

14. The Final Step

The fifth critical step

So far you have been given the first four critical steps that will ensure that you attain and advance your self-belief within the *Cycle of Confidence*.

They were to:

1. Recognise and embrace your uniqueness,
2. Celebrate each step, of achievement, no matter how small,
3. Write out your Vision Statement and
4. Set goals with small steps to your future success.

In this chapter you will be given the last critical stage needed to maintain that self-confidence that you have now attained and secured. The fifth and final critical step is application. The processes of applying what you have learnt to your everyday life. You can see that this stage, like the other four crucial phases, is both easy and common sense.

To apply what you have learnt is, however, just as imperative as having the knowledge of the other steps, to ensure your ongoing self-awareness. The component of application, putting what you have learnt into practice, will ensure the maintenance of the self-confidence that you have achieved and advanced. It is the maintaining of self-belief that leads to a happy and fulfilled life.

Although the critical steps to attain, advance and maintain self-confidence have been shown to be easy, you mustn't forget that character development continues for as long as you have life and choose to live it.

Talent develops in quiet places, character in the full current of human life.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

As character development has supported the cultivation and growth of your confidence, the first thing that must be done to maintain that advancement is to read your Vision Statement at the start of every day. Reading your Vision Statement daily is part of the application of the five critical steps.

A pleasant start to the day

By reading your Vision Statement first, prior to exercise or breakfast, you will find it is very difficult to be anything but pleasant for the first part of the day. Sorry if you're normally a grump first thing in the morning. It will be hard to be grumpy if you indulge yourself and concentrate for the few seconds that it takes to read your Vision Statement. Having read the words that define the very depths of your character at the start of the day is a great incentive to facing family and friends in a confident, self-assured and positive manner. Reading your Vision Statement once a day, at the start, is of course not enough — surely you didn't think that you would get it that easily — twice a day as a minimum is preferable meaning it could be read at night as well.

However, as you are going to carry it with you, it is probable that you may choose, or need, to refer to it a number of times during the day. The more often you read it, the more your Vision Statement will provide you with encouragement and reassurance about the decisions and choices you're making. That's part of your application, of putting your new skills into practice.

You're aware that self-belief is, unfortunately, intangible by nature. The strength of your Vision Statement is such that, because of its tangible qualities, you can actually hold it in your hands and read your own words that provide support to your self-image. Privately you can proclaim, firstly, that this Vision Statement recognises your individuality and secondly, your Vision Statement shows that you respect the originality of your character. Thirdly, your desire to adhere to your Vision Statement gives you cause for congratulation, and because it reflects the fundamental nature of your conscience, it makes you feel more positive about life.

Keep that trust in yourself

Although self-confidence is intangible, it is your Vision Statement that can be used as the tangible reflection of that confidence. The principles you used to write your Vision Statement, from the depths of your own conscience, will never let you down. Your Vision Statement is reflecting your self-belief, and at the same time it provides transparency to your strength of character. That is why the principles used in your Vision Statement prevent you from displaying arrogance with that self-belief. That is also why you and others will always acknowledge your self-confidence as a trustworthy asset. Your confidence is reflecting your strength of character. You have put yourself into the *Cycle of Confidence*.

It helps to have your Vision Statement framed and in your office or on the wall at home so that it is in constant view for reference during difficult moments. How you do it is up to you, just so long as you read it more than once each day. That's part of the application of what you have learnt. To decide that you do not need to read your Vision Statement daily could easily be seen as a sign of arrogance. You have been cautioned of the dangers of arrogance to your maintaining self-confidence.

The next thing that must be done is to put into practice every day the guidelines you have set for yourself in that Vision Statement. Concentrate on the choices you need to make

during the day and satisfy yourself that they conform to the principles that you have accepted as the foundation of your life. You are going to find that you are more of an observer of life than you used to be, and your Vision Statement will encourage you to think even further about choices. Thinking about choices is part of the application of your new self-awareness skills. This newfound curiosity and enthusiasm for life is a reason to celebrate and you should find reason to do that many times a day.

Every time you find reason to celebrate you are fulfilling both the second and the fifth critical steps to your self-confidence. Celebration and application.

The new you

Having got this far through the process of confidence building, you are now more than just an achiever. You should now feel more positive, and you're entitled to feel that. You will find yourself to be more assertive without wanting to be aggressive. You will have greater curiosity than you used to have. You will find it easier to set targets than you might once have. You will find that other people are recognising your strength of character, which they had not noticed previously. You will also find yourself more tolerant of others than previously. You will find you're more interested in other people, which means that you will now find other people are showing that much more interest in you. You will find that you are able to face setbacks more easily.

You will even find that you enjoy your work much more than you used to and also have a better perspective as to whether or not you're in the right occupation. A very successful man, Richard Branson, the owner of Virgin Airlines, who certainly gives the impression that he likes his job, made an interesting observation in an interview:

“We spend most of our lives working. So why do so few people have a good time doing it”?

The New York Times, February 1993.

It is also reasonable to ask what kinds of people you think are more likely to advance quickly through their employment, to the top job. Will it be those who cut corners, act dishonourably in their dealings with their peers and clients, or those who display confidence and principles through the integrity of their character? You will now look forward to making better decisions about things such as your work and how you relate to friends, associates and loved ones. This may, but doesn't always, happen overnight. However, it will happen much sooner than you think.

Making fewer mistakes

That is why you must continually apply the five critical steps to self-confidence that you now know. Remind yourself often that you are incomparable, and that is the most important of the many things you like about yourself. That is application, just as is the proclaiming of your smallest accomplishments. Provided you can feel that your Vision Statement is working for you, it may be appropriate to write out some small, easily reachable goals.

All of these skills you're practising do become easier, and just as you apply any practised skills, they will start to become a natural part of who you are. You will still make mistakes occasionally when dealing with family, friends and associates, and find it necessary to go back and genuinely apologise for those mistakes. Suddenly that too is also a lot easier. Even emotional mistakes, such as comments about the appearance of others, which are much more difficult to forgive than mistakes of judgement, become easier to apologise for and a genuine apology makes all mistakes much more easily forgiven.

You should, however, find that you will make fewer mistakes than previously because you will be more careful with the choices you make. That is another benefit you will see from having and using your Vision Statement.

Involve your family

Once you are satisfied with the workings of your own Vision Statement, you will find it easier to sit down with your family and, using the same principles, come up with a family Vision Statement. This is part of putting your steps to confidence development into practice by application. You will be surprised how quickly your children will embrace the concept.

Your children will want to come up with their own Vision Statement when you have one and the family has one as well. Of course children need to live in a household where a Vision Statement is not only visible but is also put into practice on a daily basis. That is what application is all about.

Don't expect that because you have a Vision Statement this week that your children will want one next week. You are probably aware that because of the unquestioned love that is shared by you and your children, they are observing your actions from the earliest years of their upbringing. Hence, if your children are being taught, and believe, that your confidence and strength of character are provided for you from a Vision Statement, written from within your respected individuality, that will then provide them with the incentive to look to their own distinctiveness. That will inevitably lead to the inspiration for their own Vision Statement.

It should be obvious that children can never be too young to be told that they are not only unique, but that they should willingly accept and love the person that they are. Remember to always tell your children why they're special. They can never be the tallest or the smartest or the fastest or the cutest. Okay, that may not be correct — perhaps they can all be the cutest. But apart from that, your children are special not only because they are original, but also because as parents you can love and value their singularity with them. Telling them that in words that they understand is part of your requirement for the application of your self-

confidence skills. They may not understand the word *unique*; however you will find the appropriate words, with the same meanings, perhaps within these pages, that they will understand.

It goes without saying that once they eagerly accept the concept of identifying and appreciating their own remarkable selves, they will have even greater triumphs. Isn't it probable that the acknowledgment, and most importantly the valuing, of their own individuality will assist teenagers to cope with some of the unwanted pressures that you know they must face when you're not there? Peer pressure becomes far less daunting when adolescents can call upon that friend within themselves that they willingly accept and know can be trusted before all others. The sooner you put the self-confidence skills that you've learnt into practice, the more likely it is that, the process will be accepted as an integral part of each member of your family's own search for self-confidence.

Share your knowledge

Another great tool for the application of maintaining your self-confidence is to consider inviting a different acquaintance out every week for a cup of coffee, tea or fruit juice. Tell them it's part of your personal self-development program and all you want to do is listen to them talk about whatever they want to talk about. You cannot begin to imagine the insights and pleasure you will get from that experience. Even if you have to prompt a little by asking questions during drinks, you will come away with a new feeling of personal assertiveness and growth every time you do it. How good do you think the other person is going to feel if they have been able to talk for fifteen minutes, about anything, to someone who just wanted to listen? You will find that this practice works really well to enhance your ability to listen to others, which is so critical to your ongoing confidence development. The practice of listening to others is also a wonderful self-discovery skill.

Is the recognition and embracing of their uniqueness going to work for everybody in the advancement of their self-confidence? Absolutely. Will the celebration of all achievements become the catalyst to building self-esteem in everyone? Absolutely. Will a Vision Statement based on the very depths of the principles of a person's character make them a determined, stronger person of action? Absolutely. Will the setting of goals based on the three previously stated critical steps become easy and attainable for whoever sets them? Absolutely. Will the application of all of those ingredients, put into practice daily, obtain, advance and maintain a person's self-confidence? Without a shadow of a doubt it will! Finally will this process of self-improvement provide you with ongoing, unshakeable reserves of self-confidence without the need or appearance of arrogance or vanity? You can easily conclude that the answer to that question is absolutely yes! You should also be confident that you can have complete trust in your self-belief, and that others can have complete trust in you.

Application will turn out to be the easiest of all five of the critical steps to your enhanced self-esteem. And you will soon come to realise that because you're sharing the knowledge of self-discovery, application is also the most rewarding of those steps.

Your ongoing self-development lasts forever

The great thing about the insights you have been given here is that they will work for you whether you are poor or rich, whether you are unemployed or working in a rewarding career. It will work if you spend all day at home raising your children, or if you spend your time alone, or in a busy work environment. The program of self-confidence that you have learnt will work irrespective of your religion or your ethnicity. Having actually commenced the process, which was intended as you moved through this exercise, you are already aware of how effectively it works.

The thoughts, insights and ideas that you have been given here have no bounds. They encompass all people and all of life's situations. Whatever your dreams and aspirations are, they can be met, shared and enjoyed with whomever you choose. Sharing of what you have learnt here is encompassed within the fifth critical step of application.

There is no doubt that if you feel more certain because of what you have learnt here you will be treated as a more positive person by everyone else. That is as a result of the workings of the self-fulfilling prophecy, the effects of which you are now more familiar with.

If your life has been tough, full of disappointments, abuse, fear or guilt, and you have acknowledged and overcome that, what a wonderful inspiration you will be to yourself and others, and what wonderful advantages that achievement can give you over others'. It is often because of the worst of experiences endured that people have learned to have a far greater appreciation of the good things of life when they come their way. You may recall that old saying that "smooth seas never made a good sailor". The tougher your life has been, the more likely it is that your very survival dictates that you could have a much stronger character than those who have had life too easy. The fact that you have taken the time to implement this process shows that where and when the trials of life have come your way, you have determined not to be a quitter. Besides, no one should need to be reminded that you have every right to feel and behave with at least as much self-esteem as everyone else because of your unique existence, that you have recognised and that everyone else is now acknowledging as well.

Nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent.

Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962).

It is an interesting point that if you are already following the guidelines for the cultivation of your confidence that are encompassed in the five critical steps, you now know that your singularity, and thus your importance, is exactly equal to everyone else's. As you continue to follow the directions of this process, you will also nurture the conviction that you will definitely never feel inferior to anybody ever again. You are linked forever to the *Cycle of Confidence*.

Summary

- a) You must apply what you've learnt to your everyday life to maintain your self-confidence.
- b) Character development is an ongoing process.
- c) Read your Vision Statement at least twice a day.
- d) Part of the fifth critical step of application is to continue to trust in yourself.
- e) Encourage your family to seek their individual paths to their own self-confidence.
- f) Share the knowledge of where your self-confidence originates.