



TEACHING CONFIDENCE

With confidence,
everything is possible

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Confidence and Character Development

What impact does confidence have on character development?

Before we can answer this question, we need to understand what confidence is and is not.

Understanding Confidence

Confidence is not a trait that some possess and others do not. It's a skill that can be learned and taught.

Confidence is not binary; it's spectral and situational. The spectrum runs from rarely confident to consistently confident and where we fit on the spectrum depends on the situation we're facing. In some situations, we know precisely what to do, so much so that we don't even think about what we're going to do, we just do it. In other instances, we feel clueless as to how we're going to deal with the situation.

Implicit in the spectral-situational nature of confidence is the fact that we are all confident...at times and in certain situations. What we typically call confidence is really an awareness of the confidence we possess. Many whom we consider confident are aware of their confidence, at least on a subconscious level. Those whom we describe as "lacking confidence" are unaware of the confidence they possess. Indeed, vivid memories of their failures prevent them from recalling situations in which they acted confidently.

There's also a misconception that all confident people experience confidence in the same way. In reality, there are three levels of confidence:

- Level 1: Being consistently confident...even when you have no background or experience.
- Level 2: Converting confidence into influence and opportunity.
- Level 3: Being confident in your ability to tap into the power of the subconscious mind consciously and at will.

All three levels of confidence are teachable.

Now that we have a better understanding of confidence, let's turn our attention to how confidence impacts character development. We'll begin by examining key differences in readily-observable attitudes and behaviors of students who are *aware* of their confidence and those who aren't. Helping students become aware of their confidence benefits not only the students, but teachers as well.

Confidence is not a trait; it is a skill that can be learned and taught.

Confidence awareness

Students who aren't aware of their confidence are typically:

- Easily influenced by others' perceptions.
- Egocentric.
- Prone to fear, anxiety, frustration, anger and, potentially, violence.

Conversely, students who are aware of their confidence typically:

- Act upon their values rather than others' perceptions.
- Are other-centric.
- Feel capable of dealing with anything that comes their way..

These are readily-observable attitudes and behaviors. Let's see what impact they have on character development.

Trustworthiness

Confident-aware students are less likely to cave to peer pressure and get involved in things that are not in their, or society's, best interests. Their lack of dependence upon others' perceptions for their self-image makes it easier for them to deal with the peer pressures they'll inevitably face. As a result, confident-aware students are more likely to do the right thing whether or not anyone is looking.

Conversely, less-confident-aware students are more likely to be pressured into behaviors they know are wrong. Their lack of awareness of their confidence makes it very difficult to resist joining in bullying activities, cheating, hiding their mistakes, denying their role in behaviors they know were wrong. Often, they are confused about what their values are, which makes their hold on those values even more tenuous

Respect

Confident-aware students find it easier to be respectful to others and of others' perspectives. They view differences of opinion, differing belief systems, as a source of new information that may or may not be helpful to them. They do not judge others, or their ideas, instead they respect the person's right to their opinions and beliefs even when they don't agree with them.

Less confident-aware students tend to be more judgmental. In part, because they feel that they are being judged. Their judgments are a defense mechanism to avoid being judged. Their judgments become rigid i.e. they're unwilling to move off their position because it makes them look "wrong, stupid, inept" in others' eyes. Because less-confident-aware students do not feel respected, they are less likely to show respect to others.

Responsibility

Confident-aware students find it easier to hold true to their values...even in the absence of scrutiny. They are less likely to hide their mistakes. Instead, they take responsibility for them.

They view their mistakes as part of the learning experience and are grateful for what they've learned. This attitude enables them to look to the future with excitement and anticipation.

Less confident-aware students are more likely to hide their mistakes. They find it difficult to admit mistakes and shortcomings for two reasons. One, is that they feel it will further diminish their image in others' eyes. Two, it deepens their own estimate of their self-worth; which in their mind is already diminished. When attempts to hide their mistakes, or deflect responsibility for them fail, less-confident-aware students are likely to lash out in anger and frustration creating potentially dangerous situations.

Fairness

Students who are aware of their confidence tend to be more fair in their dealings with others. They are more likely to possess an abundance mindset which inclines them to sharing the good fortune they feel.

Conversely, less-confident-aware students tend to possess a scarcity mentality and, in extreme cases, a victim's mentality. It's difficult to deal fairly with people when you don't feel that life is fair to you. Instead, you try to get any advantage you can to tip the scales in your favor so that you don't, once again, fall victim to life's unfairness.

Caring

This is an element of character in which the difference between being egocentric and other-centric really stands out.

Confident-aware students are typically happier which creates a desire on their part to share their happiness, their knowledge, their good fortune with others. They are confident and want others to feel confident and capable as well. Confident-aware students treat people kindly, inspire them when they're experiencing doubt, encourage them in moments of adversity and lend whatever knowledge and expertise they have in helping them.

Less confident-aware students typically focus on what is happening to them, how they feel [often they feel victimized], what others think of them. Consequently, they give little, if any, thought to the impact of what they're doing or saying has on others. These behaviors often distance the less-confident-aware students from their counterparts making them feel even more isolated, less liked and more intensely focused on how badly they feel...with little, if any, regard for what others are experiencing.

It's difficult for anyone in an egocentric state to be kind, compassionate, caring, inspiring and encouraging. It's even harder for students who are experiencing new emotions as they develop physically and mentally.

Growth

Confident-aware students believe in their ability to deal with anything that comes their way. This belief enables them to view challenges as learning opportunities...as the potential for growth in skills and abilities.

The successes this belief engenders further enhance their confidence, their excitement about life and their desire to continue exploring whatever intrigues them. They also don't judge situations as good or bad. They realize that nothing is all good or all bad, there are merely tradeoffs to be made and they get to choose which tradeoff they want to make.

Less confident-aware students feel less capable of dealing with life's challenges. They doubt their ability to deal with the challenges they face which often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. With each failure they feel less capable, less confident and, potentially, victimized.

Their belief system results in wasted talents, wasted opportunities and resignation to a life that does not make them happy. As a result they're more likely to pull others down than raise them up. They unintentionally distance themselves from more confident-aware people who don't want their happiness and excitement diminished by others' victim mentality. If less-confident-aware students are social at all, it's typically with people who share the victim mentality they possess, which reinforces their perception that life isn't fair.

Societal impact

Confidence awareness enables society to enjoy the benefits of a person's skills, abilities and talents. The lack of confidence awareness deprives society of these benefits.

Universality

In the interest of brevity, I've highlighted the ends of the spectrum in the content above. Obviously, there are many students who fall in between these extremes, who exhibit confident behaviors in many situations they face.

While confident-aware students will never be free of doubts, fear and anxiety, with confidence training they can, within nanoseconds, set aside these feelings. They do so because they are confident in their knowledge that they have, and will continue to, deal effectively with any situation they face...whether or not they've had prior experience with that situation. In other words, they learn to be consistently confident even when they have no background or experience.

They possess this ability as a result of becoming aware of their confidence, the source of their confidence and the fact that they've always dealt effectively with any situation they've faced. That doesn't mean that they found the solution on the first iteration, the second or even the fifth iteration, but they found a way to deal with what they were facing. Nor does it mean that they may have later discovered an even better way to deal with the situation, that's just part of the learning curve.

Students who receive confidence education become more:

- Trustworthy
- Respectful
- Responsible

- Fair
- Caring

And:

- Less judgmental
- More tolerant of others' beliefs and values
- More adept at handling disagreement
- More inspiring and encouraging

Students who possess these qualities become role models for all whom they meet and, consequently, have a positive impact on society as well.

Multigenerational

One of the aspects of confidence-awareness training that excites me is the potential for multigenerational impact. It's been well established that children tend to mimic their parents' behaviors. As children become increasingly aware of their confidence, live accordingly and become role models for confident living, their children will live more confidently as will their children's children throughout future generations.

Teacher benefits

By arming teachers with the tools to enhance students' awareness of their confidence and instill in them the knowledge that they can deal with anything that comes their way, they:

- Minimize the time they spend dealing with behavioral issues.
- Spend more time teaching the material they want to teach.
- Regain the joy of teaching previously lost while dealing with behavioral issues.
- Find that parents are more appreciative of what they do because their students are more confident and, consequently, doing better in their studies.
- Become more confident in their abilities to help students who are struggling because they lack an awareness of their confidence.
- Experience an improvement in test scores.

All of these benefits could help alleviate some of the teacher shortages that exist today.

For more information on the confidence education programs call Dale Furtwengler at 314-707-3771 or send him an email at dale@furtwengler.com.