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Walking down Nicollet Mall, it seems easy to spot the most successful among us: shined shoes, straight backs, massive smiles, blue tooth hooked up and arms swinging: confidence practically pours out of some people. Or does it? Confidence is not something we are born with. It has to be cultivated and constantly recharged. So what do these mall walkers have that everyone else is missing? Nothing, really, except an upbeat attitude and an inner voice that constantly says, "You can."

A lack of confidence is sometimes the only obstacle standing between people and their goals. But even the most self-assured have moments of uncertainty and an irrational lack of faith in their own talents. It is at these times that winners change gears and recognize that confidence does not come from outside; it comes from within, from each person's belief in their own aptitude and potential.

Successful people are fiercely competitive, often competing most intensely against themselves. Knowing logically that he is qualified and capable, a highly competitive person will detect the chinks in his own armor, the possible falling off points. Rather than be defeated by this fear of failure, he will work to eliminate his vulnerabilities. He may need to gather additional information, improve his presentation or bring in additional team members. In a way, he's covering his backside. By realizing he isn't perfect, he allows himself to engage the resources he needs. Who isn't more confident when his backside's well-covered?

Successful people make tough choices. They are keenly aware of the sacrifices they need to make to reach a goal, and they are willing to focus their energy and resources in the right direction to drive results. Confidence comes from knowing where the finish line is, and being willing to take the actions necessary to get there.

Successful people put themselves first. Not selfishly, but rather, carefully. Taking the time to care for herself physically, emotionally and spiritually, a person sends the message to others that she has value. A strong sense of self-worth translates into poise and visible self-assurance.

Successful people acknowledge their accomplishments. Many career-oriented professionals get the message that, "You're only as good as your next success." But if you don't stop to celebrate a closed deal, a goal reached, a benchmark achieved, who will? Pat yourself on the back (briefly) before moving forward. This success is a building block toward your next goal. Enjoy it.

Successful people share the spotlight. You didn't get to where you are (wherever that is) without some assistance. What goes around inevitably comes back around: by pointing out the success of others, you develop a culture of appreciation around you that you may need to fall back on when your own self-confidence wavers.

Can we talk ourselves into success? The messages we hear every day have a profound impact on our lives; ensure your own success by being your own best advocate. Make a capable and confident impression by telling yourself, constantly and with conviction that, yes, you can.

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