

# 7 Mental Hacks to Be More Confident in Yourself

July 8, 2016 / [LaRae Quay](#) / [5 Comments](#)



On my first day at the FBI Academy, I didn't feel like a superhero. In fact it wasn't until *after* four grueling months of being placed in dangerous and awkward situations that I built the self-confidence necessary for my career. [Boosting confidence](#) is the primary goal of the Academy—*before* they send agents out with a gun and badge.

There were days when my heart raced and my palms sweat just thinking about the new challenges that faced me. But I learned that success would not make me confident—[confidence in myself and my abilities would make me successful](#).

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On the first day, I was filled with doubt. I had never shot a gun, made an arrest or investigated a foreign spy—these challenges pushed me outside my comfort zone. I felt like I was at the mercy of the unknown, not knowing how I would land on my feet. But [I held onto my dream](#) of becoming an agent and plodded forward.

I'd venture to guess entrepreneurs, leaders and business owners might share some of the same fears I faced at the FBI Academy: *How can I pull this off?* But in my 24 years in the FBI, [the only four-letter word I didn't hear was "can't."](#)

Confidence is the cornerstone of leadership. If you don't believe in yourself, how can others believe in you? Here are seven ways FBI agents learn to boost their confidence—mental hacks you can use to be more confident in yourself, too:

# 1. Push through self-limiting beliefs.

As children we think we can conquer the world, but somewhere between childhood and adulthood, our enthusiasm and natural inclinations to dream big are squashed. Parents and teachers start imposing their own beliefs—about what we can and can't do in life—upon us.

If the instructors at the FBI Academy were not pushing us past our self-limiting beliefs, they weren't doing their job.

## How to make it work for you:

Find your limits by exposing yourself to different situations and [pushing through the uncomfortable](#). Once you have confidence in yourself, you'll be amazed what you can accomplish.

# 2. Never confuse memory with facts.

Our memory does not store information exactly as it's presented to us. Instead we extract the gist of the experience and store it in ways that makes the most sense to us. That's why different people witnessing the same event often have different versions.

Your brain has a built-in confirmation bias. That means it stores information that is consistent with [your own beliefs](#), [values](#) and self-image. This selective memory system helps keep the brain from getting overloaded with too much information.

So recognize that your memory does not always provide you with accurate information. For example if you have low self-esteem, your brain tends to store information that confirms your lack of confidence. That will be all you remember about a specific event.

## How to make it work for you:

Revisit the facts of a memory loaded with self-limiting beliefs and try to gain a more accurate perspective on the event. Talk with others that might have a different perspective.

# 3. Talk to yourself.

This might seem crazy, but it works. Talking to yourself can make you smarter, improve your memory, help you focus and even increase athletic performance. The documentary *The Human Brain* claims we say between 300 to 1,000 words to ourselves per minute. The Navy SEALs and Special Forces use the power of positive self-talk as a way of getting through tough times.

For example by instructing recruits to be mentally tough and speak positively to themselves, they can learn [how to override fears](#) resulting from the limbic brain system, a primal part of the brain that helps us deal with anxiety.

## How to make it work for you:

Be positive, because the way you talk to yourself influences your neurobiological response to it. When you say, *I know what to do* here or see things as a challenge rather than a problem, you've turned your response into a positive one.

*Related:* [4 Ways to Be More Positive](#)

## 4. Think positive to overcome your negativity bias.

Since the early days, humans learned to get lunch or be lunch. Our natural negativity bias has kept us safe from danger for thousands of years. But not every new or different thing is a threat to our survival. This negativity bias can chisel away at our confidence because we're hardwired to pay attention to all that we've done wrong.

FBI agents are taught to hunt the good stuff. It can be hard at times because positive information is like Teflon and easily falls away. But negative information, like Velcro, sticks.

### How to make it work for you:

1. Come up with five [positive thoughts to counter every one negative thought](#).
2. Let every positive thought sit for 20 seconds before moving to the next positive thought.
3. Acknowledge both good and bad emotions.
4. Do not try to suppress negative ones.
5. Label the emotions for what they truly are and move on. Do not enter into inner dialogue about the negative emotion because then it becomes more powerful.

## 5. Raise your curiosity levels.

Curiosity is an important trait for FBI agents working investigations and anyone who wants to be confident and successful.

Curiosity is the foundation of life-long growth. If we remain curious, we remain teachable and our minds and hearts grow larger every day. We can retain our beginner's mind by always looking forward and discovering new experiences and uncovering new information.

### How to make it work for you:

[Ask questions](#) and be curious because:

- It makes your mind active instead of passive.
- It encourages you to be [more observant of new ideas](#).
- It opens up new worlds and possibilities.
- It creates an adventurous response that leads you in a new direction.

## 6. Overcome self-doubt.

If you lack self-confidence, you will always feel like you're at the mercy of other people. When you assume a victim mentality, you are no longer [resilient to life's inevitable obstacles](#) and roadblocks.

FBI agents go where they are needed, not to where they feel most comfortable. I was assigned investigations I had no idea how to solve. But my thinking was this: *Drop me into the middle of any squad or any situation, anywhere, anytime. I will not be scared because I am confident I will succeed wherever I am.*

### How to make it work for you:

No one but you is stopping you from [achieving what you want to accomplish](#). It's time to identify the areas in which you doubt yourself and remove those barriers.

## 7. Face your fears.

When we feel in control, we’re not afraid. When we have a level of comfort with something, it’s not scary. [When we don’t feel in control](#), we don’t think clearly because our emotional brain is in the driver’s seat and takes over. This is why fear often seems random and irrational—our emotions are in control.

To increase safety, FBI agents are taught to move closer to the threat. It does no good to avoid, deny or ignore the fear.

### How to make it work for you:

Harvard Medical School professor Ronald Siegel recommends this in his book, [The Mindfulness Solution](#):

Think about your worst fear. Spend time with it. Now make your fear worse by getting closer to it. Imagine the worst that could happen. Now focus on your breathing. Feel your body relax. See, you didn’t die, did you? You’re on your way to conquering your fear.

If you don’t believe in yourself, how do you expect anybody else to? Start today.

*Related:* [Your Thoughts Create Your Beliefs](#)

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**teresa** on August 2, 2018 at 3:27 pm

can i ever speak in public?

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**Jay** on August 2, 2018 at 4:20 pm

To be confident, you have to understand why you have low confidence in the first place. In a nutshell, it's basically an accumulation of negative life experiences. (For many people it actually starts way back in childhood.)

The reason I'm saying this is because it's not something that can change overnight. You have to learn how to rewire your brain and how you see yourself. It's really worth checking out Sean Cooper's guide on this stuff, it's brilliant. Here's a link to his guide: <http://www.confidencehacks.info>

You CAN speak in public, you just need to get over the mental barrier. Hope this helps!

[Reply](#)



**Sensai** on August 3, 2018 at 3:33 pm

Thank you, I needed this.

Anyone else have good and bad days? Like sometimes for whatever reason I feel pretty confident, and then other days its like the self esteem is sucked out of me.

[Reply](#)

**Accumulate your mental well-being – Well-Being** on August 2, 2018 at 11:37 pm

[...] in yourself! You can do anything if you set your mind to it. Be confident. Remember that no one else in this world is you. Be true to yourself, your morals, your values, [...]

[Reply](#)

**Brigitte Evans** on August 10, 2018 at 12:42 pm

We should all be confident all the time, and nobody has the right to put us down. Great article! I also think if we could do something to make us feel better, we should. I hade some non-invasive procedures on my face it the best cosmetic surgery in Perth <http://medisculpt.com.au/> And I did not regret it cause it looks natural and helped me with feeling better about myself.