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Self-Doubt

In this management business publication we focus on topics that add to our abilities, improve our skills, add positive spins to our actions and we discuss topics that impact our productivity. We all know what the words “Self Confidence” mean. Today we’re going to examine that opposite side of the self-confidence coin... the side called Self-Doubt.

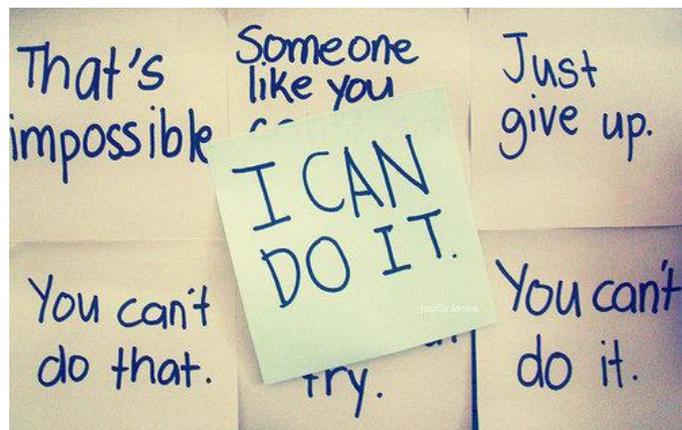
What is self-doubt? Let’s turn to the writings of Petrea Hansen-Adamidis. And we can visit the website - <http://tinybuddha.com/blog/5-steps-to-deal-with-self-doubt-and-trust-your-self-again/>

Self-doubt is what happens when that little voice inside your head convinces you that your plans, your goals, your actions and your results are all less than where and what you think you should be. We’ve all

heard the words “Cudda, Woudda, Shouldda.” This taunting reference is usually what we hear in our heads when we think back on our past and how much different things would have turned out if we had only done, said, acted or completed something other than what we actually did.

We coulda done it differently, we woulda done it differently if we had known what we now know, we shoulda taken some other action. But we did what we did, and more importantly, for that negative critic that lives inside our minds, we did NOT do something else.

It’s important to note that the destructive words are not limited to the past. The real problem with self-doubt is the present. When you think that your results are less than you deserve there is a little chat room in your head where a conversation takes place. There are two people seated at a small table. You are on the right side of the table. Your internal critic sits on the left side. Let’s



listen in on the conversation for a moment: (We will use Y to mean you and C to mean your internal critic.)

Y – I'm about to take on a new job responsibility and expand both my ability and my income. I'm pretty excited about it!

C – What? Are you kidding me? You could have done this years ago and did nothing! You kept



saying you were going to do it but instead kept coming up with excuses about why it would not work, how much money it was going to cost, all the time it would require and how unlikely your success would be. So why do you think anything will be different this time?

Y – It will be different because this is now and that was then. According to you I'm supposed to pay attention to my past as if it's some indicator of my future?

I can do anything I decide to do. I've got plenty of success stories that prove it.

C – Yeah but like you said... that was then and this is now! Don't even think you have what it takes to pull off a new movement towards your goals... you're a slacker – you are now and always will be! You're tired. You're not ready for a big push at this stage of your life. Give it up!

Y – Listen – I can do what I make up my mind to do and I don't need your agreement to get it done! In fact, I'm going to stop listening to you and think of something; anything else other than your endless negative, critical, hateful assessment of my ability or chances to advance myself in any way. You are done!

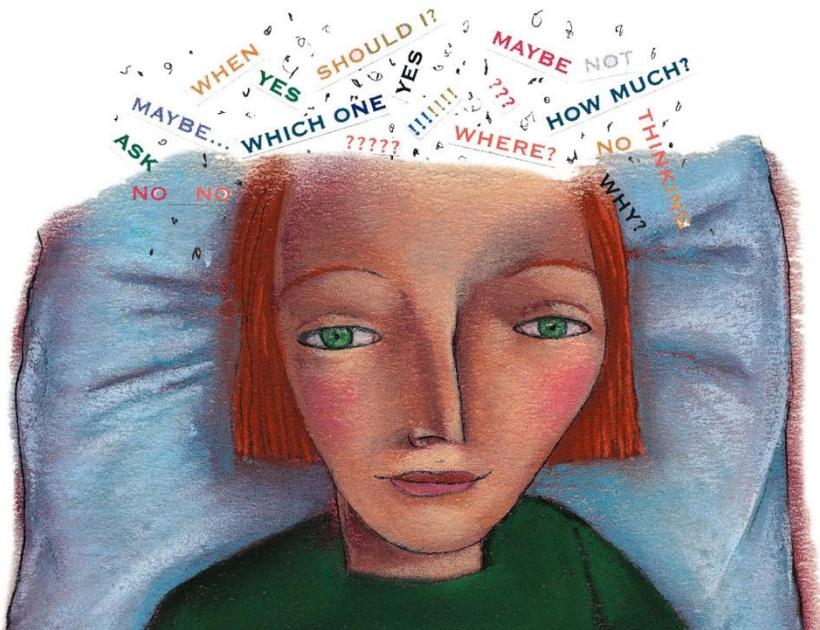
C – Right. This is the same conversation we've had dozens of times over the past and I come out on top every time and you know it! I'll be right this time too so stop thinking anything is going to be different pal. Give it up! You're too old. You're too weak. You're too young. You're not that smart. You can't possibly think your friends are going to support you in this crazy pursuit.

Y – Well, maybe you're right. I am tired and I really don't know what the result will be once I take on the new project. I can take a stab at this next month and use a little time to relax.

Okay .. I think we all get the point. In this sample narrative it seems the Critic won the debate. But that's only because the You caved in. The You started siding with the Critic and agreed with the internal negative assessment of present possibilities by simply deciding to do nothing. Doing

nothing is the fuel of the internal critic for all of us. So let's break it down. Self-doubt happens in this way:

1. We decide we are going to do something positive in any of the five critical areas of our lives – health, job, relationships, money or community.
2. The little voice in our heads quickly reminds us of what has not worked out in the past.
3. We take note of that little voice and unconsciously start agreeing with it.
4. This is where self-doubt begins. As we tell ourselves we probably are not up to the task we start concluding that we need something we do not have. It may be experience, money, other participants or just the will to win.
5. Once we head down that path of doubt it becomes harder and harder to say YES to something we've already started saying NO to.
6. We keep thinking that we can and should take action on that positive goal but the mind keeps all that in check and the result is we sit on the fence of decision. We don't decide yes but we don't decide no either. Self-doubt is the bottom line result.



Is there a way to handle self-doubt? The good news is YES there is. The other news is you will have to place a lot of trust in your ability to buck the tide and charge ahead in spite of that nagging, lingering doubt that seems to overshadow your efforts to take one step at a time. Let's look at a bit of advice from Steven Southwick, Yale School of Medicine:

1. Develop a core set of beliefs that nothing can shake. This can be about your past accomplishments, proving that you have been and can be successful when focused.
2. Try to find meaning in whatever stressful or traumatic thing has happened. Here you can look back on your attempts that did not turn out the way you hoped they would and find the lesson in that experience.
3. Try to maintain a positive outlook. This means the glass is always half full, not half empty. You have most of what you need to succeed any most endeavors. Admit it.
4. Take cues from someone who is especially resilient. You have friends, family, associates and even total strangers who you have various degrees of admiration for. Notice them.

5. Don't run from things that scare you; face them. Most of us like our comfy zones. But accomplishment is not about being a ship at port, it's about being a ship at sea. Change is necessary in order to get out of our comfort zones and reach new destinations.
6. Be quick to reach out for support when things go haywire. There's no shame in asking for help, guidance, advice and support. In fact, most great accomplishments are a function of team work where everyone on the team depends on everyone else to reach goals.
7. Learn new things as often as you can. Some of our readers are in their 70s and are just now learning coding, playing the piano or other instrument, writing a book or learning to fly. Your brain does not know how "old" it is. It notices when it's not needed any longer and starts to shut down as a result. Pretend you are preparing for a new career every few years or so. It's a huge boost to your self-confidence.
8. Find an exercise regimen you'll stick to. Our bodies need exercise. But with comfy cars, comfy sofas, comfy shoes and comfy office chairs it's easy to think that because we are busy we are also strong. If all you do is walk five or six blocks a day every day you will extend your good state of health way into old age. If you don't use it you lose it.

In summary, self-doubt is the opposite of self-confidence. If you're good at something and you know it then be it. Act on your strengths and stop paying so much attention to that little voice in your head that seems hell-bent on dragging you down to your lowest level and keeping you from acting on the goals you want to achieve. Whether it's planting a tree or building a house you have the ability to take the first step. Do this and you'll put self-doubt further and further behind you with each step you take.

Until next week, if you know of any business that would benefit with a little coaching in the areas of organization, time and task management, social media, sales, marketing, customer service, operations, HR, leadership or team-building, have them give us a call at 562-577-7000 or send us an email. We will keep you in the loop on how it's going.

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