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Norman Vincent Peale, The Power of Positive Thinking (Prentice-Hall, Inc.) 1952, 1-17; 70-78; 105-125.

Peale's Positive Thinking
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Believe in Yourself

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers you cannot be successful or happy. But with sound self-confidence you can succeed. A sense of inferiority and inadequacy interferes with the attainment of your hopes, but self-confidence leads to self-realization and successful achievement. Because of the importance of this mental attitude, this book will help you believe in yourself and release your inner powers.

It is appalling to realize the number of pathetic people who are hampered and made miserable by the malady popularly called the inferiority complex. But you need not suffer from this trouble. When proper steps are taken, it can be overcome. You can develop creative faith in yourself—faith that is justified.

After speaking to a convention of businessmen in a city auditorium, I was on the stage greeting people when a man approached me and with a peculiar intensity of manner asked, "May I talk with you about a matter of desperate importance to me?"

I asked him to remain until the others had gone, then we went backstage and sat down.

"I'm in this town to handle the most important busi-

ness deal of my life," he explained. "If I succeed, it means everything to me. If I fail, I'm done for."

I suggested that he relax a little, that nothing was quite that final. If he succeeded, that was fine. If he didn't, well, tomorrow was another day.

"I have a terrible disbelief in myself," he said dejectedly. "I have no confidence. I just don't believe I can put it over. I am very discouraged and depressed. In fact," he lamented, "I'm just about sunk. Here I am, forty years old. Why is it that all my life I have been tormented by inferiority feelings, by lack of confidence, by self-doubt? I listened to your speech tonight in which you talked about the power of positive thinking, and I want to ask how I can get some faith in myself."

"There are two steps to take," I replied. "First, it is important to discover why you have these feelings of no power. That requires analysis and will take time. We must approach the maladies of our emotional life as a physician probes to find something wrong physically. This cannot be done immediately, certainly not in our brief interview tonight, and it may require treatment to reach a permanent solution. But to pull you through this immediate problem I shall give you a formula which will work if you use it.

"As you walk down the street tonight I suggest that you repeat certain words which I shall give you. Say them over several times after you get into bed. When you awaken tomorrow, repeat them three times before arising. On the way to your important appointment say them three additional times. Do this with an attitude of faith and you will receive sufficient strength and ability to deal with this problem. Later, if you wish, we can go into an analysis of your basic problem, but whatever we come up with following that study, the formula which I am now going to give you can be a large factor in the eventual cure."

Following is the affirmation which I gave him—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13) He was unfamiliar with these words so I wrote them on a card and had him read them over three times aloud.

"Now, follow that prescription, and I am sure things will come out all right."

He pulled himself up, stood quietly for a moment, then said with considerable feeling, "O.K., Doctor. O.K."

I watched him square his shoulders and walk out into the night. He seemed a pathetic figure, and yet the way he carried himself as he disappeared showed that faith was already at work in his mind.

Subsequently he reported that this simple formula "did wonders" for him and added, "It seems incredible that a few words from the Bible could do so much for a person."

This man later had a study made of the reasons for his inferiority attitudes. They were cleared away by scientific counseling and by the application of religious faith. He was taught how to have faith; was given certain specific instructions to follow (these are given later in this chapter). Gradually he attained a strong, steady, reasonable confidence. He never ceases to express amazement at the way in which things now flow toward rather than away from him. His personality has taken on a positive, not negative, character so that he no longer repels success, but, on the contrary, draws it to him. He now has an authentic confidence in his own powers.

There are various causes of inferiority feelings, and not a few stem from childhood.

An executive consulted me about a young man whom he wished to advance in his company. "But," he explained, "he cannot be trusted with important secret information and I'm sorry, for otherwise I would make him my administrative assistant. He has all the other

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and
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necessary qualifications, but he talks too much, and without meaning to do so divulges matters of a private and important nature."

Upon analysis I found that he "talked too much" simply because of an inferiority feeling. To compensate for it he succumbed to the temptation of parading his knowledge.

He associated with men who were rather well to do, all of whom had attended college and belonged to a fraternity. But this boy was reared in poverty, had not been a college man or fraternity member. Thus he felt himself inferior to his associates in education and social background. To build himself up with his associates and to enhance his self-esteem, his subconscious mind, which always seeks to provide a compensatory mechanism, supplied him with a means for raising his ego.

He was on "the inside" in the industry, and accompanied his superior to conferences where he met outstanding men and listened to important private conversations. He reported just enough of his "inside information" to cause his associates to regard him with admiration and envy. This served to elevate his self-esteem and satisfy his desire for recognition.

When the employer became aware of the cause of this personality trait, being a kindly and understanding man, he pointed out to the young man the opportunities in business to which his abilities could lead him. He also described how his inferiority feelings caused his unreliability in confidential matters. This self-knowledge, together with a sincere practicing of the techniques of faith and prayer, made him a valuable asset to his company. His real powers were released.

I can perhaps illustrate the manner in which many youngsters acquire an inferiority complex through the use of a personal reference. As a small boy I was painfully thin. I had lots of energy, was on a track team, was

healthy and hard as nails, but thin. And that bothered me because I didn't want to be thin. I wanted to be fat. I was called "skinny," but I didn't want to be called "skinny." I wanted to be called "fat." I longed to be hard-boiled and tough and fat. I did everything to get fat. I drank cod-liver oil, consumed vast numbers of milk shakes, ate thousands of chocolate sundaes with whipped cream and nuts, cakes and pies innumerable, but they did not affect me in the slightest. I stayed thin and lay awake nights thinking and agonizing about it. I kept on trying to get heavy until I was about thirty, when all of a sudden did I get heavy? I bulged at the seams. Then I became self-conscious because I was so fat, and finally had to take off forty pounds with equal agony to get myself down to respectable size.

In the second place (to conclude this personal analysis which I give only because it may help others by showing how this malady works), I was a minister's son and was constantly reminded of that fact. Everybody else could do everything, but if I did even the slightest little thing—"Ah, you are a preacher's son." So I didn't want to be a preacher's son, for preachers' sons are supposed to be nice and namby-pamby. I wanted to be known as a hard-boiled fellow. Perhaps that is why preachers' sons get their reputation for being a little difficult, because they rebel against having to carry the banner of the church all the time. I vowed there was one thing I would never do, and that was to become a preacher.

Also, I came of a family practically every member of which was a performer in public, a platform speaker, and that was the last thing I wanted to be. They used to make me get up in public to make speeches when it scared me to death, even filled me with terror. That was years ago, but the twinge of it comes to me every now and then when I walk onto a platform. I had to use every

known device to develop confidence in what powers the good Lord gave me.

I found the solution of this problem in the simple techniques of faith taught in the Bible. These principles are scientific and sound and can heal any personality of the pain of inferiority feelings. Their use can enable the sufferer to find and release the powers which have been inhibited by a feeling of inadequacy.

Such are some of the sources of the inferiority complex which erect power barriers in our personalities. It is some emotional violence done to us in childhood, or the consequences of certain circumstances, or something we did to ourselves. This malady arises out of the misty past in the dim recesses of our personalities.

Perhaps you had an older brother who was a brilliant student. He got A's in school; you made only C's, and you never heard the last of it. So you believed that you could never succeed in life as he could. He got A's and you got C's, so you reasoned that you were consigned to getting C's all your life. Apparently you never realized that some of those who failed to get high grades in school have been the greatest successes outside of school. Just because somebody gets an A in college doesn't make him the greatest man in the United States, because maybe his A's will stop when he gets his diploma, and the fellow who got C's in school will go on later to get the real A's in life.

The greatest secret for eliminating the inferiority complex, which is another term for deep and profound self-doubt, is to fill your mind to overflowing with faith. Develop a tremendous faith in God and that will give you a humble yet soundly realistic faith in yourself.

The acquiring of dynamic faith is accomplished by prayer, lots of prayer, by reading and mentally absorbing the Bible and by practicing its faith techniques. In another chapter I deal with specific formulas of prayer,

but I want to point out here that the type of prayer that produces the quality of faith required to eliminate inferiority is of a particular nature. Surface skimming, formalistic and perfunctory prayer is not sufficiently powerful.

A wonderful colored woman, a cook in the home of friends of mine in Texas, was asked how she so completely mastered her troubles. She answered that ordinary problems could be met by ordinary prayers, but that "when a big trouble comes along, you have to pray deep prayers."

One of my most inspiring friends was the late Harlowe B. Andrews of Syracuse, New York, one of the best businessmen and competent spiritual experts I ever knew. He said the trouble with most prayers is that they aren't big enough. "To get anywhere with faith," said he, "learn to pray big prayers. God will rate you according to the size of your prayers." Doubtless he was right, for the Scriptures say, "According to your faith be it unto you." (Matthew 9:29) So the bigger your problem, the bigger your prayer should be.

Roland Hayes, the singer, quoted his grandfather to me, a man whose education was not equal to that of his grandson, but whose native wisdom was obviously sound. He said, "The trouble with lots of prayers is they ain't got no suction." Drive your prayers deep into your doubts, fears, inferiorities. Pray deep, big prayers that have plenty of suction and you will come up with powerful and vital faith.

Go to a competent spiritual adviser and let him teach you how to have faith. The ability to possess and utilize faith and gain the release of powers it provides are skills and, like any skills, must be studied and practiced to gain perfection.

At the conclusion of this chapter are listed ten suggestions for overcoming your inferiority pattern and for

developing faith. Practice these rules diligently and they will aid you in developing confidence in yourself by dissipating your feelings of inferiority, however deeply imbedded.

At this point, however, I wish to indicate that to build up feelings of self-confidence the practice of suggesting confidence concepts to your mind is very effective. If your mind is obsessed by thoughts of insecurity and inadequacy it is, of course, due to the fact that such ideas have dominated your thinking over a long period of time. Another and more positive pattern of ideas must be given the mind, and that is accomplished by repetitive suggestion of confidence ideas. In the busy activities of daily existence thought disciplining is required if you are to re-educate the mind and make of it a power-producing plant. It is possible, even in the midst of your daily work, to drive confident thoughts into consciousness. Let me tell you about one man who did so by the use of a unique method.

One icy winter morning he called for me at a hotel in a Midwestern city to take me about thirty-five miles to another town to fill a lecture engagement. We got into his car and started off at a rather high rate of speed on the slippery road. He was going a little faster than I thought reasonable, and I reminded him that we had plenty of time and suggested that we take it easy.

"Don't let my driving worry you," he replied. "I used to be filled with all kinds of insecurities myself, but I got over them. I was afraid of everything. I feared an automobile trip or an airplane flight; and if any of my family went away I worried until they returned. I always went around with a feeling that something was going to happen, and it made my life miserable. I was saturated with inferiority and lacked confidence. This state of mind reflected itself in my business and I wasn't doing very well. But I hit upon a wonderful plan which knocked

all these insecurity feelings out of my mind, and now I live with a feeling of confidence, not only in myself but in life generally."

This was the "wonderful plan." He pointed to two clips fastened on the instrument panel of the car just below the windshield and, reaching into the glove compartment, took out a pack of small cards. He selected one and slipped it beneath the clip. It read, "If ye have faith . . . nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Matthew 17:20) He removed that one, shuffled expertly through the cards with one hand as he drove, selected another, and placed it under the clip. This one read, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

"I'm a traveling salesman," he explained, "and I drive around all day calling on my customers. I have discovered that while a man drives he thinks all kinds of thoughts. If his pattern of thought is negative, he will think many negative thoughts during the day and that, of course, is bad for him; but that is the way I used to be. I used to drive around all day between calls thinking fear and defeat thoughts, and incidentally that is one reason my sales were down. But since I have been using these cards as I drive and committing the words to memory, I have learned to think differently. The old insecurities that used to haunt me are just about all gone, and instead of thinking fear thoughts of defeat and ineffectiveness, I think thoughts of faith and courage. It is really wonderful the way this method has changed me. It has helped in my business, too, for how can one expect to make a sale if he drives up to a customer's place of business thinking he is not going to make a sale?"

This plan used by my friend is a very wise one. By filling his mind with affirmations of the presence, support, and help of God, he had actually changed his thought processes. He put an end to the domination of

his long-held sense of insecurity. His potential powers were set free.

We build up the feeling of insecurity or security by how we think. If in our thoughts we constantly fix attention upon sinister expectations of dire events that might happen, the result will be constantly to feel insecure. And what is even more serious is the tendency to create, by the power of thought, the very condition we fear. This salesman actually created positive results by vital thoughts of courage and confidence through the process of placing the cards before him in his car. His powers, curiously inhibited by a defeat psychology, now flowed out of a personality in which creative attitudes had been stimulated.

Lack of self-confidence apparently is one of the great problems besetting people today. In a university a survey was made of six hundred students in psychology courses. The students were asked to state their most difficult personal problem. Seventy-five per cent listed lack of confidence. It can safely be assumed that the same large proportion is true of the population generally. Everywhere you encounter people who are inwardly afraid, who shrink from life, who suffer from a deep sense of inadequacy and insecurity, who doubt their own powers. Deep within themselves they mistrust their ability to meet responsibilities or to grasp opportunities. Always they are beset by the vague and sinister fear that something is not going to be quite right. They do not believe that they have it in them to be what they want to be, and so they try to make themselves content with something less than that of which they are capable. Thousands upon thousands go crawling through life on their hands and knees, defeated and afraid. And in most cases such frustration of power is unnecessary.

The blows of life, the accumulation of difficulties, the multiplication of problems tend to sap energy and leave

you spent and discouraged. In such a condition the true status of your power is often obscured, and a person yields to a discouragement that is not justified by the facts. It is vitally essential to re-appraise your personality assets. When done in an attitude of reasonableness, this evaluation will convince you that you are less defeated than you think you are.

For example, a man fifty-two years of age consulted me. He was in great despondency. He revealed utter despair. He said he "was all through." He informed me that everything he had built up over his lifetime had been swept away.

"Everything?" I asked.

"Everything," he repeated. He was through, he reiterated. "I have nothing left at all. Everything is gone. There is no hope, and I am too old to start all over again. I have lost all faith."

Naturally I felt sympathetic toward him, but it was evident that his chief trouble was the fact that dark shadows of hopelessness had entered his mind and discolored his outlook, distorting it. Behind this twisted thinking his true powers had retreated, leaving him without force.

"So," I said, "suppose we take a piece of paper and write down the values you have left."

"There's no use," he sighed. "I haven't a single thing left. I thought I told you that."

I said, "Let's just see anyway." Then asked, "Is your wife still with you?"

"Why, yes, of course, and she is wonderful. We have been married for thirty years. She would never leave me no matter how bad things are."

"All right, let us put that down—your wife is still with you and she will never leave you no matter what happens. How about your children? Got any children?"

"Yes," he replied, "I have three and they are certainly

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wonderful. I have been touched by the way they have come to me and said, 'Dad, we love you, and we'll stand by you.'

"Well, then," I said, "that is number two—three children who love you and who will stand by you. Got any friends?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, "I really have some fine friends. I must admit they have been pretty decent. They have come around and said they would like to help me, but what can they do? They can't do anything."

"That is number three—you have some friends who would like to help you and who hold you in esteem. How about your integrity? Have you done anything wrong?"

"My integrity is all right," he replied. "I have always tried to do the right thing and my conscience is clear."

"All right," I said, "we will put that down as number four—integrity. How about your health?"

"My health is all right," he answered. "I have had very few sick days and I guess I am in pretty good shape physically."

"So let's put down as number five—good physical health. How about the United States? Do you think it's still doing business and is the land of opportunity?"

"Yes," he said. "It is the only country in the world I would want to live in."

"That is number six—you live in the United States, land of opportunity, and you are glad to be here." Then I asked, "How about your religious faith? Do you believe in God and that God will help you?"

"Yes," he said. "I do not think I could have gotten through this at all if I hadn't had some help from God."

"Now," I said, "let's list the assets we have figured out:

- "1. A wonderful wife—married for thirty years.
- "2. Three devoted children who will stand by you.
- "3. Friends who will help you and who hold you in esteem.

"4. Integrity—nothing to be ashamed of.

"5. Good physical health.

"6. Live in the United States, the greatest country in the world.

"7. Have religious faith."

I shoved it across the table at him. "Take a look at that. I guess you have quite a total of assets. I thought you told me everything had been swept away."

He grinned ashamedly. "I guess I didn't think of those things. I never thought of it that way. Perhaps things aren't so bad at that," he said pensively. "Maybe I can start all over again if I can just get some confidence, if I can get the feel of some power within me."

Well, he got it, and he did start all over again. But he did so only when he changed his viewpoint, his mental attitude. Faith swept away his doubts, and more than enough power to overcome all his difficulties emerged from within him.

This incident illustrates a profound truth which is expressed in a very important statement made by the famous psychiatrist, Dr. Karl Menninger. He said, "Attitudes are more important than facts." That is worth repeating until its truth grips you. Any fact facing us, however difficult, even seemingly hopeless, is not so important as our attitude toward that fact. How you think about a fact may defeat you before you ever do anything about it. You may permit a fact to overwhelm you mentally before you start to deal with it actually. On the other hand, a confident and optimistic thought pattern can modify or overcome the fact altogether.

I know a man who is a tremendous asset to his organization, not because of any extraordinary ability, but because he invariably demonstrates a triumphant thought pattern. Perhaps his associates view a proposition pessimistically, so he employs what he calls "the vacuum-cleaner method." That is, by a series of questions he

"sucks the dust" out of his associates' minds; he draws out their negative attitudes. Then quietly he suggests positive ideas concerning the proposition until a new set of attitudes gives them a new concept of the facts.

They often comment upon how different facts appear when this man "goes to work on them." It's the confidence attitude that makes the difference, nor does this rule out objectivity in an appraisal of facts. The inferiority complex victim sees all facts through discolored attitudes. The secret of correction is simply to gain a normal view, and that is always slanted on the positive side.

So if you feel that you are defeated and have lost confidence in your ability to win, sit down, take a piece of paper and make a list, not of the factors that are against you, but of those that are for you. If you or I or anybody think constantly of the forces that seem to be against us, we will build them up into a power far beyond that which is justified. They will assume a formidable strength which they do not actually possess. But if, on the contrary, you mentally visualize and affirm and reaffirm your assets and keep your thoughts on them, emphasizing them to the fullest extent, you will rise out of any difficulty regardless of what it may be. Your inner powers will reassert themselves and, with the help of God, lift you from defeat to victory.

One of the most powerful concepts, one which is a sure cure for lack of confidence, is the thought that God is actually with you and helping you. This is one of the simplest teachings in religion, namely, that Almighty God will be your companion, will stand by you, help you, and see you through. No other idea is so powerful in developing self-confidence as this simple belief when practiced. To practice it simply affirm "God is with me; God is helping me; God is guiding me." Spend several minutes each day visualizing His presence. Then practice

believing that affirmation. Go about your business on the assumption that what you have affirmed and visualized is true. Affirm it, visualize it, believe it, and it will actualize itself. The release of power which this procedure stimulates will astonish you.

Feelings of confidence depend upon the type of thoughts that habitually occupy your mind. Think defeat and you are bound to feel defeated. But practice thinking confident thoughts, make it a dominating habit, and you will develop such a strong sense of capacity that regardless of what difficulties arise you will be able to overcome them. Feelings of confidence actually induce increased strength. Basil King once said, "Be bold, and mighty forces will come to your aid." Experience proves the truth of this. You will feel these mighty forces aiding you as your increasing faith reconditions your attitudes.

Emerson declared a tremendous truth, "They conquer who believe they can." And he added, "Do the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain." Practice confidence and faith and your fears and insecurities will soon have no power over you.

Once when Stonewall Jackson planned a daring attack, one of his generals fearfully objected, saying, "I am afraid of this" or "I fear that . . ." Putting his hand on his timorous subordinate's shoulder, Jackson said, "General, never take counsel of your fears."

The secret is to fill your mind with thoughts of faith, confidence, and security. This will force out or expel all thoughts of doubt, all lack of confidence. To one man who for a long time had been haunted by insecurities and fears I suggested that he read through the Bible underlining in red pencil every statement it contains relative to courage and confidence. He also committed them to memory, in effect cramming his mind full of the healthiest, happiest, most powerful thoughts in the world. These dynamic thoughts changed him from cringing

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hopelessness to a man of compelling force. The change in him in a few weeks was remarkable. From almost complete defeat he became a confident and inspiring personality. He now radiates courage and magnetism. He regained confidence in himself and his own powers by a simple process of thought conditioning.

To sum up—what can you do *now* to build up your self-confidence? Following are ten simple, workable rules for overcoming inadequacy attitudes and learning to practice faith. Thousands have used these rules, reporting successful results. Undertake this program and you, too, will build up confidence in your powers. You, too, will have a new feeling of power.

1. Formulate and stamp indelibly on your mind a mental picture of yourself as succeeding. Hold this picture tenaciously. Never permit it to fade. Your mind will seek to develop this picture. Never think of yourself as failing; never doubt the reality of the mental image. That is most dangerous, for the mind always tries to complete what it pictures. So *always* picture "success" no matter how badly things seem to be going at the moment.

2. Whenever a negative thought concerning your personal powers comes to mind, deliberately voice a positive thought to cancel it out.

3. Do not build up obstacles in your imagination. Appreciate every so-called obstacle. Minimize them. Difficulties must be studied and efficiently dealt with to be eliminated, but they must be seen for only what they are. They must not be inflated by fear thoughts.

4. Do not be awestruck by other people and try to copy them. Nobody can be you as efficiently as YOU can. Remember also that most people, despite their confident appearance and demeanor, are often as scared as you are and as doubtful of themselves.

5. Ten times a day repeat these dynamic words, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

(Stop reading and repeat them NOW slowly and confidently.)

6. Get a competent counselor to help you understand why you do what you do. Learn the origin of your inferiority and self-doubt feelings which often begin in childhood. Self-knowledge leads to a cure.

7. Ten times each day practice the following affirmation, repeating it out loud if possible. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13) Repeat those words NOW. That magic statement is the most powerful antidote on earth to inferiority thoughts.

8. Make a true estimate of your own ability, then raise it 10 per cent. Do not become egotistical, but develop a wholesome self-respect. Believe in your own God-released powers.

9. Put yourself in God's hands. To do that simply state, "I am in God's hands." Then believe you are NOW receiving all the power you need. "Feel" it flowing into you. Affirm that "the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21) in the form of adequate power to meet life's demands.

10. Remind yourself that God is with you and nothing can defeat you. Believe that you *now* RECEIVE power from Him.

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