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GOT CONFI- DENCE?

Ahhhh, confidence. The secret key to life that everyone wants. I could talk about this for days. But to save you that (aren't you lucky?!), I've picked three questions that I get asked a lot, and answered them for you here. I hope they help you to build your self-confidence.

Q

I don't look like
any of the girls
I see on Instagram
and every time
I think about
it I feel like crap ...

— Katie, 15

A

Katie, do you wanna know what I am constantly asked?


It's 'How are you so confident?'

Now, I know people don't mean that in a nasty way, quite the opposite, but what they're really asking is how I can be so confident when I look so *different*.

There's this perception that the 'better' we look, the more confidence we'll have.

Now, there's nothing wrong with caring about how you look. I'll be the first to tell you that I love looking my best. I love rocking fresh threads and I'm still trying to find ways to talk myself out of many a purchase at the Mecca Beauty counter. I'll also always explore new medical advancements that will help me smooth my skin and improve my appearance.

But what that boils down to is having pride in my appearance.

If I rocked up to a speaking gig with my teeth not brushed, wearing ugg boots and  my PJs, I wouldn't feel confident to speak in front of thousands of people! However, if I've exercised that morning, if I've taken pride in my appearance and put my best foot forward, I'm going to feel more capable and therefore more confident.

There's nothing wrong with presenting the best version of yourself to the world. But don't fall into the massive trap of thinking that you have to look a certain way or look like some airbrushed Insta girl to feel confident.

Because confidence is made up of LOTS of different things. Yes, appearance might be one facet. But it's not the only one!

SIDE NOTE:

Those girls on Instagram are using FILTERS. Heard of them?! Remember: You can't compare your behind-the-scenes with someone else's highlights reel! To the right is a selfie I took one day when I was hanging around the house with Michael. Below is a pic taken with my hair and makeup done, a team of stylists and a photographer behind the lens, professional lighting and some filters at work. What you see on Instagram isn't always reality.

**NO MAKEUP SELFIE****PORTRAIT WITH JUST A SMIDGE OF MAKEUP + STYLING...** **ONE MORE THING:**

If looking at someone's social media feed makes you feel bad about yourself, unfollow them ASAP. Like, right now. What are you doing? Put this book down and go and unfollow them!

OK, it's time for a little flashback

(cue the wavy pictures, wind chimes and soft lighting)

Before the fire, I was a super-confident person. I was athletic, I had a good job, I had an awesome boyfriend, I had a big circle of friends, I raised money for charities.

I was killing it and my confidence was sky high.

And then the fire came along and changed everything. I found myself in a hospital bed with my physical abilities completely stripped away.

I was made redundant from my job, I was socially isolated (my friends were all off working and travelling the ✈️ world, and I was stuck in rehab), I was forced to wear a compression mask that made me stick out like a sore thumb, my boyfriend became my carer and I was completely dependant on him and my mum to do the most basic of tasks.

I also lost pride in my appearance - I would wear Michael's t-shirts and track pants with crocs 🥿 (stylish, I know) and Michael would have to brush my hair on the rare occasion that I let him!

Instead of spending my weekends rock climbing in gorges with Michael, I was spending my weeks at rehab centres and was constantly in and out of operating theatres.

So, yep, as you can imagine, I wasn't feeling confident.

BEFORE THE FIRE



DURING RECOVERY



TODAY




credit: Juli Balla

So, how'd you get it back?

—

I had to slowly rebuild my ability to do the things that made me feel confident: running, *surfing*, challenging myself physically, raising money for charities, studying, reading and getting smarter.

I also started taking pride in my appearance again - I started brushing my hair, wearing cool gym outfits and painting my toenails .

All of these 'little things' came together and slowly, my confidence grew and grew.

I've got a q for you:

—

How do you measure your confidence right now? Is it just tied up in how you look? What about your respect* for yourself, your sporting abilities, how smart you are in class, what a great friend you are, how you help your community?

On the next page is a cool little circle that shows all the ways in which I feel confident. It looks a little like a pie chart, which is why I call it my Confidence Pie (yum?!).

* When I say self-respect I mean how you treat yourself. Are you kind to yourself, do you look after yourself, do you take pride in your appearance and pride in your abilities?



Do you get a little ego boost whenever one of your pics does well on Instagram or social media? That's ok (I get it - that happens to me too!) but it can't be the only way you feel good about yourself. One of the dangers is that you're relying on what other people think about you to make you feel good, and your confidence has got to come from within.

CONFIDENCE PIE

Here it is, my delicious
Little Confidence Pie!

See how I draw
confidence from lots
of different things?



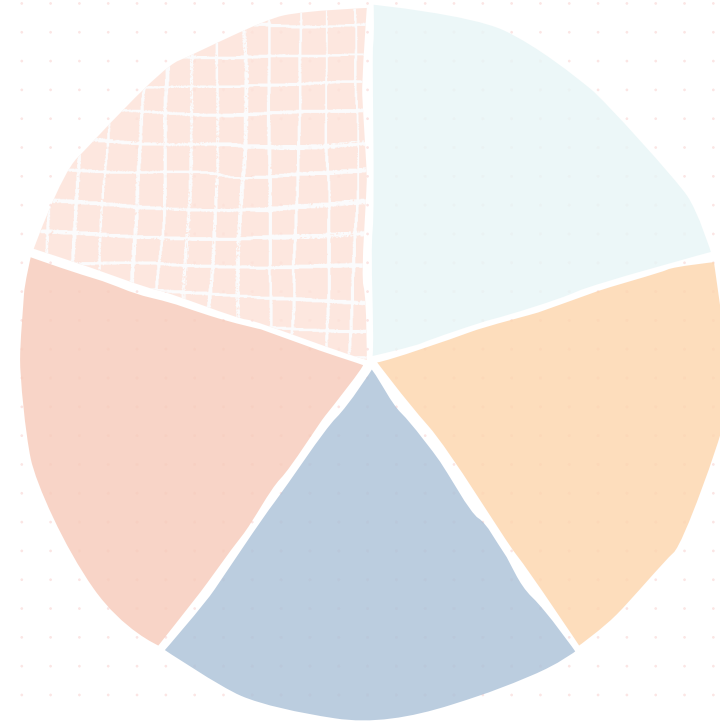
YOUR TURN

I want you to think about all the things that help you to feel more confident and add them to the blank circle to create your own Confidence Pie!

EXAMPLES:

Maybe you feel your confidence grow when you're playing footy, studying, preparing for a debate, getting your hair braided or raising money for your school?

Remember, this is YOUR Confidence Pie, so be honest with yourself about the things that really make YOU feel confident, not what you think 'should' make you feel confident.



Q


What can I do to be confident like you?

—Hayley, 14

A

As your Confidence Pie will show you, Hayley, confidence starts with YOU.

I have some q's for you:

How do you treat your body? Do you fuel up with good food, get enough sleep and move daily? (And when I say 'move' that can be anything from walking, swimming and surfing to playing footy  and dancing - whatever! Just move that body.)

What words do you use to describe yourself? Do you look at yourself in the mirror, pinch your stomach and tell yourself you're disgusting? Or do you smile at yourself and say 'Good morning sunshine!'?

(Psst: check out the self talk chapter on page 62 for more on this.)

What are your personal relationships like? Do they make you feel good about yourself? Or do the people you spend time with bring you down?

See, feeling confident is easier when you're healthy and strong, hanging with people who make you feel great, and being kind to yourself.

Start building healthy habits in these areas and your confidence will start to skyrocket.

But, here's an important tip - just pick ONE area to work on first. When you try to do too many things at once, it's easy to get overwhelmed.

Maybe you can start with drinking more water, walking every day, or getting more sleep? Once that becomes a habit, you can pick something else to work on. Simple!

Wanna break this down even more?

—

Have you ever noticed that after you make a mistake, say the wrong thing or put your foot in your mouth (not literally of course, unless you're an ex-Olympic gymnast! 🤪), you ask yourself questions like 'Why am I such an idiot?', 'Why do I always stuff up?' or 'Why can't I do anything right?'

In our brain, we have what's called the RAS - the Reticular Activating System (bear with me here - that's as science-y as I'm gonna get, I promise).

The RAS is basically a mini Google inside your head. So, when you ask yourself a question, it's like typing that question straight into your internal Google search bar.

Whatever you search for, you'll find.

So, if you wanted to buy a cool pair of kicks, you'll start to notice the ones you want everywhere. Your RAS presents evidence for the things you think about or ask questions about.

Likewise, if you make a mistake in an exam and immediately ask yourself a crappy question like, 'Why am I such an idiot?' your brain will start searching for evidence to prove that you're an idiot! All of a sudden you'll start thinking about all the other times you've messed up.

Google 🔍

ONE MORE THING:



Have you ever heard the saying 'What you focus on is what you'll find'? What that means is that the more you think about something, the more power you give it. So, if you're always thinking about how you failed that maths exam, the more stupid you'll feel. But if you can focus on all the subjects at school that you're great at, are you gonna feel dumb? No way!

Your RAS doesn't discriminate

—

Google 🔍

It will just find the answers to the questions you ask. So if you ask yourself a better question like, 'What can I learn from this?' - your brain will start the search and come up with answers that are more helpful. Something like 'Maybe next time I can get someone to help me revise for that exam'.

Your mindset is critical for failure or success. And part of the shift in mindset is simply asking yourself better questions.

Q

You always seem so confident. Do you ever have days when you feel self-conscious?

—Tim, 16

A

Everyone feels self-conscious sometimes – even footy stars, models, neurosurgeons, presidents and pro-surfers. It doesn't matter how attractive people find you, how smart you are or how good you are at something – no one is immune to feeling unconfident and self-conscious.

It's ok to feel self-conscious sometimes.

On the days I feel self-conscious, I have three options available to me:

ONE I can choose to just accept it and wallow for a while. (Wallowing means letting yourself really feel whatever it is you're feeling.) I decide to just let myself feel uncertain and a bit down. That's ok. But I usually give myself a time limit, otherwise I can find myself feeling bad for a whole day!

So, I give myself an hour just to feel it, and then I go and do something that makes me feel better.

TWO I do something that makes me feel good. I have a list of things that always make me feel positive. It includes: going for a surf, reading a good book, hanging out with mates, going for a run.

All of those things make me feel positive and in charge.

THREE The third option is for those times when, for whatever reason, I can't wallow OR do something to make me feel better. In those cases, I just have to OWN IT.

I'll give you an example.

I remember this time I had to travel for a speech. It was just a few days after I'd had laser surgery on my skin, which makes my face and neck really red and sore. I was walking through the airport and, maybe it was just my imagination, but I just felt like everyone was staring at me.

To be honest with you, I started to get upset. But you know what? Sometimes, you've just gotta remind yourself that no one else's opinion or judgement matters. And so I thought to myself 'Stuff it! You've gotta own this like a boss'.

Because, here's the thing:

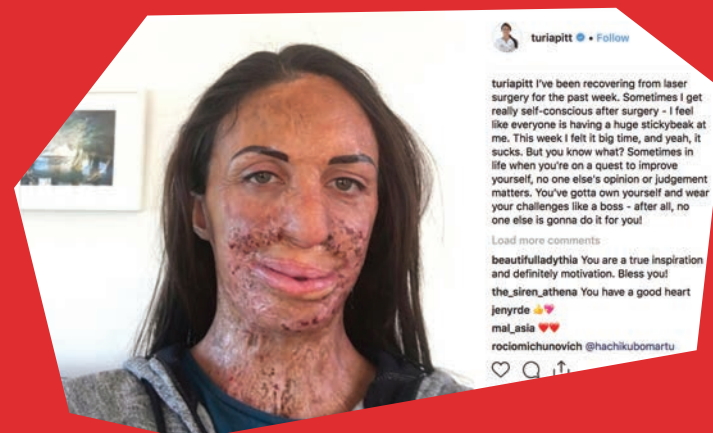
**If you can't own yourself,
no one else is gonna do
it for you.**

So, maybe you feel self-conscious right before you walk into an exam. You can't head out to throw the footy around or watch a funny movie, and you can't afford to wallow because that might affect your performance. That's a time when you've gotta just put your chin up, act brave and confident and OWN IT.

PS.

There's a TED talk by Amy Cuddy that I really love. It's all about how your body language can help you feel more confident. So, pulling your shoulders back and acting brave will actually make you feel brave! [Check it out on page 19.](#)

That day at the airport



I even went so far as to post a selfie on social media (check it above). I'm not suggesting you have to post a photo next time you get a big pimple or cold sore and feel self-conscious about it, I just want you to know that the world doesn't end every time you feel self-conscious. You're gonna be ok.

People can be mean. People do judge - we can all judge sometimes. You can't control that.

So you need to focus on what you can control - your reaction. Pull your shoulders back and own it like a boss. So, to answer your q, Tim, when you feel self-conscious you've got three options:

- ONE** Allow yourself an hour to feel it, then move on.
- TWO** Do something that makes you feel good.
- THREE** Own it.



TL;DR

1	Confidence comes from a lot more than just what we look like.
2	Confidence begins with YOU. Look after yourself, and work on making your self talk POSITIVE.
3	You'll always find what you're looking for, so start looking for the positive.
4	Feeling insecure? Wallow for an hour, do something fun or own it like a boss!
5	Everyone feels self-conscious sometimes, and that's ok.