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HOW TO DEVELOP SELF-CONFIDENCE IN SPEECH & MANNER

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PREFACE

The purpose of this book is to inspire in men lofty ideals. It is particularly for those who daily defraud themselves because of doubt, fearthought, and foolish timidity.

Thousands of persons are held in physical and mental bondage, owing to lack of self-confidence. Distrusting themselves, they live a life of limited effort, and at last pass on without having realized more than a small part of their rich possessions. It is believed that this book will be of substantial service to those who wish to rise above mediocrity, and who feel within them something of their divine inheritance. It is commended with confidence to every ambitious man.

Grenville Kleiser.

New York City,
October, 1910

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PRELIMINARY STEPS

The development of self-confidence begins properly with intelligent self-examination. The mind must be closely scrutinized, undesirable tendencies checked; faults eradicated, and correct habits of thought and conduct firmly established.

To achieve the best results this personal overhauling, or stock-taking, should be thorough and fearless.

Fear thought is a disease, to be diagnosed as carefully as any other malady. It arises largely from perverted mental habits. The mind is permitted habitually to dwell upon thoughts of doubt, failure, and inefficiency. So great does this power become, when permitted to rule unchecked, that it affects to greater or less degree almost every act of one's life.

The extremes to which timidity will sometimes go are as amusing as they are absurd. Men fear poverty, darkness, ridicule, microbes, insomnia, dogs, lightning, burglars, cold, solitude, marriage, Friday, lawyers, death, thirteen, accident, and ghosts. The catalog of dreaded possibilities might include black cats, mice, ill luck, criticism, travel, disease, evil eyes, dreams, and old age.

It is true there is a legitimate and honest fear, like that of the young soldier who, upon being asked after his first battle how he felt, replied: "I was afraid I would be afraid, but I was not afraid." It is right and proper that one should fear to do a mean or cowardly thing, to injure another, or to commit any kind of wrong. This fear, however, instead of weakening personal character, imparts to it new and manly force.

To walk straight up to the thing feared will often strip it of its terror. In one of the old fables we read that when man first beheld the camel its huge size caused him to flee in dreadful fear. But later, observing the animal's seeming gentleness, he approached him less timidly, and then, seeing the almost spiritless nature of the beast, he boldly put a bridle in his mouth and set a child to drive him. We can in like manner conquer fearthoughts of the human mind.

Fear has well been called our most ancient enemy. Primitive humanity were unprotected against more powerful animals, and in those early days they had good reason, doubtless, for manifesting (great fear; but it is difficult to justify the wide-spread fear that exists today.

Thousands of persons can say truthfully: "I have all my life feared things that never happened." The danger of this fear attitude is that it frequently attracts that which is dreaded most, and the words of Job are literally fulfilled: "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me and that which I was afraid of is come unto me." We are told that

one of the bravest of African chiefs was driven into a cold sweat of agonizing fear merely by the constant ticking of a watch.

If worry is due to lack of self-reliance, fear is an acknowledgment of inferiority. It does not stand still, and unless throttled will gradually overwhelm its victim, making him at last "Like one, that on a lonesome road Doth walk in fear and dread, And having once turned round walks on, And turns no more his head; Because he knows a frightful fiend Doth close behind him tread."

Timidity is quickly recognized by the world, and not only argues an ignoble mind, as Virgil says, but actually invites pursuit and imposition. John Foster observes in his splendid essay "On Decision of Character": "Weakness, in every form, tempts arrogance; and a man may be allowed to wish for a kind of character with which stupidity and impertinence may not make so free. When a firm, decisive spirit is recognized, it is curious to see how the space clears around a man, and leaves him room and freedom. The disposition to interrogate, dictate, or banter, preserves a respectful and polite distance, judging it not unwise to keep the peace with a person of so much energy."

It is surprising how confidence begets confidence. Courage in danger is sometimes half the battle, while self-reliance will often safeguard a man's interests and give him an abiding sense of security. It makes him feel equal to almost any undertaking, however difficult, leading him to think with Dry den that "They can conquer who believe they can."

The building of self-confidence is not difficult, but it requires patience and intelligent effort. There should be no straining, no anxiety, and no haste. The story of the man who tried to jump over a hill should be kept in mind. He went a long way back, then ran so hard toward the hill that when he got there he was obliged to lie down and rest. Then he got up and walked over the hill. Many men are always preparing, but never achieving.

It is said that with regard to any final or definite end, most men live at hazard, and without any fixed star to guide them. Hence, as a writer has expressed it, "To him that knoweth not the port to which he is bound, no wind can be favorable; neither can he who has not yet determined at what mark he is to shoot, direct his arrow aright."

Indecision is a frequent cause of the fear habit. Men hesitate to take a step one way or the other lest they do the wrong thing, and this spirit of irresolution and hesitation often leads them into the very mistakes they would avoid. It is like a man on a bicycle, endeavoring to steer clear of an obstruction on the road, but all the while keeping his eye fastened upon it so that a collision is inevitable. There is nothing more disastrous to manbuilding than infirmity of purpose. "He who hesitates is lost," while he grows great who puts on "the dauntless spirit of resolution." The world generally accepts a man at his own valuation. If you give an impression that you are afraid, you will be beside-elbowed and imposed upon at almost every turn. Let me illustrate: The other day I saw a dog leisurely pass a cat on the street, and to all appearance there was no ill feeling on either side. The cat looked him straight in the eye as he approached, and the dog returned her confident

glance and quietly passed on. Then the cat, seeing a good chance for escape, bolted across the street, but the instant the dog saw her running he turned and followed in hot haste. It was cat and dog for some yards, when suddenly the cat stopped, humped her back and looked defiantly at her adversary. He stopped, caught his breath, blinked uncertainly, turned up his nose, and walked off. As long as the cat showed fear and ran, the dog chased her; but the moment she took her stand, he respected her. When a man stands up boldly and self-confidently for his rights, fear slinks tremblingly into the shadows.

You, who enter upon this study of self-confidence, resolve to follow it to completion with bulldog tenacity. Realize that no weak-hearted, intermittent efforts will achieve your desired purpose. Hold before you the supreme assurance that you can and will achieve this indispensable power, and great will be the reward of your energy and perseverance.

BUILDING THE WILL

The importance of will-power is recognized by most men, yet few deliberately give any time or thought to its development. Why we resist one thing and yield to another, may be due to "the strongest motive," but what more particularly concerns us in the study of self-confidence is in what way this mighty power can be built and directed.

Does desire control the will, or will desire? The psychologist points to the testimony of consciousness as confirming our freedom to choose a certain course and to pursue it, with the feeling that we could choose some other course if we desired. In either event, there is no feeling of compulsion, and this would seem to confirm the idea of freedom of will.

Let desire, then, be the starting-point of the student's attempt to educate his will. To strengthen immediately his desire for a strong will, he should dwell intently upon the advantages this power will confer upon him. He should think deeply upon the satisfaction that will come to him from doing things definitely and promptly, and the increased self-confidence that will surely follow from the habit of finishing in a thorough manner everything he undertakes. By dwelling long and earnestly upon the inestimable value of a strong, well-directed will, there will grow in his mind an intense desire to possess this faculty, to use it to his daily advantage, and finally by its aid to realize his life's ambition.

There are many things we desire to avoid, such as poverty, pain, misfortune, and ill-health; while there are things we much desire to have, such as wealth, power, knowledge, and independence. It is, however, the intensity of our desire that counts for most. "I desire to become a good public speaker," says one. "How strong is your desire?" asks the teacher. "Will you practice regularly every day for an hour?!" "I don't think I can," says the student, "because my time is so much occupied during the day, and at night I am too tired." "What personal sacrifices are you ready to make?" "None," is the answer. "Then," replies the teacher, "your desire is not strong enough to make you a good public speaker."

This applies with equal force to you who read these pages in search of help to develop your self-confidence. How strong is your desire to acquire this great power? Is it strong enough to lead you carefully to read all the suggestions offered here and to put them into actual practice? Will you enter upon this study with intense earnestness and perseverance? Will you make reasonable sacrifice to achieve this great end? Your answer to such questions as these will largely determine what your success will be.

In the life of every man there are many times when he is in an exalted frame of mind. There is a sudden realization of new and mysterious power, when, indeed, all things seem possible to him. He there upon resolves to do better and greater things than ever before, but in a little while this feeling dies away, leaving only the slightest impress behind it. The student bent upon educating his will should resolve in his mind to take advantage of

these favorable moments to fortify such thoughts with other favorable thoughts, to bring instantly to bear upon himself every conception and emotion that will deepen this sudden inspiration, and to proceed without delay to put these results into actual practice. "Seize the very first possible opportunity," advises "William James, "to act on every resolution you make and on every emotional prompting you may experience in the direction of the habits you aspire to gain."

To choose intelligently between our complex and conflicting desires we must avoid impulsiveness. In every important matter we shall weigh things pro and con, and carefully consider the advantages, dangers, and probabilities before determining our course of action. This will teach us caution and self-restraint. We are told to "look before we leap," to "think twice," and again that "haste makes waste." A little more prudence and deliberateness would prevent most of the serious mistakes of life.

Sometimes an idea must be repeated many times before an enduring impression can be made upon the mind. This is illustrated in modern methods of advertising. The first time you see an announcement it impresses you perhaps feebly. But it is repeated again and again, in newspaper, magazine, letter, and fence-poster, until at length a sufficient number of impressions lead you to become a purchaser. Mental habits are established in the same way. A suggestion is made to your mind once, twice, a hundred, or a thousand times. Some day this repeated suggestion has become a fixed habit, and fulfils its duty unconsciously. The power of reiteration is so great that, if a timid man were to repeat aloud for a few minutes daily, with earnestness and concentration, a list of words such as courage, valor, bravery, gallantry, intrepidity, manliness, pluck, backbone, and audacity, he would shortly find these qualities being incorporated in his own personality.

We must be particularly careful about outside influences. A certain course of conduct is decided upon, after mature consideration, when suddenly we yield to the interposition of a friend who advises an altogether different course. Then when it terminates disastrously, we blame our friend for his interference, and our self for weakness of will. There are times, of course, when the advice of others should be sought and considered, but once having determined what our conduct shall be, let us pursue it without hesitation.

We should be as frank with ourselves as we are with others. We are not slow to point out to them the dangers that lie in a certain course. We can quite as earnestly advise, caution, and urge ourselves in what is best to do.

A realization of personal responsibility has an important influence upon the building of the will. We owe it to our manhood, to others dependent upon us, and to our eternal destiny, that we make the most of ourselves here and now. Our will, no less than our other powers, is given to us for intelligent development. As we more clearly realize this responsibility we shall see the vital importance of willpower and make an increasing effort to build it for high and definite ends. "The education of the will," says Dr. Morell, "is really of far greater importance, as shaping the destiny of the individual, than that of the intellect; and it should never be lost sight of by the practical educator, that it is only by the amassing and consolidating of our volitional residua in certain given directions