

## **11. Arrogance From Self-Confidence**

### Risking vanity and arrogance

This chapter will look at some important examples of what happens when your self-confidence is not channelled to the strengthening of character. You will see that self-esteem is of little value to yourself and others when your confidence is used for displaying vanity or arrogance. It is important to see the end results of what can happen if you have a lot of self-belief and then fail to develop the growth in character that is required to channel that conviction to useful and positive purposes. Firmness of character is one of the more socially attractive features that you look for in the people that you recognise and admire for their achievements.

One of the intangible qualities that people seek for themselves is self-reliance for their own happiness and success. Most people will admit that they like to be in the company of others who display self-dependence because of the positive effect the other person's certainty and conviction has on themselves.

However, it is important to realise that although it is not possible to have personal growth without a level of self-belief, it is possible to feel self-assured and yet fail to participate in some important practices of confidence such as the process of self-development. Without a process of character improvement you will see that self-trust soon turns to arrogance and vanity, and this in turn can lead to some dangerous decisions, affecting many lives, when the decisions are made by people in a position of power.

The examples this program uses will be taken from historical military facts because it is in the military that the most critical decisions are made that directly effect life-and-death situations for many innocent people influenced by the exercise of those decisions when taken. It is because of their influence over life and death of so many people that military leaders'

characters and decisions have been so closely scrutinised and then recorded. The first example is that of the NATO Supreme Commander during the 1999 Kosovo campaign, General Wesley Clark.

### General Wesley Clark

General Clark was described by America's most decorated soldier, Colonel David Hackworth, as having,

“high intelligence, working at the White House, going to get advanced degrees, teaching at the military academy”. (3)

It appears obvious that this four-star general, to have risen so far in his profession, must have had many moments of extreme certainty in pursuit of his career.

When a Russian brigade secured the airfield at Pristina, a strategic position in the battle for Kosovo, General Clark ordered his subordinate, General Sir Michael Jackson, the British commander, to send in his troops to take the airport from them. This order, if carried out, might have led to war between Russia and NATO once the shooting started.

When asked why Pristina airport was worth risking war for, General Clark replied,

“First because Pristina airfield was a key to further re-enforcement by Russian air-land forces in a way that could have been disruptive, and secondly because control of Pristina airfield was something that had been sought by Russian forces who broke their agreements with the stabilisation force in Bosnia and came out, and they shouldn't have been rewarded for breaking their commitment”. (3a)

Fortunately, Lieutenant General Jackson refused the four-star general's order with the comment,

“I’m not going to be responsible for starting World War Three”. (3b) Colonel Hackworth went on to say of General Clark,

“He’s very power-mad, he is the four-star and he’s not going to accept any insubordination from anyone; and that kind of commander who doesn’t have the experience to really lead is probably employing that kind of arrogance because of his own lack of confidence”. (3c)

Now that interesting contrast of being highly intelligent, Supreme Commander of NATO troops, and yet appearing to be lacking in confidence is worth pondering. That is a situation that can only eventuate when the pressures of people’s situations encourage them to make decisions based on their arrogance instead of using their assertiveness to make decisions based on ethical considerations. General Jackson, in refusing to carry out the order to take the airport from the Russians, showed strength of character that utilised the process of previous self-development. The situation at Pristina airport was soon settled at a political level without the need to resort to force.

The next example is that of America’s Douglas MacArthur.

#### General Douglas MacArthur

General MacArthur was the Allies’ Supreme Commander of the war in the Pacific during the Second World War. He had come from a privileged and military background and was well known for his self-belief and confidence. Such was his reputation that at the outset of the Korean War in June 1950, the United Nations appointed MacArthur as leader of a fourteen-nation coalition. Although seventy years old, General MacArthur maintained self-reliance:

“If Washington doesn’t hobble me, I can handle them with one hand tied behind my back”. (4)

History has shown that things didn't work out as MacArthur had hoped. With the intervention of the Chinese, MacArthur's troops suffered a number of setbacks that led MacArthur to advocate the use of Atomic bombs against China and suggesting saturation of large areas of North Korea with radioactive waste. This policy brought MacArthur into conflict with his commander-in-chief, President Truman, who was eventually forced to relieve MacArthur of his command. MacArthur was a man whose conviction was being used to fuel his arrogance and vanity to the extent that it could have lead to a new war with Russia and China where atomic weapons would have been just another tool of convenience.

An interesting insight into MacArthur's character is provided by the University of Arizona's Professor Michael Schaller:

“MacArthur is shrewd, proud, arrogant, successful, handsome, articulate, but he has no humour and no insight into himself, and he mistakes his ambitions and his emotions for principles. And that's his greatest fault, that he really has no insight into himself as a person”.

(4a)

Having read and understood this process you will know that having insights into yourself as a person is what makes the principles of life that are reflected in your individuality so transparent. Those principles were paramount in determining your path to self-confidence. The cultivation and personal growth of your character is guaranteed because of the insights into yourself as a person.

### Hermann Goering

The last example to look at here is that of Reichsmarschal Hermann Goering. Before the Second World War Goering was appointed as Adolf Hitler's deputy and Prime Minister of Prussia. He was elected unanimously to the position of speaker of the German Parliament, the Reichstag, in August of 1932. He was the leader of the German air force, the Luftwaffe,

before and during the war and he held too many positions of power to list here. Goering was appointed, and then held onto, all of the important posts to which he was assigned because he had the ability to display so much certainty. There was no doubting his courage, having received Germany's highest bravery award during the First World War, the Pour le Merite — The Blue Max — and he was renowned for both his assertiveness and his arrogance.

However, he also displayed, on occasions, a terrible lack of self-confidence. When the German 6<sup>th</sup> Army was surrounded at Stalingrad, Goering lacked the confidence to tell Hitler that he didn't have the capacity to airlift the required 700 tons per day needed for the survival of the beleaguered troops. On a typical day such as on 19<sup>TH</sup> December 1942, Goering's Luftwaffe could only supply 70 tons of supplies to the trapped Germans. This led to the comment from the career soldier Field Marshal von Manstein, "Let the confident commander take charge of the sector that he's so confident about". (5) Of the 250,000 trapped 6<sup>th</sup> Army soldiers at Stalingrad only 6,000 would ever return home to Germany.

Goering was to tell his interrogators after the war that "whenever he tried to speak frankly to Hitler, his heart sank to the seat of his pants". (5a) Hermann Goering was obviously very intelligent. Indeed the Professor of Psychology at Philadelphia's Drexel University, Professor Eric Zillmer was to observe, "They gave him an intelligence test and found that he was brighter than 99% of the population." (6)

Two other comments made by Professor Zillmer are very relevant. Firstly that Goering had an "over-inflated view of himself," which manifested itself in his arrogance, and secondly, "his self-esteem was actually very low," which led to some appalling military decisions and enormous loss of life.

## Confidence misplaced

These examples have been used to show observations made by highly qualified professionals and assessments by respected psychologists that reflect enormous fluctuations in self-confidence even in leaders who have reached the peak of their professions. So if people can hold positions of such power over the lives of millions of people and yet be observed as having such fluctuations in self-belief, what does that tell you?

The first thing you should realise from this is not to panic if you have fluctuations in your own self-esteem because it is a very human frailty. This exercise, through your Vision Statement, will have helped you to learn how to overcome that frailty of fluctuations in your self-assurance.

Secondly those examples can teach you that it is important to have the necessary skills to attain high levels of self-belief and then to sustain those levels of certainty so that you are prepared for the inevitable times of pressure in your work or your personal life. Also those examples demonstrate that there is real danger in not having a program of development, so that you can learn to channel your self-reliance towards strengthening your character, in order to avoid the dangers of arrogance and vanity. You can see from those examples that there is no point in obtaining a level of self-confidence, as important as that is, unless you have practised self-improvement. You need to be provided with the ability to nurture and keep your convictions, while avoiding the pitfalls of being self-centred and arrogant.

The first three critical steps to the self-confidence that you have attained, are the initial tools for both obtaining a high opinion of your self-image and for sustaining those levels of assurance. You have also been shown that one of the critical steps in that self-enhancement process, your Vision Statement developed from your conscience, is the specific tool that

enables you to avoid arrogance and vanity. Those first three steps have linked you intrinsically to the *Cycle of Confidence*, so your own character development is assured.

Having the self-confidence to make decisions and take action must be supported by enough strength of character to ensure, where possible, your decisions and actions don't reflect badly on yourself or the lives of others. When you make assertive decisions that have a clear and positive effect on others, those decisions will reflect back to yourself as coming from a person of strong ethical character. It is the essence of self-belief that you have the conviction not only to make decisions, but that those decisions are reflective of the cultivation and growth of your character, rather than the result of any arrogance or vanity.

#### Self-development for Industrial Relations

Another good example of putting that self-analysis into practice is in Industrial Relations. Consider decisions that are made by senior management or senior union officials at times of disputation. Poor decisions on either side can dramatically affect the lives of thousands of people and the entire economy of nations. It is not uncommon for either or both sides to take an adversarial approach to negotiations in industrial disputes.

All exponents of Industrial Relations matters spend a lot of time and money learning about each other's respective positions in the hope of success in negotiations. However, no matter how many training courses management or labour attend so that they may be better able to negotiate an outcome suitable to their respective positions, they are both aware of the secret to success in Industrial Relations negotiations. Indeed you will recognise it as the formula to success in any form of negotiation, including at work or at home.

The formula to success in any negotiations is to know when to push and when to back off. Getting that balance right will always achieve the most positive results. Get the balance wrong and you're immediately in dispute. If either side pushes because of their perceived

positions of strength, the outcome means trouble. Even the apparent winner in those circumstances will have a hollow victory. The side that appears to lose may harbour a bitterness that will surface with interest at the first available opportunity.

The management and union officials who get it right most often are those that have better self-awareness. It is no surprise that those management and union officials who mostly get it right are admired by their respective peers and opponents for displaying strength of character that is not evident in those that always appear to be in the centre of disputation. Of course nobody gets the balance right all the time. It is very difficult to know when to back off if you feel that you're in a position of strength, just as it is difficult to push hard when you feel vulnerable. However, the measure of confidence building that you are in the process of learning here will not only give you the certainty required, but also the character traits needed to get the balance right much more often.

### Self-development in the workplace

Have you ever worked in a situation with a boss or colleague who appeared to know a lot about the job, but who was often said to have no people skills? If you think about how people get to the top in their respective work, social or political areas it is not difficult to understand what can go wrong. It is possible for people to get to the pinnacle of their company because of financial position, inheritance, seniority, accident or formal education. There may also be intrigue or dishonesty, or many other nefarious methods, that people use for their own advancement, but for the sake of brevity this study will concentrate on the honest methods mentioned to make the necessary point.

Anyone who buys a business and then employs others becomes the boss because of his or her financial position. People who inherit a business are immediately bosses and under those circumstances, even if they don't want the job, other people's livelihood may depend on

their continuing to operate the business. People may get promoted because they are the longest serving in that organisation when someone else leaves or because of the arbitrary decision of a selection committee. In addition people may be placed in a position of power because they have procured more formal educational qualifications than their colleagues.

It may be unfair to criticise people who are placed in their position of authority over others because of circumstances over which they have no control. If you're a senior management person yourself, you may have been responsible for appointing some of those bosses who are having difficulty dealing with their subordinates. Once acknowledged, that situation can be overcome by having those employees in power go through this process of character development which will enhance their self-image, and channel that confidence to the benefit of the company, themselves and their fellow employees. Indeed you can see from the military examples given that if employees attempt to manage their responsibilities without a program of personal growth, that may lead to dangerous decisions, brought about through arrogance, which could affect the very viability of any business. Wouldn't business owners be happier if they had employees with enough character to put their hands up to say they need help, rather than make decisions that result in losses of finance, contacts, contracts with other firms, or valuable staff?

Therefore, self-confidence, although important, is a commodity that must be utilised carefully or it can become destructive. When self-reliance is not being channelled to improve the character within, that feeling of certainty will turn to arrogance that starts to eat away at the very confidence that created it in the first place. Hence there is no point to gaining self-esteem that does not depend on the development of character ethics as its base. It will not last unless it is linked to the *Cycle of Confidence*.

Apart from the methods for gaining a positive self-image that you will learn about through this process, if because of wealth, education, election, promotion or because of

someone else's actions, you are put in a position of power where you now feel confident, what are you going to do with that conviction if you neglect your character enhancement? Will you use your newfound self-belief just to push other people around? Your new status could find you in a position to do that. What would that say about you and your character? Is that what you really want for yourself?

Once you have gained self-belief you must harness it as fuel to further self-examination. As you have seen, self-awareness will provide you with the strength of character to ensure your actions and decisions will be carried out without the dangers of arrogance and vanity.

### Summary

- a) Confidence without self-development leads to arrogance.
- b) Arrogance eats away at confidence.
- c) Management without self-development could lead to losses in finance, contacts, contracts or valuable employees.
- d) You need self-belief for character development.
- e) People like to be in the company of those who display self-reliance because of the positive effect that other people's certainty has on themselves.
- f) You should now be able to better judge when to be assertive and when to step back.
- g) You are now more likely to make confident decisions without displaying arrogance or vanity.

The next chapter will show you how the setting of goals with your Vision Statement in support will lead you down a path to success and assist you to maintain the self-confidence that the three previous critical steps have assisted you to attain.