



What is the Confidence Myth?

Clients come to me all the time wanting to understand how to win, perform better in their jobs, grow a businesses, or to feel more proud of who they are and the work they do. Confidence is a **feeling**. A feeling that comes and goes. Mental toughness is an **attitude**. A gritty attitude that riders command by using practical tactics to achieve a doubt-free, highly focused, locked-in mental state.

The idea of increasing confidence to handle pressure can be thought of as “the confidence myth.” The confidence myth goes something like this: if riders can crank up their confidence a couple of notches, they’ll be more successful at keeping their wits and not fall victim to pressure and nerves. The idea suggests that increasing one’s confidence eradicates doubt.

No matter how confident a rider is, self-doubt is always knocking on their mental door. Doubt and its cousins: indecision and hesitation, are the villains in every rider's story.

Self-confidence is something nearly everyone strives for when they ride. Typically the number one thing standing in the way of greater success, is ourselves. Confidence can feel hard to achieve and hold on to. This is due in large part to the many misconceptions we hold about it. No, you don’t need to “fake it ‘til you make it.” Nor is confidence something you’re born with. Confidence is a skill like any other.

Myth: You have to feel confident to take action.

Truth: You have to take action to feel confident.

Most high-achievers operate under the assumption that you have to feel confident before you take action. The problem is, if you wait around waiting to feel confident, you’ll never take the necessary steps or risks you need to be successful. **Confidence is a byproduct of success.** It's an outcome, not a prerequisite.

Myth: Confidence is achieved through epic success.

Truth: Confidence is achieved through small wins.

Authentic confidence doesn't have to be showy. In fact, it comes from progress over the long-term. The science of small wins suggests that you should instead seek small wins, consistently. A whopping 91 percent of people say focusing on smaller goals increases or greatly increases their confidence. That's because the momentum you gain gives you motivation, energy, and self-belief to crush bigger goals.

Myth: Confidence equates to unwavering self-belief.

Truth: Confidence fluctuates depending on the circumstances.

Don't hold yourself to the impossible standard of being confident 100% of the time. No one feels that way, and if they say they do, then there's a good chance they are lying.

Myth: Confidence involves being pushy, loud, and aggressive.

Truth: Confidence requires assertiveness, but is often understated.

We have been conditioned to equate confidence with bravado and outgoingness. Confident people are portrayed as gregarious, fast talkers, who hold their head high and can instantly command a room.

While that is absolutely one version of confidence, it's not the whole story. You can have quiet confidence. This requires:

- A willingness to speak up for what you believe is right, even at the risk of rejection
- Bring humble enough to learn from others and not make it mean you're inferior
- Accepting your mistakes without chastising yourself or self-sabotaging
- Advocating for your needs and setting boundaries
- Giving yourself praise and validation instead of constantly seeking it from others

Myth: Confidence is motivated by self-criticism.

Truth: Confidence is motivated by self-compassion.

Many people try to motivate themselves to be more confident by judging themselves harshly (I need to be doing better. I should be further along by now). If you hold yourself to exacting standards, your negative self-talk may be particularly vitriolic.

Self-compassion is a path to resiliency, emotional strength, and confidence. Self-compassion doesn't mean letting yourself off the hook. It means being kind and understanding of yourself and is associated with a number of mental health and performance-enhancing benefits, including:

- Lower levels of depression, anxiety, and rumination.
- Greater ability to cope with negative emotions.
- More positive emotions like happiness, wisdom, and connectedness.
- Increased optimism.
- Showing more personal initiative.

Mental toughness is what's needed to handle pressure and succeed in competition. Riders and trainers need to wrap their mind around this: **confidence and mental toughness are not the same**. Confidence is still a factor to performing well, but once rider's are in the ring- "on stage", mental toughness is what they rely on to stay positive, battle unexpected things that happen, and to stay locked in to their ride.

This simple shift in perspective opens the door building a mental game loaded with mental toughness tactics to conquer nerves and win. For now, buy in to that fact that mental toughness is what a rider draws on to fight the fear of not doing well, and believe they have what it takes to succeed, not more confidence.

References:

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