

CHECK IN TO THE CONFIDENCE CLINIC



If you lack the self-assurance to succeed, then you need our quick guide to getting ahead **By Lorna Gray**



Being held back by insecurities? Chances are you're part of the 92 per cent of British women harbouring hang-ups that stop them taking control of their lives.* A huge part of being confident comes from healthy levels of self-esteem, but it's something that women increasingly struggle with, especially at work, where 48 per cent believe a lack of confidence has stopped them from progressing.** Read on to find out how to sort your self-esteem today.

07.30 GET DRESSED... TO IMPRESS

It's amazing what a good outfit can do. "How you choose to dress reflects how you view yourself and how you want others to view you," says Jo Usmar, co-author of *This Book Will Make You Confident*. "You don't have to follow the latest trends, but your clothes are one of the most obvious non-verbal signals you send out." Mix a bit of colour or pattern into your wardrobe if you tend to go for plain pieces or wear a skirt if you're usually in jeans. "Making changes like this will boost your confidence and make you look like someone who's in control as it challenges people's perception of you," says Jo.

08.30 MAKE THE DRIVE COUNT

Your commute is the perfect time for a positive imagery exercise. "Think about an impending task that's been making you feel anxious and imagine the best-case outcome," suggests clinical psychologist Dr Jessamy Hibberd. "Often we imagine the worst, which knocks our self-esteem and allows it to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Visualising yourself succeeding will convince you it's possible." Make a change by saying the result you want out loud, e.g. "I want a promotion at my yearly review". Jessamy explains: "Hearing the words will make your determination to see this through more official, as you're not allowing the negative voices to cloud your judgement."

10.00 SIT UP STRAIGHT

If you struggle with confidence at work, next time you're in a meeting, fake it! Research has shown that pretending to be confident will actually help you become it.** And the best place to start is with your posture. In one study, people who sat up straight in their chairs, instead of slouching, were not only perceived as more confident, but felt more confident.** "Good posture also builds a sense of strength and confidence in social situations," says Jo. "So keep your body language open, make good eye contact, stand up tall, and keep your shoulders back and relaxed. Then walk purposefully and assertively into your meeting to appear in control."

13.00 DEAL WITH TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS

One of the biggest drains on self-esteem and confidence are toxic relationships - and there can be lots in the workplace. Be proactive, which automatically makes you feel more in control. "Ask for a meeting with the toxic colleague," suggests Jessamy. "Then avoid using a confrontational 'you,' opting for 'we' instead. For example: 'I feel like we could be getting along better.' It'll stop your workmate from getting defensive." Just never email a complaint, as the tone can be misconstrued.

16.00 NAIL THAT WORK PRESENTATION

"If you're scared of public speaking, give lots of speeches to friends and family until you feel at ease," advises Jo. "Practice makes perfect, plus they can reassure you that you're doing fine." Remember, everyone wants you to do well and no presentation is perfect. Do you remember others' mistakes? Probably not. Get someone to film you speaking, then you can watch it back and find ways to improve and further boost your confidence.

22.00 GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Before you go to bed, make a list of all the things you've been putting off. "Rank each in order of difficulty or fear levels," suggests Jo. "Start with the simplest task and note down the steps needed to complete it. This will make it easier to tackle the harder tasks later on." We bet you drop off to sleep much faster. **F**