exhausting the resources within them. There are deep wells of strength that are never used."

The Inner Filter

However, if God has actually created humans with such beauty and honor, what holds so many people from using their capacities? It is often because we become obsessed with our imperfections instead of viewing at the entire picture. A beautiful girl is getting ready to go out on a date. It happens that she has a pimple on her face this week. Does she see all the good traits that would make most objective spectators (such as her date) to look at her and say that she is pretty? No, she notices only the pimple. And if the guy she goes out with tries to praise her, she tends to take it as simple flattery, or worse, as a lie.

One of the oddest things I notice is that people who doubt themselves frequently cannot accept praises or accolades. One would assume that if people have low self-confidence, they would be willing to accept great compliments. But if it is the other way around: if their self-perception is off and they hate the way they are, they will not be talked out of that self-view,

regardless of what people try to say. When someone criticizes, they hear every single word, but praises drift over them.

Here is the way it goes. We seem to have an internal filter that accepts only selected information in. You hear only the compliments that fit to your belief system. For example, you believe the following things about yourself:

- I'm pretty good at math.
- I'm poor at sports.
- My IQ is about average.
- I see myself as fat and pimply.
- I've got a beautiful face but a terrible figure.

When new information comes towards you, it is run through this filter. If it conforms what you believe you are, then the filter allows it in. If someone says: "You're very good at Geometry," that's allowed in, and you acknowledge the person for the remark, since the compliment fits to your view of yourself (I'm pretty good at math). However if someone says: "You're sure looking nice and trim," that is screened out, since your internal picture is of someone with a terrible figure.

Get Rid of Comparisons

There is another variable that makes us obsessed with our weaknesses: we tend to compare ourselves with other people. There is possibly no other practice that breaks away at our self-confidence so

effectively as the practice of searching the people around us to check how we compare. It is as if we have a radar dish on our foreheads, continually scanning to see if someone else is faster, tanner, or smarter. And when we find that at times someone is, we are frustrated and depressed.

The foolishness of building our self-estimate on comparisons is that it places us on a roller-coaster. Maybe we are feeling quite good about our appearance one day, and we happen to be in the company of someone with strikingly good looks. All of a sudden we feel horrible and want to vanish. Or maybe we know we have above-average IQ, but we find ourselves at dinner with people who are even brighter. Then every single word that comes out from our mouths sounds like intellectual mud.

Several of us grew up with older siblings who we dreadfully sought to imitate, but certainly we were doomed from the beginning. For regardless of how hard we tried to draw near, we happened to be smaller, clumsier, and dumber than they were. And when they mocked us – as all older brothers and sisters do – we learned to criticize ourselves. In many instances this became a permanent practice.

But God did not create us to be like our brothers and sisters or anyone else. We are totally distinctive. We are the outcome of 23 chromosomes from our fathers and 23 chromosomes from our mothers, and geneticists say that the chances of our parents having another child like us are one in $10^{2,000,000,000}$. The mixture of characteristics that comprises us will never be duplicated. If this is true, and if it is true that we are created by God – an

original by a master artist – it makes the discovery and improvement of that distinctiveness an item of the highest priority.

Our main principle is not reduced when we find ourselves with people who are better musicians or more famous or wealthier. Nor is it heightened when we happen to be with people who are less talented. We have worth quite distant from the existence of any other individual. We have worth because we are all unique in our own special ways.

Giving Your Best

“ There is dignity in work only when it is freely accepted. ”

- Albert Camus

All of us have limitations. The technique is to find out which ones can be improved, then get to work on those and stop thinking about the rest. For instance, some of us will never be as good at math as others. But what's important is to stop kicking ourselves when we are not quick at math problems and develop the talents we are gifted at. Jesus' parable about the talents has, as its unavoidable conclusion, that the division of talents in this world is not our problem. Our duty is to take the talents with which we happen to have and passionately parlay them to the highest possible attainment.

There are two good reasons to do your best.

Firstly, when you give one hundred percent, you are happier. Remember back to when you were at school. Remember what it felt like

walking to school, on those days when you had done all of your homework – and done your best. Didn't you feel just a bit more enthusiastic?

It doesn't matter whether you've been out of school for fifty years, the "homework principle" still applies. Your teacher told you to work hard, your parents told you to work hard, bosses tell you to work hard – but you don't work to please parents and teachers and to keep your boss off your back. You do it for you.

Secondly, the universe has a way of punishing laziness and arrogance. Enough things will go wrong in your life – and work – without you giving a half hearted effort. When we get casual, things start to collapse. Ask the boxer who underestimates his opponent. Ask the businessman who underestimates his competition. There's a word to describe doing it your best shot every time – it's called professionalism.

Have you ever noticed how some taxi drivers make a trip a pleasure, and some make it a pain? Same repetitious job. So where's the difference? Happy cabbies have a different philosophy. One may say: "But good cabbies give good service because they're cheerful." No! They're cheerful because they give good service.

People who enjoy their work wake up saying: "*Today, I am going to be more effective and more caring than I was yesterday.*" They don't always hit the bull's-eye, but it's their aim.

Is it important that we have as high IQ as most, or that we do not have limitations? No, the important thing is that we are giving the best we

can with what we've got. Instead of getting obsessed with our limitations, we should capitalize on our potentials.

In a Nutshell

You give your best not because you need to impress people. You give your best because that's the only way to enjoy your work.

CHAPTER IV

Aim for Personal Excellence

“ One does not “find oneself” by pursuing one’s self, but on the contrary by pursuing something else and learning through discipline or routine... who one is and wants to be. ”

- May Sarton

We will have a strong personality only when we recognize our gifts or talents and develop them industriously. Our worth does not come from our achievements; our achievements are the products of our inherent worth. That is, if we have some confidence in ourselves because we are created uniquely in God’s own image – then we would like to achieve something with our talents. We will aspire to do something that will last.

The bonus we get is that as we achieve something valuable, our self-confidence is improved. We are more than what we do, but what we do represents an important part of who we are. Anyone who has strong self-confidence also has a sense of reason in life, and Dr. Karl Menninger (among others) said that to be stable one must have some play, some love, and some work. Therefore, another principle for building self-confidence is to: Find Something You Like To Do And Do Well, Then Do It Over And Over.

There are two important steps to putting this principle into practice:

1. Evaluate your gifts to find out where it is you can make a telling contribution.
2. Take on the difficult task of practice and improvement in order that you become exceptional at one thing.

Talent

“Talent” doesn’t have to mean you paint masterpieces. Caring for people is a talent. Teaching is a talent. Making people feel welcomed is a talent. Solving problems is a talent. Managing is a talent. Parenting is a talent.

Too often we underestimate our own talents. The potter says: “If only I could make music, now that would be something.” The pianist says: “If only I could make things with my hands” Don’t measure your skills against others. Do what you can do. Accept what talents you have. Accomplishment comes from developing your talents, not wishing for someone else’s.

Joanna says: “I have a God-given talent with kids, but maybe I’m supposed to be a banker.” If you are literally God’s gift to preschoolers, why would you want to be involved in numbers?

Another thing I notice: most people who tell you they have no talent haven’t tried many things.

Having said this, *talent is useful, but it isn’t everything!* When people talk about Jack Nicklaus’ golfing success, they usually talk of his *extraordinary talent*. When Jack talks of his success, he talks about the *extra practice ball he hit*. Jack knew that the difference between Jack Nicklaus and a thousand other talented golfers was attitude and hard work.

Onlookers and underachievers put major emphasis on talent. For them, talent, or the lack of it, is a great excuse to do nothing. If there is an outstanding quality common to great artists, scientists, sports stars,

humanitarians and business tycoons it is not their talent – it is their *focus*.
Once you know what you want to do, get focused! You can't do everything.
You can't save the whales, heal the sick and plug the ozone layer all at the
same time. Leave some chores for the rest of humanity.

CHAPTER V

Improve your Internal Dialog

“ The only difference between the best performance and the worst performance is the variation in our self-talk. ”

- Dorothy and Bette Harris

If I could plug a set of headphones into the minds of most people and listen in on the messages they make to themselves all day, I am certain that the majority of them would be negative:

- “I’m running late once more – as usual.”
- “My hair looks horrible this morning.”
- “That was a stupid comment to have made – she most likely thinks I’m a dummy.”

By the thousands these messages flash across our brains everyday, and it is no wonder that the outcome is a reduced personality.

One effective daily exercise for developing self-confidence is to practice a friendlier internal dialog: Change Self-Criticism With Regular, Positive Self-Talk.

Donald Meichenbaum has developed a complicated approach on helping people change their stream of internal discussion. Here, for example, is the manner an impulsive and extremely self-critical child might handle an assignment:

Oh my, this is going to be hard. I’m certainly going to make a mess of this. Oh! there you go, you’ve already made an error. I could never draw. Stupid, you

were supposed to go down there. He'll see where I've erased that. It seems as if others are doing well on theirs, but this is a total mess. That's as good as I can do, but it's not what they want.

Here is the manner Meichenbaum teaches the same child to talk within:

Okay, what is it I have to do? You want me to copy the picture with the different lines. I have to go slow and be cautious. Okay, draw the line down, down, *good*, then to the right, *that's it*, now down some more and to the left. *Good, I'm doing well so far*. Remember go slow. Now back up again. *No, I was supposed to go down*. *That's okay*. Just erase the line carefully ... carefully. Okay. I have to go down now. *Finished, I did it*.

Such a manner of talking to ourselves can be a great help in reprogramming our personality.

The Origins of Self-Criticism

Where did we learn to talk to ourselves with accusation? We learned it from other people, for sure. The thousands of negative thoughts that came from parents and teachers and older brothers and sisters, as they tried to change us into socially acceptable individuals, are all stored in our memories. Many of those thoughts get incorporated into the general pattern of dialogue we keep on with ourselves all day. "Why are you always late ... What's the matter with you, do you want to get run over? ... This way, idiot. ... Can't you even catch the ball?"

We learn from the assessments of the people around us. Some psychologists go so far as to say that we know ourselves only from the reflection of other people's responses to us. If someone says, "You have trouble with math, don't you?" It is usual to believe – if such persons are bigger and older and smarter – that they're correct. Then for the rest of our lives, whenever a set of numbers appears before our eyes, our automatic reaction is, "Remember, you always have trouble with math."

Talking More Positively to Children

These data make it all the more significant that we push as much positive messages as possible into the young minds around us. Obviously, we must correct our children and our students when they commit mistakes, however, we can do it with positive thoughts:

"You're a bright guy – you can see that it's unsafe to swing the bat here in the house."

"This is not like you. Your work is usually so neat. I want you to do that page over."

"You're one of the best-behaved boys in the class, Bryan. What's wrong today that you're talking so much?"

"I love you, Billy, but you're making me nervous tonight."

This kind of method to parenting and teaching will harvest good dividends in the future, since the outcome will be a much more positive

stream of consciousness in those children. They will grow up to say such phrases as:

"I'm no dummy. I can figure this one with a little time."

"This is not like me. Got to figure out what's wrong so I can get back to normal production."

"I like getting along with people, and always feel good when I walk into this office. I'm pretty well accepted around here, and that feels good."

The Displacement Law

However, let's say that you have not been so lucky in your past and that you have absorbed a thousand negative thoughts and you are in the habit of saying to yourself, "I'm no good at math," or "I'm going to get into trouble!" Can anything be done about this habit? Absolutely. We can begin by understanding the principle of displacement. The way to eliminate depreciating thoughts is to so fill our minds with good messages that the negative ones are automatically displaced. Like everything else, we will learn to talk to ourselves more gently with practice.

Statements of Hope

One way to be used to the practice of running a more positive stream of self-dialog through your mind is to place it on paper. Like in prayer, our minds easily drift, and just as some of us find it easier to pray by writing out

our prayers – as if we were writing a letter to God – so writing positive messages helps direct our concentration.

The procedure is in many ways very much the same to prayer. Here is how it works. In your journal each day, if possible, early in the morning, you can jot down a few statements such as these:

- I feel optimistic about the day that is unfolding.
- I am a competent decision-maker and trust that I'll do the right things as I go through this day.
- I enjoy nature and feel good as I look out this window at the foggy morning.
- My body is a creation of God, and I'm going to enjoy the sensations it sends me today.
- I am determined to be self-confident!
- I am enthusiastic for achievement!
- I am thankful for life and opportunity!
- I desire to be influential!
- I long for power!
- I resolve to progress!
- I covet greatness!
- I have absolute faith in myself!
- I daily grow in courage!
- I am ambitious for conquest!
- I will positively succeed!

- I have set my heart upon truth!
- I aspire to lofty heights!
- I am developing self-reliance!
- I am pushing to the front!
- I shall absolutely win!

These are not so much goals for the day as statement of belief, which repeated over and over, can change how we think about ourselves.

If it is true that we become what we believe about, then it will change the essence of our being.

CHAPTER VI

How Love Results in Self-Confidence: Expanding a Network of Love

“Nothing can make up for the absence of someone whom we love, and it would be wrong to try to find a substitute. ... It is nonsense to say that God fills the gap, he does not fill in, but on the contrary, he keeps it empty and so helps us to keep alive our former communion with each other, even at the cost of pain.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

At times I ask people if they're in any important relationship.

“Are you in love, or do you have some good friendships?”

“No,” the person frequently responds, “I'm not yet prepared for that. I want to get my personality straightened out, then perhaps I'll be ready to seek some intimate relationships.”

On the contrary, that is like a grown-up man delaying exercise till he is in shape. Individuality and relationship must take place hand in hand.

The belief that a positive personality must certainly go before any positive relationship is one of the bromides of present self-help literature. Several books and seminars point out that one should not rely on others for support. It should all come from the inside, they say.

However it is a chicken-or-the-egg question. It is a fact that the greater our self-confidence, the better we will interact to other people, but healthy self-regard is not exposed on some land mass where we gaze at our navels. We are identified partly by the people that surround us, and personality is largely improved by society. Thus one of the most certain ways

to increase confidence is to ensure you have a lot of love in your life, to take the needed steps to build a network of supportive relationships.

One way that love results in self-confidence is when you: Nurture People Who Help You Grow.

Let me give a simple example. I have met a woman on her thirties. My personal feeling of sorrow is nothing compared to her. Her scenario is like this: she lives in a huge residence house. Every morning, she eats her breakfast alone, goes down to her parking garage, drives out onto the expressway, and parks in another underground parking lot beneath her office building. There she starts to work in a small workplace, working alone, with not much communication with the people whose workspace surrounds her. She frequently eats her lunch alone, and at the end of the day, drives back to her residence house and goes into her empty house, where she more or less never worries to cook herself a hot meal, instead eats while standing at the sink. Then at around 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. she goes to bed, thinking that she can fall asleep, "because," according to her, "those 11 or 12 hours are the only respite I have from this terrible solitude."

It is no doubt that this woman has to be hospitalized four times and that she has been in and out of therapy all her adult life. The ancient rabbis were correct when they said: "Anyone who goes too far alone goes mad."

It is simple to look at such a confused individual and dismiss her lack of friends as a consequence of an abrasive self-image. There maybe some truth to that, for sure. Although she dreadfully yearns for friendship – and particularly for romantic love – she does plenty of things to scare away

anyone who draws close to her, and these rough limits to her self-image require lots of work. Therefore it will not do, as some counselors have it, to focus on getting her personality repaired, and then turn her loose to interact in the world. We should cope with her interpersonal difficulties one at a time, and she and I should persist till some camaraderie start to come together. I must be there to help her pick up the pieces when her relationships break, to help her work out what she did wrong, and to take remedial measures to make sure of more success next time.

The Must for Love

“ 'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. ”

- Alfred Lord Tennyson

Individuals are made for love, and I think that many people don't remember that. They scramble to prop up their personalities with different practices, without taking enough consideration to the basis from which they will acquire help most willingly – good friendships. They make all kinds of complaints – that they're very busy, that they can't trust people, that they've learned to survive without having anyone, that they are certainly loners and choose to be alone. Yet it is all a smoke partition, and beneath lies an intense longing to love and be loved.

Several people make the mistake of assuming that they will be happy and contented only when they find the perfect man or the perfect woman to marry, ignoring the vital field of friendship. Few people are prepared for a sexual relationship till they have learned to maintain and nurture a

friendship. We do not have to marry to be contented, but we do have to have some love, and that can be found in the best kind of friendships. The paradox is that people who start to unwind in some solid friendships with people of the same sex – and stop worrying so much about knowing the man and woman of their dreams – start to be much more appealing to the opposite sex. Friendship seems to be the best catalyst to love.

Another reason to place more importance on friendship and less on romance is due to the realities of divorce and death. Most of us will have to take at least some of our adult lives unmarried, thus it is a weak strategy to place all our eggs in one container. We could happen to be completely deprived of love when something happens to our partner. When a woman says to me, “I don’t need any other friends – my husband is my best friend,” I do not approve. She is placing too much force on her marriage, for there is no way any one person can satisfy all your emotional wants. To demand your partner to do so is to ask an impossible thing. Your partner should be your best friend, but not your only friend.

How does one go about developing a group of supportive and nurturing relationships? Most of us believe the problem is in finding a spot to meet new people. However the essential answer is not in meeting new people; it is in strengthening the relationships we currently have. Many people have acquaintances who could be elevated to friends, some friends who could be elevated to good friends. It may look simpler to start with someone new, but the best foundation of love is most likely in your existing group of family and friends.

The Value of Family

Some women are frightened because they have read the studies that indicate how small their probability of marrying if they are in their thirties and have earned college degrees. Yet, it is certain that we cannot consider on being in a nuclear family our entire adult lives, and so it is significant to build powerful networks of support and nurture in several aspects. One valuable aspect is one's extended family – which includes uncles and aunts, cousins, nieces, and grandparents.

My mom's friend who is 47 years old tells me that when she returns to visit her parents, it is always "a mixed bag." She makes contacts with some relatives, and she normally has at least one blow-up with her parents. "But it is important to be around my family," she says. "I observe my grandfather's gestures, and my parents' traits, and say, 'So that's where I got that mannerism,' or 'that's why I respond this way.' At times I say, 'I'm happy I have this feature, but that one I'm going to throw away.' And I always come back feeling that I understand myself better and have a clearer thought, in some way, of who I am, where I came from, and where I want to go."

She is a clever woman. Some of us have detached ourselves from our pasts, moved thousands of miles away, and behaved as if we were from outer space, when in reality we have ancestry – family ancestors who have names and inheritable characters and recognizable physical traits. It is, as my mom's friend says, "a mixed bag," but we need these relations with our legacy, for they help us to understand that we're recognized by someone, that someone gave us a name, and that a tribe even knows our name. Such

associations make our individualities more protected, for as John Dos Passos says, "A sense of continuity with the generations gone before can stretch a lifeline across the scary present."

The Importance of a Group

Years ago, I found out that people can at times learn more from a month of group counseling than from a year of individual therapy. This is partly because the group can provide you precise comment or reaction as to how you interact with other people, since in such a group most people finally go back to their typical ways of relating. And in a trustworthy group, people will let you know accurately how you appear or look like, while most of the community will not.

I would like to argue for the improvement and development that such groups can provide. AA gives great assistance for people fighting with chemical addiction, and there are several other kinds of groups helping persons with unique interests and desires. Most churches have such groups. They differ in what they are termed and how they are formed. For this objective it is important to choose a group other than one gathered mainly for research (important as such groups are for other purposes). Rather, it must concentrate on the thoughts of the members and develop trust so that group participants are open to reveal their own anxieties freely. If possible, trust will develop to a time when in due course you can tell each other anything.

When we enclose ourselves with a few close friendships, we construct for ourselves a pipeline that provides a stream of nurturing support. It does not come about without a huge amount of effort, but it is worth every ounce of energy we exert.

I don't know of a single step one can do to improve self-confidence that is as valuable as developing a network of supporting, loving relationships. At times the people who come for therapy are in such poor condition emotionally since they do not have sufficient love in their lives, and they are usually screaming, "Somebody please love me!" Development happens when they are able to lighten up, stop demanding for love, and start loving. They seek someone for whom they can do a favor, someone whose shoulder they can place an arm around, someone to whom they can send a word of encouragement, and possibly even start to love. When we are "networking" simply for what we can obtain out of it, it normally goes wrong. However when we begin looking for other people who need love and take the initiative in giving it to them, love seems to start flowing back to us.

CHAPTER VII

Summary

“ The mightiest works have been accomplished by men who have somehow kept their ability to dream great dreams. ”

- Walter Russell Bowie

Some highlights of this book are:

- Self-confidence is defined as a belief in oneself and one’s abilities in a wide range of conditions.
- A particular quantity of self-confidence, in addition to the proper knowledge and abilities, allows people to be very effective and efficient. Without the knowledge or abilities, self-confidence alone is not sufficient. However, excessive self-confidence can make people proud or careless and their functioning suffers as a consequence.
- Two ways in which we can increase our self-confidence in particular circumstances are: improve our abilities in dealing with the situations, and improve our self-worth or self-esteem.
- Frequent use of positive thoughts and messages can help to increase self-confidence, and may help us on becoming more effective.

Conclusion

“ The root of the matter, if we want a stable world, is a simple and old-fashioned thing, a thing that I am almost ashamed to mention, for fear of the derisive smiles with which wise cynics will greet my words. The thing I mean is love, Christian love. ”

- Bertrand Russell

What started out as a book about the different ways we see ourselves now becomes a book about love, since it is from loving and being loved that self-confidence best comes out, and eventually it is divine love that places this all in viewpoint.

Until this concluding section I didn't use the words "self-love," because I am not at ease with the ring of that phrase. They sound very much like a proud or arrogant person we describe as being "extremely in love with himself." If we are to love ourselves, obviously it is not to be in conceit against which clever writers have inveighed many times. Instead, it is to be the type of relationship we have with our most treasured friends: we accept them, mistakes and all, and we are dedicated to their best welfare. We have made a promise to them, and out of that promise we look after them and support them. It must be very similar in our connection to ourselves.

Or to illustrate better, we are to love ourselves in the same way as God loves us: God is not excessively impressed with us – he knows our imperfections. Yet we are children of God, and God is generously concerned in our interests. Therefore if we are to label it "self-love," we should perceive it as this relaxed appreciation and healthy regard for the beloved.

It is a strange thing how love and laughter go simultaneously. When you first fall in love with someone, you find so many things hilarious, and you simply fall down into each other's arms over a very funny incident. One of the indications of a meeting of good friends is the enthusiastic laughter that breaks out. And the saving grace of healthy self-confidence is its ability to be able to laugh at one's own faults as by those of others.

Few years ago I watched a conversation panel on one of the religious television networks. There was an overweight man who laughed at the drop of a hat, didn't worry about how he looked on the television and who was the star of the show. He had succeeded at five or six various professions and was now partially retired. On television he did not try to hide his stomach – he sat on the edge of his chair, waved his arms, and let his coat fly open and his tie go where it would. He laughed, he grumbled, he moaned, and his eyes shone with pleasure and wonder. He was comfortable, confident, and he did not make believe to be anything more than he was.

In evangelical groups, there is an enormous deal of talk about "being constantly in prayer" and having regular family devotions. But he said that he did not follow the tradition. "Honestly," he said to the camera, "Karlvin and I have attempted all sorts of ways of doing Bible study and prayer meetings and it simply doesn't work for us. I'm not especially proud of this, but I'm just letting you know the way it is at our house. The only time we pray together is before we go to bed. We embrace into each others' arms and say a prayer and then we just lie there and hold each other, and that makes everything right."

He was just as frank about the spectacular failures of his life. He had been dismissed from a top administrative rank. "They told me that they would announce that I had given up my job so it wouldn't seem so terrible, however they wanted me to empty my table on Saturday so there would be no questions asked. I had never been fired from a job in my life."

"Was that traumatic to you?" asked the interviewer.

"Traumatic?" he cried out. "I went home and went to bed and pulled the blanket over my face for two days. However my wife loved me. She knew I'd done some wrong things and she had been waiting. She is a spiritual woman, and she loved me back into completeness."

As I observed him talk, I realized how small our bodily pattern has to do with our good looks. Thousands of women were watching this fat fellow talk and perhaps would have given anything to have a husband like him. Instead of some austere, self-sufficient, aloof person who is hesitant of himself, they choose to be around a relaxed person such as this, who knows how to laugh and to love.

This fellow is a good illustration of healthy self-love. He does not take himself too seriously, he is honest about his weaknesses, and he laughs at himself willingly. But there is self-respect about him also. His self-esteem comes from being a child of God, and he does not waste his life – he leads a life that involves serving other people, and he thinks about fervently for some people who happen upon his way. Success and failure appear to vary, yet he does not take that too seriously either, for it is sufficient to serve God,

to do the best he can with what he has, and to catch joy when it comes. To use William Blake's phrase, "catch joy on the wing."

The great philosopher, Immanuel Kant once said that if there is any science we must really have, it is one that will tell us "how to dwell in properly that place in creation that is assigned to man." That man appears to have found his place better than some of us who try to be philosophers, theologians, economists, and psychologists. He had found the appropriate "middle ground" between self-worship and self-contempt.

That middle ground is a secure place, where we can walk with determination and with conviction, and in spite of that where we can laugh at our limitations when our friends tell us we are wrong. It is a place where we can be comfortable with both our talents and our faults, our great capacities and our fondness for sin, conscious that on one hand we are dust and on the other hand that we are "a little less than God, crowned with glory and honor."