

## HOW TO ACQUIRE UNLIMITED SELF- CONFIDENCE

By Susan Berkley

As I write this article I m preparing for a two-week trip to Brazil. I travel a lot and being out of the country gives me ample opportunity to reflect on what it means to be an American -- the similarities and differences between ourselves and those from other countries. One characteristic that seems to stand above all others is our apparent self confidence, a quality others admire in us and we admire in ourselves.

When an American lacks confidence it s a big deal. It seems as if every time we turn on the television or open a magazine the fabulous icons of American life are thrust in our faces -- actors, models, athletes, the rich and famous. Never sweating. Always flawless. Exuding self-esteem. These perfect specimens are the gold standard to which we are compelled to compare ourselves.

And we are doomed to measure up short. We seem to forget that most of these images are airbrushed anyway, that behind every perfect body is a plastic surgeon and a phalanx of makeup artists, personal trainers, and diet doctors. Not to mention a human being who is often addicted to drugs or alcohol, miserably unhappy and suffering from severe psychological problems.

Sometimes it seems as if the current fascination with plastic surgery, botox and the like, is nothing more than a futile attempt to surgically acquire a mask of confidence, a permanent happy face. True self-confidence does not come from having a flawless body, riches or fame. It is not something you can convince yourself to have. Nor does it come from positive thinking, positive self-talk, or re-framing your language.

The psychoanalyst Norberto R. Keppe writes in his new book *The Origin of Illness* (available at <http://www.analyticaltrilogy.org>) that we can only feel truly self-confident and strong within ourselves when we are engaged in action that is good, beautiful and truthful.

In public speaking, this means taking the focus off yourself and putting it on the audience. Instead of trying to look good or smart or perfect or special, it means working hard to prepare and deliver a presentation that meets the needs of the audience, that will enlighten and entertain them to the best of your ability.

Often, a lack of confidence in speaking comes from an unconscious rejection of goodness within oneself. This can manifest as being hyper-critical of oneself or overly afraid of making a mistake in public even when you are well prepared and an expert in your field. Or it can manifest as too much self-assurance, as falling in love with your words and ideas and forgetting that you are here to serve the audience, not to glorify yourself. Ouch!

When we don t do good, or when we reject the goodness in our lives and in ourselves, we suffer psychologically, physically and socially. The inner equilibrium and poise, the

self-assurance we crave already resides within but it is rooted not in the material world or in our physical being, but in the virtues of affection, goodness, truth, beauty, and mainly in the virtue of humility. Cultivate these virtues and unlimited self-confidence will be yours.

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