

YOU
CAN
DO IT!

No More Low-Confidence Days!

mind, body + spirit QUICK & HEALTHY DINNER SECRETS, P. 90

fitness

HERE ARE 13 EASY WAYS TO MAKE YOUR SELF-ESTEEM SOAR. USE 'EM TODAY. BY MARISA COHEN

CULTIVATE CONFIDENCE!

1 POINT

START A CONFIDENCE FILE. Keep every complimentary letter, romantic birthday card or flattering photo of yourself in a box; save admiring e-mails in a special folder on your computer. Every so often, look through them to remind yourself how cool/smart/gorgeous other people think you are.

3 POINTS

CHALLENGE THE OTHER HALF OF YOUR BRAIN.

Think of yourself as the logical, number-crunching type? Flex the creative side of your brain by learning to play the piano or trying out for your community theater. If you have an artsy day job, work out your logical side by investing a few dollars in the stock market and following the financial world. "Using both sides of your brain expands your confidence in your skills," says Tim Ursiny, Ph.D., author of *The Confidence Plan*. "Either you'll allow yourself to do something imperfectly and realize that's okay, or you'll discover an untapped talent."

3 POINTS

ERASE BAD MEMORIES.

The next time a mortifying recollection (the time you forgot the name of your company mid sales pitch) flashes through your mind, knock it out: Mentally fade all the color from the image until it's black and white. Then shrink the picture down to a tiny gray dot. "Removing the color eliminates the emotion, and shrinking it dials down the intensity," explains Ursiny. Then replace it with a brilliant, Technicolor image of one of your greatest successes.

3 POINTS

HAIL TO THE CHEF.

Bring a dish to your next potluck that will have everyone asking for seconds. You don't have to be a master cook, just practice one signature recipe until it's perfect. So what if your cakes always fall? The only thing your friends will know is that your impossibly fluffy lemon meringue pie or your roast chicken à la Grandma is to die for.

3 POINTS

GO AHEAD AND BRAG.

Women are experts at deflecting praise ("Oh, thanks, but it was no big deal"), which keeps our confidence in check. So whenever you get a promotion, lose 10 pounds or finish a 5K race, let everyone know by throwing yourself a little party. Don't be obnoxious about it, just say, "I'm really proud and I wanted to share it with all of you."

3 POINTS

GET CLOSURE.

Dig out that half-finished project, like the afghan you stopped knitting when it was no bigger than a hanky or the antique trunk you were going to refinish, and get it done. It's the ability to complete a task that builds our confidence, no matter how imperfect the finished product turns out, says Kimberly Fulcher, a life coach and author of *Remodel Your Reality*.

4 POINTS

BREAK THE ICE.

Next time you're in the elevator with your boss or the über-intimidating CEO, instead of staring intently at the floor, strike up a conversation. Prepare for this by keeping up on company news so you can throw out a tidbit: "I hear we're opening up an office in Chicago. I love the dinosaur exhibit at the Field Museum."

5 POINTS

COMPETE IN YOUR PERSONAL OLYMPICS.

Confidence comes from measurable successes, says Stacy Berman, a certified personal trainer in New York City. So instead of doing the same old thing in the gym, find challenges that matter to you. How quickly can you walk from your house to your daughter's preschool? How many laps around the park can you run with your dog? Time yourself on day one, then again after two weeks of practice to gauge your progress. When you reach your preset goal, reward yourself with a manicure and pedicure.

5 POINTS

LEARN TO LOVE ALONE TIME.

If you need the constant buzz of other people to feel confident, take some time to appreciate the joy of solitude—try dining solo at a sushi bar, taking a five-mile walk alone or dedicating a Sunday afternoon to shutting off your cell phone and going for a drive. "Use the time to reflect on your accomplishments and what you value and love about yourself," says Ursiny. Think of it as a chance to recall your own "best of me" moments, unencumbered by outsiders or demands on your time.

5 POINTS

OWN YOUR LOOK.

Throw away those pictures of Reese's and Halle's hair, forget what your mom said about you needing to look "more professional," and don't let your friends talk you into a crazy color you'll later regret. Instead, find a stylist who'll work with you to create your personal style. You'll project confidence by knowing exactly who you are.

7 POINTS

SPEAK UP!

Get over one of the world's most common fears—that of public speaking—by volunteering to give a presentation at work or a toast at a wedding. Work up your nerve by practicing in front of a friend, and then throw in an even more terrifying element, like singing a verse of Madonna's "Like a Virgin" or telling an embarrassing anecdote. When you do the real thing—without the humiliation factor—it'll seem like a piece of cake.

7 POINTS

ASK FOR BIGGER BUCKS.

At your annual review, take a deep breath and request a raise that's at least 20 percent high-