



FIVE KEYS TO MANAGING DOUBT

Doubt kills more dreams than failure ever will.

~ Suzy Kassem

It is not always easy to be self-assured and confident. Many people move through life with numerous doubts and insecurities. You may doubt yourself, others, and the world around you. Perhaps you look at certain situations and people with suspicion and distrust. Doubting yourself and the world around you make solid decision-making agonizingly difficult. Some people respond by wavering between several options, unable to make a choice, or second guessing themselves after a decision is made. Insecurity, doubt, and anxiety can all cause

paralysis. And when you are afraid to move in any direction, it is easy to stay stuck in your own indecision.

Doubt can be managed by applying the following strategies:

1. REVIEW YOUR SUCCESSES

Negative “what if” scenarios are full of doubt. Reviewing what went wrong increases timidity, insecurity, and fear. Looking back over successes can increase confidence, remind you of past strength and abilities, and help you feel more reliable, confident, and solid in your decision-making ability. Review what went right recently, rather than endlessly thinking about what went wrong, or what might go wrong in the future.

2. MANAGE YOUR UNCERTAINTY

When you make a decision, doubt may creep in, and you may wonder if you made the right choice. Decisions are often difficult if there is no solid right or wrong answer. An uncertain choice can lead to doubt and indecision. You may need to make a decision, even though you anticipate several problems with it. Remember, you cannot eliminate all problems, gather all information, or always make perfect decisions. With practice, you can better tolerate the frustration that comes from being mildly unsure or a little hesitant.

3. BUILD AND PRACTICE CONFIDENCE

To help build confidence over time, practice in small ways. Ask for something in the store, request a favor, choose a restaurant for you and a friend, or decide to take a class. Make your decisions in advance of a deadline. Choose to get gas, decide to buy milk, and commit to paying a bill early. Practicing these easy ways will make difficult decisions more manageable in the future.

4. CONQUER YOUR FEAR OF DISAPPROVAL

Doubt and insecurity often come from fear of what people might think of our decisions. This can make us cautious, hesitant, and passive. It is important to continually work on being independent and assertive. Although it is nice to have everyone's approval, it rarely, if ever, occurs. Look for those who affirm and encourage you, and minimize your attention on the disapproval and criticism coming from those who do not. As you face your fear of disapproval, you will become stronger. Resist the urge to avoid all situations that may lead to interpersonal conflict.

5. ENGAGE IN POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Engaging in negative thinking and repeating pessimistic thoughts about yourself is very harmful. Ask yourself if your doubts are realistic or if you are overreacting. Challenge the doubts and worries. Identify the doubt, and if it is unrealistic, refuse to entertain it. You can learn to better recognize and refuse negative thoughts and label them as irrational, distortions, or misperceptions. After you identify these thoughts, replace them with something positive and practice the positive substitution.

BE DETERMINED

Increasing confidence, assurance, and security is a skill that can be developed. It is futile to attempt to live in a world that presents you with easy-to-solve, surefire, 100% guaranteed, mistake-free decisions that always feel right. Instead, we all need to manage our anxiety, work down our doubt, and overcome our uncertainty. When you do, everyday decisions become easy to make and you will grow into a strong and confident person.

A TIME TO REFLECT

1 In what ways have you doubted yourself, others, or the world around you in the recent past? Do you feel you've had more than your share of doubts and insecurities?

2 Practice making small, easy decisions. This will make difficult decisions more manageable in the future. List several small ways you could build confidence in your decision-making over time.

3 Identify past, repeating, and negative thoughts you have had about yourself. Develop several challenges for those pessimistic thoughts. Make a commitment to repeat the positive thoughts frequently.
