



CONFIDENCE TO WIN

Confidence is the belief that you can succeed at what you aim to achieve.

Research indicates that confidence is THE key factor that separates top players from the rest. Top players do not wish or hope for success. They are absolutely convinced of their ability to succeed. So how do they get to be so confident? Are they just born that way? NO! They have learned it and so can you.

“WHEN ATHLETES FEEL CONFIDENT, THEY TEND TO BE MORE RELAXED, TO FEEL LESS PRESSURE, TO REMAIN CALMER, AND TO SOLVE PROBLEMS MORE INTELLIGENTLY.”
-DR. JIM LOEHR, SPORTS PSYCHOLOGIST

The Story Of Dora The Doubter

There is not much point in being technically flawless, extremely fit, and tactically brilliant, if every time you get out onto the court, you are full of doubts and lack confidence in your abilities.



When you watch a tennis match, it is easy to see the player who loses her confidence. Let's consider Dora the Doubter. Dora trains hard, eats well, and hits many hours. Yet somehow, she seems to lose a lot of matches. Today, she meets Charlotte the Conqueror on Court Four.

- She starts off okay. Then at 3 - 2 in the first, she makes a few mistakes and within a few moments, she begins to play defensively, she tightens up and begins mis-hitting some balls.
- She becomes distracted by external factors (the wind, a bad call, and the crowd), and her head and shoulders begin to droop. Inside her head, she doubts herself, feels mad at herself, and starts thinking negatively.
- Who needs an opponent when this is happening?
- Dora will defeat herself with her own lack of confidence.
- If only she spent as much time to learn and practice her mental game as she does on the physical aspects, the outcome of this match may not be so predictable.

Mind Games

Most players agree with the legendary player Jimmy Connors, that “Tennis is 95% mental”. So why do so many players, like Dora, spend thousands of hours on physical training, yet spend relatively little time or energy to improve their mental skills? Mental skills, such as concentration, do improve with practice. Get to work! The art of confidence is to learn to think and act like a winner.

Begin with:

1. Recognize and take responsibility for the mental side of your game.
2. Work on those aspects that need improvement.
3. Practice, practice, practice, until confidence becomes a part of you.



Want To Increase Your Confidence?

- Start by using the ideas contained in this topic.
- A qualified counselor or psychologist can assist you to improve your confidence.
- Speak to your primary care provider.

Improve Your Self-Confidence

EVALUATE

- Ask yourself if you are doing everything possible in all areas to be the best you can be?
- Honestly review: technique, tactics, nutrition, sleep, fitness, recovery, focus, mental skills, and attitude.
- This will help you plan to peak at key times in your season and to maintain physical, mental, and emotional stamina and strength throughout the tennis year.
- When you plan, prepare and recover well, your confidence will soar.

PLAN & SET GOALS

- Identify your strengths and areas for improvement. Set your goals. Plan how to reach your goals.
- Set short-term goals along the way, e.g., ‘To improve my first serve percentage to 65%’ or ‘To drill ten backhands down the line’.
- When you succeed and reach each short-term goal, you will experience improved confidence.

BELIEVE

- Your beliefs can help you to reach your goals or to block you. Are your beliefs realistic or based on false or irrational ideas?
- Your beliefs turn your dreams (or your nightmares) into reality. You choose what to believe.

SELF-TALK

- Be aware of all the internal conversations you have in your head. Your self-talk directs the outcome of everything you do. If you always call yourself ‘stupid’, eventually you will believe it.
- Focus instead on the positive side of the situation. Change, ‘I am a loser’ into “I will learn from that match’.
- Pump up your self-talk to make it even more powerful and confidence-boosting. Your volley is ‘great’; your mood is ‘fantastic.’

EXPECTATIONS

- No one feels 100% confident all the time. When you do something new or something very challenging, it is okay and expected that you will feel less confident and perhaps doubt your ability.
- As you learn skills to better prepare for the challenges, your confidence and comfort levels will improve.

VISUALIZE

- Use visualization techniques to create realistic, confident images of yourself in different match situations. Confident players see, feel and hear winning shots, anticipate moves, and fight challenges.
- Players with low confidence often see what they fear might happen....and then experience that fear as it becomes reality.
- Practice visualization over and over again for it to work well. A psychologist or sports psychologist can teach you visualization. Ask your mental healthcare provider for more information about this important mental skill.

**“YOU MISS 100% OF THE SHOTS YOU DON’T TAKE.”
-WAYNE GRETZKY, ICE HOCKEY CHAMPION**

ACT

- Confident players LOOK like champions. Their posture says they are ready for any challenges.
- They hold their head up, shoulders back, and walk with a bounce in their step. Their faces remain calm and alert.
- Acting as if you are confident, can even trick you into feeling more confident. Try it and see for yourself. It works!

GO FOR IT!

- Always do your best. Make a commitment and go for it. Practice and play with 100% effort and dedication.
- Confident people look for opportunities, take them, and turn them into successes.

PLAY IN THE NOW

- Focus on this point, this game. Don’t worry about what happened before or what may happen in the future.
- Let go of the outcome (the result), so you can concentrate on what you are doing right now.

STOP TRYING

- Sometimes you want something so much, that you try too hard to push it along and make it even harder for yourself.
- Trust that you can relax and let things proceed. Have the confidence to let things unfold as they should.

PRAISE

- Give yourself credit for what you do well. You have special talents and abilities that are unique to you.
- When you acknowledge the great things you do, on and off the court, you will further improve your self-confidence.