

A MODERN WOMAN'S
GUIDE FROM SELF-DOUBT
TO SELF-ASSURANCE

SHUSH Your Inner Critic



Packed with practical strategies, empowering insights, and real-world exercises, this guide helps you silence your inner critic, boost confidence, and thrive in your personal and professional life. Stop second-guessing yourself and start owning your success!

www.robinofspring.com

Shush Your Inner Critic

A Modern Woman's Guide from Self-Doubt to
Self-assurance

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Chapter 1

The Confidence Myth—Why You're More Ready Than You Think

"Each time we face our fear, we gain strength, courage, and confidence in the doing."

– Theodore Roosevelt

Emma sat in the conference room, heart pounding, hands clenched under the table.

She knew the answer. The big boss had just asked a question, and she had the perfect response. She had spent hours researching this exact issue.

But instead of speaking up, she hesitated.

What if I say it wrong?

What if they think I'm not smart enough?

What if someone else has a better idea?

Seconds ticked by. The moment passed. Someone else spoke up, offering an idea she had been thinking. The boss nodded approvingly.

Emma forced a smile, but inside? She felt sick.

Why hadn't she just said it?

Sound familiar?

Here's the truth: You don't need to "become" confident to act confidently. You just need to stop believing the lies that are holding you back.

And in this chapter, we're going to shatter the biggest confidence myth that's keeping you stuck, so you can finally step up, speak up, and stand out.

The Confidence Myth That's Holding You Back

How many times have you thought...

- *"I'll feel more confident once I have more experience."*
- *"I just need to learn a little more before I put myself out there."*
- *"I'll speak up in meetings when I stop feeling nervous."*

If you've ever told yourself these things, you're not alone.

But here's the truth that most women don't realize: Confidence isn't something you wait for—it's something you create.

Most people believe they need to *feel* confident first before they take action. But that's **completely backward**.

Confidence doesn't come before action. Confidence comes because of action.

Think about learning to drive. The first time you got behind the wheel, were you confident? Probably not. But you did it anyway. And over time, as you practiced, your confidence grew.

The same is true for speaking up, leading meetings, negotiating your salary, or going after your goals.

You don't wait until you feel confident to take action. You take action, and confidence follows.

What's Really Keeping You Stuck? (Hint: It's Not a Lack of Confidence)

Most women think they struggle with confidence. But what if confidence isn't actually the problem?


Here's what's really happening:

- **You're listening to your inner critic too much.** That little voice in your head that whispers, "*What if you fail?*" "What if they think you're not good enough?" It's not confidence you lack. It's freedom from that voice.
- **You've been conditioned to doubt yourself.** Studies show that women underestimate their abilities more often than men—even when their skills are equal. (*Kay & Shipman, The Confidence Code*). The issue isn't your ability, but the outdated beliefs you've been taught.
- **You're afraid of being seen as "too much."** Many women hold back because they don't want to be labeled as aggressive, bossy, or arrogant. So they shrink themselves, waiting for permission that never comes.

The result?

❌ You hesitate.

❌ You second-guess yourself.

 You play small.

But here's the good news: You don't have to stay stuck.

The 3 Confidence-Boosting Shifts You Can Make Right Now

Want to stop waiting for confidence and start showing up boldly? Start with these three shifts:

1. Separate Your Feelings from the Facts

Feeling uncertain doesn't mean you're unqualified. Feeling nervous doesn't mean you're not ready.

Confidence isn't the absence of fear. It's taking action despite it.

Try this: Next time you hesitate, ask yourself: "What would I do right now if I trusted myself?"

Then do that.

2. Reframe Self-Doubt as Proof That You're Growing

Successful women still have self-doubt. They just don't let it stop them.

In fact, research shows that high-achieving women experience imposter syndrome the most (Clance & Imes, 1978).

Doubt doesn't mean you're not ready. It means you're stretching outside your comfort zone, and that's where real growth happens.

Try this: Next time doubt creeps in, remind yourself: "This feeling means I'm stepping up. That's a good thing."

3. Take Action First—Confidence Will Catch Up

The fastest way to build confidence? Do the thing you're afraid of before you feel ready.

Every time you speak up, raise your hand, or take a bold step, you're proving to yourself that you can do hard things.

And the more you do it, the more confident you become.

Try this: Set a "confidence challenge" this week. Do one small thing that stretches you—whether it's speaking up in a meeting, asking for feedback, or sharing your ideas first.

Every small action builds momentum. **Start now.**

Your Next Step: Stop Waiting, Start Owning It

Confidence isn't something you magically wake up with one day. It's built one choice, one action, one bold moment at a time.

And now, you have a choice.

You can keep waiting, hoping confidence will find you. Or you can start acting like the confident woman you're becoming, **right now**.

So, what's one bold move you're going to make today?

Chapter 2

Unmasking the Shadows – Recognize & Release Self-Doubt

"The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease forever to be able to do it."

– J.M. Barrie

On the surface, Ava seemed confident—she spoke up in meetings, led projects with ease, and had the respect of her colleagues. But inside, she constantly questioned herself. Every compliment, every achievement came with a small, nagging voice: "Who are you to deserve this?"

One rainy evening, after a particularly grueling day of back-to-back presentations, Ava found herself walking through the city streets, lost in thought. As she passed a shop window, she stopped and looked at her reflection. For the first time, she truly saw the exhaustion in her

eyes, the cracks in the confident image she worked so hard to maintain. In that moment, she realized that the biggest challenge she faced wasn't external. It was the battle happening in her own mind.

This chapter, *Unmasking the Shadows: Recognize & Release Self-Doubt*, is about that very battle. It's about recognizing the quiet self-doubt that holds you back and understanding the beliefs that keep you from fully stepping into your potential. Are you ready to take an honest look at the thoughts that have been weighing you down?

The Hidden Battle: Understanding Self-Doubt

Ava's story isn't unique. Many ambitious, talented women experience the same silent battle, appearing confident to the world while privately questioning their own worth. The real struggle is not the lack of skill, talent, or drive. It's the persistent, internal voice whispering, *"You're not good enough."*

Self-doubt is more than a fleeting moment of uncertainty; it's a deeply ingrained belief system that can erode confidence and stall career growth. It manifests in hesitation, second-guessing, and an inability to fully own our successes.

Truth is, self-doubt is not an accurate reflection of your abilities. It is simply a mental habit, one that can be unlearned.

What Causes Self-Doubt?

Self-doubt doesn't appear overnight. It's shaped by experiences, upbringing, societal conditioning, and even the environments we navigate daily. Common sources include:

- **Childhood Experiences:** If you grew up in an environment where perfection was expected or praise was rare, you may have internalized the belief that you're never quite "enough."

- **Past Failures or Criticism:** A single negative experience such as a public mistake at work or harsh feedback can linger in your mind, reinforcing doubt.
- **Comparison & Social Pressure:** Seeing others succeed, especially in the age of social media, can make you feel like you're falling behind, even when you're making great progress.
- **Perfectionism:** The belief that everything must be flawless can create an endless cycle of self-doubt and procrastination.

The Science Behind Self-Doubt

Neuroscience reveals that our brains have a negativity bias—an evolutionary tendency to focus more on threats and failures than on successes. According to research by psychologist Rick Hanson, "The brain is like Velcro for negative experiences and Teflon for positive ones." (Hanson, *Hardwiring Happiness*, 2013). This means we tend to overanalyze our mistakes while downplaying our achievements.

Good news is, self-doubt is not hardwired. It is learned and what is learned can be unlearned.

Recognizing the Patterns of Self-Doubt

Before you can break free from self-doubt, you need to recognize the ways it shows up in your life. Here are five common signs:

1. The Imposter Syndrome Loop

You've achieved success, yet you feel like a fraud. You fear that one day, people will "find out" that you're not as capable as they think. That's imposter syndrome – a form of self-doubt that disproportionately affects high-achieving women. Research from the International Journal of Behavioral Science found that 70% of people experience imposter syndrome at some point (Clance & Imes, 1978).

Example: You land a big promotion, but instead of celebrating, you tell yourself, *"They must have made a mistake. I don't really deserve this."*

2. Overanalyzing & Second-Guessing

Self-doubt makes decisions feel overwhelming. Instead of trusting your instincts, you overthink every choice, fearing you'll make the wrong move.

Example: You spend hours rewriting an email before hitting send, worried it's not "perfect" enough.

3. Seeking Constant Validation

You struggle to make decisions without reassurance from others. If you don't get approval, you assume you must be wrong.

Example: You hesitate to share your ideas in meetings unless someone else confirms they're good first.

4. Playing Small & Avoiding Risks

Fear of failure causes you to shrink your goals and opportunities. Instead of going after that dream role, you convince yourself you're not ready yet.

Example: You see a job listing that excites you, but since you don't meet 100% of the requirements, you don't apply. (Meanwhile, studies show men apply if they meet only 60% of the criteria! [Hewlett Packard Study, 2014])

5. Downplaying Achievements

You dismiss your own accomplishments as luck or external factors rather than acknowledging your hard work and talent.

Example: You get praised for a successful project, but instead of owning it, you say, *"Oh, it was just a team effort."*

Releasing Self-Doubt: Practical Strategies to Reclaim Confidence

Recognizing self-doubt is the first step. The next step is actively dismantling it. Here are five proven techniques to help you break free:

1. Flip the Script: Reframe Your Internal Dialogue

Your thoughts create your reality. Every time self-doubt creeps in, challenge it with a reframe.

Example:

Self-Doubt Thought: “I don’t belong in this leadership role.”

Reframed Thought: “I was chosen for this role because I bring value and experience.”

Write down your most common self-doubt thoughts and reframe them into positive affirmations.

2. Use the “Best Friend” Technique

Would you ever tell a close friend she’s not good enough? Of course not! So why say it to yourself? Next time you catch yourself being self-critical, ask: *Would I speak this way to my best friend?* If not, change your inner dialogue to something more empowering.

3. Keep a “Confidence File”

Start collecting evidence of your success. Save emails, testimonials, or notes of praise in a dedicated folder. On days when doubt creeps in, revisit this file to remind yourself of your achievements.

4. Take Small, Bold Actions

Confidence is built through action. Instead of waiting to "feel ready," take small steps outside your comfort zone. The more you act despite self-doubt, the weaker it becomes.

Action Ideas:

- ✓ Speak up once in a meeting.
- ✓ Apply for an opportunity even if you don't feel 100% ready.
- ✓ Share an idea without seeking validation first.

5. Develop a Growth Mindset

People with a growth mindset view challenges as opportunities to learn rather than as failures. If something doesn't go as planned, instead of thinking, "*I failed,*" shift to "*What did I learn?*"

Mantra: I am always learning, evolving, and growing. Every challenge makes me stronger.

Action Steps & Reflection Prompts

To ensure you're actively breaking free from self-doubt, complete these exercises:

1. Journaling Exercise:

- Write about a time when you felt self-doubt.
- How did it hold you back?
- How would you handle that situation differently using what you've learned?

2. Daily Confidence Tracker:

- Each day, write down one thing you did well (even something small).
- Over time, this reinforces your self-worth.

3. Affirmation Challenge:

- Choose 3 affirmations to repeat daily for the next week.
- Example: *"I am skilled, I am valuable, and I trust my abilities."*

Self-doubt thrives in silence, but now, you've brought it into the light. You've identified its patterns, challenged its hold on you, and armed yourself with strategies to rewrite your inner narrative.

Will you take action? Will you speak up, apply for the opportunity, or embrace your achievements?

Remember: Confidence doesn't come first. Action comes first. Confidence follows.

In the next chapter, you'll take a step forward: uncovering and owning your unique value so that you can fully embrace your brilliance.

Because you're not just good enough. You're exceptional. And it's time you start believing it.

Chapter 3

Own Your Value – The Power of Self-Worth

"To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

The conference room was packed, the air buzzing with anticipation. Maya sat at the long, polished table, surrounded by industry experts—men and women whose confidence filled the room. As the discussion began, ideas flowed effortlessly from her colleagues. Bold opinions. Conviction in every word.

Maya, however, sat frozen, her mind racing. She had a brilliant idea, one she *knew* could reshape the entire strategy. But as she opened her mouth to speak, doubt crept in. *What if they already know this? What if I sound inexperienced?*

The moment passed. Someone else spoke up with an idea almost identical to hers. The room buzzed with excitement. *That was my thought exactly!* she realized. Yet no one would ever know.

Later that evening, as she replayed the meeting in her mind, questions kept coming back: *Why do I hesitate? Why do I doubt myself?*

And then, it hit her. She had spent years working hard, achieving, and proving herself, but she had never truly believed in her own value. She had let hesitation, self-doubt, and the fear of judgment silence her.

Have you had a similar experience?

It's time to stop underestimating yourself. Don't let others take credit for your ideas just because you were hesitant to share them. Stop waiting for permission to show your strength. When you truly recognize your worth, everything changes—your presence, your career, your confidence.

Why Owning Your Value Changes Everything

How many times have you held back in a meeting, second-guessed your ideas, or let someone else take the spotlight because you weren't sure if you were the right person to speak up?

Studies show that women are more likely to underestimate their abilities, even when their performance is equal to or better than men's (Kay & Shipman, *The Confidence Code*, 2014). Meanwhile, men tend to overestimate their abilities and go for opportunities, even if they're only partially qualified.

You need to start believing that **you are just as capable as anyone else in the room.**

Owning your value isn't about arrogance. It's about recognizing what you bring to the table and having the confidence to stand behind it. It's about knowing, deep in your bones, that you are worthy of success, not because someone else says so, but because you say so.

The Hidden Ways We Undervalue Ourselves (And How to Stop)

1. You Downplay Your Achievements

Ever gotten a compliment and brushed it off?

"Oh, it was just a team effort."

"I just got lucky."

"It wasn't a big deal."

This is called **discounting your success**, and it keeps you from truly seeing your worth.

How to Break the Habit: The next time someone compliments your work, try saying “*Thank you, I worked really hard on that.*” No excuses, no deflecting.

2. You Wait for Permission to Speak Up

In meetings, do you hesitate to share your thoughts, worrying if they’re “good enough”? Meanwhile, someone else speaks up, often with a similar idea and gets all the credit.

How to Break the Habit:

- Remind yourself: **Your voice matters.** If you have an idea, share it.
- Use a **power phrase** to jump in: “*I have a thought to add here...*” or “*Here’s another perspective...*”
- Speak early in meetings. It sets the tone for confidence.

3. You Feel Like You Have to Prove Yourself (Over and Over Again)

Many women feel they must constantly prove their worth. Instead of being confident in their expertise, they over-explain, over-prepare, and over-apologize.

How to Break the Habit:

- Stop over-explaining. Say what you need to say, then stop.
- Replace “*Does that make sense?*” with “*I hope that clarifies things.*”
- Own your expertise. You don’t need to prove yourself. **You already are qualified.**

4. You Settle for Less Than You Deserve

Not asking for a raise. Not applying for the promotion. Accepting more work without recognition. All of these come from undervaluing yourself.

How to Break the Habit:

- **Know your worth.** Research salaries for your role and industry. Websites like CareerBuilder and Payscale can help.
- **Practice asking for more.** If negotiating a raise feels intimidating, start small—ask for extra PTO, a professional development budget, or flexible hours.
- **Remember: They expect you to negotiate.** Employers rarely offer their highest number first.

The Confidence Formula: 3 Ways to Recognize Your Own Value Every Day

1. Keep a “Brag File”

Create a folder (digital or physical) where you track every achievement, compliment, and win, big or small.

Why? Because when self-doubt creeps in, this file will remind you of how much you've already accomplished.

Action Step: Start today. Write down three things you're proud of from the last month.

2. Use Power Posture & Confident Body Language

The way you carry yourself affects how others perceive you and how you see yourself.

Try this:

- Stand tall with your shoulders back.
- Make eye contact when speaking.
- Use deliberate, steady movements.

Harvard researcher Amy Cuddy found that adopting a “power pose” for just two minutes can boost confidence and lower stress (Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges, 2015).

Action Step: Before a big meeting, interview, or presentation, stand in a power pose for two minutes. (Yes, it feels silly, but it works!)

3. Speak About Yourself with Confidence

How you talk about yourself shapes how others see you. If you downplay your achievements, people will believe you. If you own them, people will respect you.

Action Step: When someone asks what you do, drop the “just” and “kind of” from your response.

Instead of: *“I’m just a manager at...”*

Say: *“I lead a team that...”*

Your Challenge: Appreciate Your Value Today

You've read the strategies. Now it's time to put them into action.

Here's your Confidence Challenge for the week:

Day 1: Write down three things you're proud of. Keep adding to this list daily.

Day 2: Speak up in a meeting or conversation—without overthinking.

Day 3: Accept a compliment without deflecting. Simply say, "Thank you."

Day 4: Practice a power pose before a big moment.

Day 5: Rewrite your LinkedIn bio, resume, or professional summary using stronger, more confident language.

You Deserve to Be Here

Owning your value isn't about becoming someone else. It's about fully stepping into who you already are.

Imagine how your life would change if you truly believed in yourself.

If you didn't wait for permission.

If you spoke with authority.

If you finally recognized that you belong in every room you walk into.

That future is 100% possible.

And the next step is learning how to speak with authority and command the room without fear, hesitation, or doubt.

Chapter 4

Speak with Authority – Own the Room, Own the Conversation

"Speak clearly, if you speak at all; carve every word before you let it fall."

– Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.

The moment Emma stood up to speak, she felt the familiar tightness in her chest.

She had prepared for this presentation for weeks. She knew the material inside out. But as she looked around the boardroom, scanning the faces of her colleague, her mind started spinning.

What if I sound boring?

What if they question my expertise?

What if I mess up?

Her heart pounded. Her throat went dry.

She started speaking, but her voice came out softer than she intended. She rushed through her points, avoiding eye contact, her sentences trailing off as if she were asking for permission to speak. Halfway through, she saw the subtle glance between two executives, the slight shift in their posture. They weren't fully engaged.

And just like that, she lost them.

When she finished, they nodded politely, offered a few comments, and moved on. No real discussion. No real impact. As Emma sat back down, heat burned in her cheeks. She had worked so hard on this. Why didn't they really listen?

It wasn't her ideas. It wasn't her content.

It was her presence.

Her voice lacked power. Her words lacked conviction. And because of that, her message, no matter how brilliant, was lost.

But what if she could do it differently? What if she could walk into any room and own it? What if her voice commanded attention?

What if, the next time she spoke, every single person leaned in, listened, and felt her authority?

This chapter is about making that shift.

By the time you finish, you'll know exactly how to speak with confidence, authority, and presence whether you're in a meeting, giving a presentation, or simply stating your opinion.

Because when you learn to own your voice, you don't just get heard.

You get remembered.

Why Speaking with Authority Matters

You've probably seen it happen before.

Two people share similar ideas in a meeting, one is received with excitement and engagement, while the other barely gets a response.

What's the difference? **Authority.**

The person who speaks with authority commands attention. They sound confident, even if they don't know everything. And because they believe in what they're saying, others believe in them too.

Speaking with authority isn't about being the loudest person in the room. It's about delivering your message with confidence, and making sure people listen.

So how do you do that? Let's break it down.

The Hidden Mistakes That Weaken Your Presence

Before we talk about what to do, let's talk about what **not** to do.

1. You Start with "I'm Not an Expert, But..."

Have you ever started a sentence like this? Or maybe:

“This might be a dumb question, but...”

“I could be wrong, but...”

This instantly weakens your message. Instead of positioning yourself as knowledgeable, you’re asking for permission to be heard.

Fix It: Drop the disclaimers. Instead of “I’m not an expert, but I think...”, say “Here’s what I know.”

2. You Apologize Too Much

Women, in particular, tend to over-apologize even when they’ve done nothing wrong.

“Sorry to bother you, but...”

“I just wanted to say...”

“I hope this makes sense...”

Fix It: Swap “Sorry” for “Thank you” or direct confidence.

✓ Instead of “Sorry for the delay,” say “Thanks for your patience.”

✓ Instead of “I just wanted to check in,” say “I’m following up on...”

3. You Use “Weak” Language

The words you choose matter. If you use uncertain or filler words, your message loses impact.

Weak Language to Avoid:

“I think we should try this.”

“Maybe we could consider...”

“Does that make sense?”

Stronger Alternatives:

“We should try this because...”

“One approach that could work is...”

“Let me know if you have any questions.”

4. You Trail Off or Speak Too Softly

Confidence isn't just about what you say, it's about **how** you say it.

If you mumble, speak too fast, or let your voice go up at the end of a sentence (making it sound like a question), people won't take you as seriously.

Fix It:

- ✓ Speak at a steady pace.
- ✓ Lower your tone slightly—it signals confidence.
- ✓ End your sentences firmly, not like a question.

The Confident Speaking Formula: How to Command Attention

1. Own the First 10 Seconds

People decide if they'll listen to you within seconds. The first words you say set the tone.

How to Start Strong:

- ✓ Pause before you speak – this shows confidence.
- ✓ Make eye contact. Don't look down or away.
- ✓ Use a power statement. Instead of “I just wanted to say...” try:

“Here's what I've been thinking...”

“Let's consider this approach...”


2. Slow Down and Emphasize Key Words

When nervous, many people speed up. But speaking too fast makes you seem uncertain.

Fix It:

- Slow down. It shows control.
- Pause for impact. Before making an important point, take a brief pause. It builds anticipation.
- Emphasize key words. Say the most important words with extra weight.

Example:

 “I think we should go with Option B because it might be a better fit.”

✓ “We should go with Option B—it’s the strongest choice.”

3. Use Confident Body Language

Your body speaks before your words do.

Powerful Presence Tips:

✓ Stand tall—shoulders back, chin up.

- ✓ Don't fidget. Keep movements intentional.
- ✓ Use hand gestures naturally. They help reinforce your message.
- ✓ Smile strategically. It signals warmth and confidence.

Harvard researcher Amy Cuddy found that expansive body language (“power poses”) boosts confidence and lowers stress (Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges, 2015).

Action Step: Before an important conversation, stand in a power pose for two minutes.

4. Make Eye Contact

Avoiding eye contact makes you seem unsure. Looking people in the eyes (instead of down or at your notes) makes you appear strong and engaged.

How to Master Eye Contact:

- Look at one person at a time. It creates connections.
- If nervous, focus on their forehead or nose.

5. Use the “Three-Second Rule” to Eliminate Filler Words

Fillers like “um,” “uh,” “like,” and “you know” weaken your message.

How to Stop:

- When tempted to say “um”, pause instead.
- Use the three-second rule: Before answering a question, take three seconds to gather your thoughts. This eliminates unnecessary fillers.

Your Challenge: Practice Speaking with Authority

Here’s how you can start applying these techniques this week:

Day 1: Record yourself speaking for one minute. Notice if you use filler words or weak language.

Day 2: Practice a powerful opening for a meeting or conversation.

Day 3: Speak slower than usual and use intentional pauses.

Day 4: Make a conscious effort to replace “sorry” with stronger alternatives.

Day 5: Use a power pose before an important conversation.

Speak Like You Belong

Speaking with authority isn't about being aggressive or overpowering. It's about believing in your voice and owning your presence.

Imagine yourself walking into a room, speaking with confidence, and commanding attention without hesitation.

Imagine people stopping to listen when you talk.

That's not just for other people. That's for you.

Once you speak with confidence, the next step is using it to advance your career, negotiate with power, and get the opportunities you deserve.

Chapter 5

The Power of Presence – How to Be Seen, Heard, and Respected

"It's not just what you say, but how you show up that commands respect."

– Amy Cuddy

It was the biggest meeting of her career.

Maya had been working for months on a strategy that could save her company millions. She had the numbers. She had the research. She knew, without a doubt, that her proposal was the best option.

But as she walked into the sleek, glass-walled conference room, something shifted.

The executives were already seated, mostly men in expensive suits, engaged in easy banter. The room was buzzing with energy, but the moment Maya sat down, she felt invisible.

The conversation flowed around her, moving fast.

When she finally found an opening to speak, she cleared her throat and started. But before she could finish her first sentence, someone interrupted.

She tried again, raising her voice slightly. Another interruption.

She smiled politely, leaned back in her chair, and waited. *They'll come back to me*, she thought.

They didn't.

As the meeting wrapped up, her stomach sank. The team went with another idea—one that was less effective, less researched, and strikingly similar to hers. The difference? **The person who presented it owned the room.**

Maya had the expertise, the insight, the right answer. But she wasn't seen as the authority in that room.

And that's when she realized something: It's not just about what you say—it's about how you show up. **It's about presence.**

Because when you walk into a room with presence, people don't just see you. They feel you. They pay attention. They respect what you have to say before you even open your mouth.

So how do you develop that kind of presence – the kind that commands a room, influences decisions, and makes people stop and listen?

That's exactly what this chapter is about. By the time you finish reading, you'll know how to walk into any room with unshakable confidence and make sure your voice is heard without ever having to fight for attention.

Because power isn't given.

It's claimed.

What Is Presence, and Why Does It Matter?

Have you ever walked into a room and felt like some people just own the space? They don't have to be the loudest or the most talkative, but when they speak, everyone listens.

That's presence.

Presence is the energy you bring into a room. It's the way you carry yourself, how you project confidence, and how people perceive you, even before you say a word.




It's not about being perfect. It's not about being the smartest person in the room. It's about showing up with confidence, authority, and authenticity so people take you seriously and respect your voice.

Presence isn't something you're born with. **It's something you build.** And that's exactly what we're going to do.

What Kills Your Presence?

Before we dive into what to do, let's talk about what not to do. These common habits can make you fade into the background even when you have something valuable to say.

1. Shrinking Yourself

-  Sitting at the edge of your chair instead of claiming space
-  Crossing your arms or hunching your shoulders
-  Keeping your hands hidden (in your lap or pockets)

These small actions signal “I don't belong here.”

Fix It:

- ✓ Sit tall, shoulders back, and plant your feet firmly on the ground.
- ✓ Use open body language: hands visible, arms relaxed.
- ✓ Take up space! If you're in a meeting, spread out your notes and own your seat.

2. Avoiding Eye Contact

Ever notice how powerful people hold eye contact? They don't dart their eyes around the room. They don't stare at their notes or fidget.

Fix It:

- ✓ When speaking, look at different people in the room. Hold eye contact for 2-3 seconds before shifting.
- ✓ If nervous, focus on people's foreheads or noses. It still creates the effect of direct eye contact.

3. Speaking Too Softly or Too Fast

Speaking quickly or in a low, uncertain voice makes people tune out even if your ideas are great.

Fix It:

- ✓ Slow down. Confident people don't rush.

✓ Lower your pitch slightly. Higher-pitched voices can sound uncertain.

✓ Use pauses for impact. Instead of filling silence with “um” or “like,” pause intentionally.

4. Apologizing or Over-Explaining

You don't need to “soften” your presence with excessive apologies or explanations.

⊘ “Sorry, I just wanted to add...”

⊘ “This might not be important, but...”

⊘ “Does that make sense?”

Fix It:

✓ “Here's what I think.”

✓ “This is an important point because...”

✓ “Let me know if you have any questions.”

Confidence doesn't ask for permission. It simply is.

How to Build Magnetic Presence

1. Master Your Posture and Body Language

Your body speaks before you do. Make sure it's saying "I belong here."

How to Instantly Look More Confident:

- ✓ Stand tall. Keep your shoulders back, chin up.
- ✓ Take up space. Don't shrink into yourself—own your seat, your table, your presence.
- ✓ Keep your movements intentional. No fidgeting, no nervous gestures.

Harvard professor Amy Cuddy found that practicing "power poses" (standing tall with open posture) for just two minutes can boost confidence and lower stress (Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges, 2015).

Try This:

Before an important meeting or conversation, stand in a power pose for two minutes: hands on hips, feet planted. It actually changes your mindset.

2. Speak with Strength and Intention

Your voice is one of your most powerful tools. Use it intentionally.

How to Sound More Powerful:

- ✓ Slow down. Rushing makes you seem nervous. Speak at a steady pace.
- ✓ Lower your tone slightly. A calm, steady voice commands respect.
- ✓ Use strategic pauses. Don't be afraid of silence. It makes people listen.

✗ “Um, I think maybe we should...”

✓ “We should move forward with this approach.”

✗ “Does that make sense?”

✓ “Let me know if you have any thoughts.”

✗ “I’m sorry, but can I add something?”

✓ “I’d like to add something to this.”

The way you deliver your words is just as important as the words themselves.

3. Own the First 30 Seconds

People form impressions fast. How you start a conversation, meeting, or presentation sets the tone.

How to Start Strong:

- ✓ Pause before speaking. A one-second pause before you talk shows confidence.
- ✓ Use a strong first sentence.
 - Instead of “I just wanted to say...” → “Here’s what I recommend.”
 - Instead of “I’m not sure, but...” → “Based on my experience, this is the best approach.”

Own your first sentence, and people will pay attention to everything that follows.

4. Dress the Part

Like it or not, appearance influences perception. This doesn’t mean you need expensive clothes. It means wearing outfits that make you feel powerful.

Presence-Boosting Style Tips:

- ✓ Wear structured pieces: blazers, tailored pants, fitted dresses.
- ✓ Stick to bold, solid colors. They project confidence.
- ✓ Wear shoes you can walk in with purpose—no wobbly heels!

When you dress like you belong at the table, you start believing it. And when you believe it, others do too.

5. End with Strength

How you close a meeting or conversation is just as important as how you start.

- ✗ “Well, I guess that’s it...”
- ✗ “Hopefully that made sense?”
- ✓ “To summarize, here’s what we’ve decided...”
- ✓ “That’s my perspective—what are your thoughts?”
- ✓ “Let’s move forward with this plan.”

Your Challenge: Start Practicing Presence Today

Here's how you can start building your presence this week:

Day 1: Notice your posture—stand tall, take up space.

Day 2: Record yourself speaking for one minute. Eliminate fillers like “um” or “just.”

Day 3: Practice a powerful opening sentence for meetings.

Day 4: Try a power pose before your next big conversation.

Day 5: Speak slower and with intention.

Presence isn't about being the loudest person in the room. It's about owning your space, your voice, and your worth.

Imagine walking into a meeting and knowing, without a doubt, that people will listen to you.

Imagine standing in front of an audience and feeling calm, in control, and powerful.

This isn't just for “naturally confident” people. It's for you.

Once you master presence, it's time to use it to negotiate, influence, and get the opportunities you deserve.

Chapter 6

Speak Up & Get What You Want – The Art of Confident Communication

"Speak your mind, even if your voice shakes."

– Maggie Kuhn

The conference room was silent.

All eyes were on Danielle as she prepared to respond. She had worked for weeks on this proposal, running numbers, preparing slides, and rehearsing her pitch. This was her moment.

But as soon as she opened her mouth, a wave of doubt washed over her.

"What if they push back?"

"What if I sound too aggressive?"

"What if I say the wrong thing?"

So instead of confidently presenting her case, she softened her tone.

"I was just thinking... maybe this could work?" she said hesitantly. "But of course, we can go with whatever you all decide."

Her manager nodded. "Interesting idea. Let's circle back later."

A week later, a male colleague pitched her exact idea—with more confidence, more certainty, and zero hesitation.

And guess what?

He got the credit.

Danielle sat in that same conference room, watching as her idea was celebrated—without her.

And in that moment, she realized that having great ideas isn't enough. If you can't communicate with confidence, you'll be overlooked.

How many times have you stayed silent in meetings, hesitated before speaking up, or held back your thoughts because you didn't want to sound pushy?

How many times have you let someone else take the lead, when you knew you had just as much (if not more) value to offer?

Here's the reality: The world listens to people who speak with confidence.

So if you've ever struggled to:

- Speak up in meetings without second-guessing yourself
- Say what you really mean—without over-explaining or apologizing
- Make sure your voice is heard, valued, and respected

Then this chapter will show you how to speak with confidence and earn the recognition you deserve.

And once you do? No one will ever overlook you again.

Why Speaking Up Matters

Have you ever had a great idea in a meeting but didn't say it out loud? Then, a few minutes later, someone else voiced the same idea and got all the credit?

Or maybe you've tried to express your thoughts, but people talked over you, dismissed your point, or ignored it completely.

It's frustrating.

You don't get what you deserve. You get what you confidently ask for.

Speaking up isn't just about saying the words, it's about making sure people listen, respect, and act on what you say. And that requires confident communication.

The best part is: Confidence in communication is a skill you can develop.

In the next pages, you'll discover how to:

- Speak with clarity and authority
- Make people listen without being aggressive
- Stop over-apologizing and softening your words
- Handle pushback and interruptions like a pro

By the end, you'll know how to own your voice, make an impact, and get what you want.

What's Holding You Back from Speaking Up?

Many women hold back from speaking up because of:

Fear of being wrong – You worry that your idea isn't "good enough."

Fear of judgment – You don't want to sound aggressive, bossy, or pushy.

Fear of conflict – You avoid disagreement to “keep the peace.”

Self-doubt – You question whether you’re qualified to speak.

The problem is, when you stay silent, people assume you either agree with them or don’t have anything valuable to add. Neither of those is true.

The solution? Reframe how you see your voice.

Instead of thinking: *“I don’t want to say the wrong thing.”*

✓ Think: “I have a valuable perspective to share.”

Instead of: *“What if they disagree with me?”*

✓ Think: “A good discussion means different opinions.”

Instead of: *“I don’t want to sound pushy.”*

✓ Think: “My ideas deserve to be heard.”

Speaking up isn’t about being perfect. **It’s about trusting yourself enough to contribute.**

The 5 Keys to Speaking with Confidence

If you want to be heard, you need to communicate like a leader. Here's how:

1. Start Strong – The First 5 Seconds Matter

People decide in the first few seconds whether to listen to you. So don't start weak.

❌ “Um, I was just thinking maybe...”

❌ “I'm not sure if this makes sense, but...”

✓ “Here's my take on this...”

✓ “I recommend we do X because...”

✓ “One thing we should consider is...”

Pro Tip: Pause before speaking. It signals confidence and makes people pay attention.

2. Stop Over-Apologizing & Softening Your Words

Women are often taught to be “nice” and “non-threatening,” which leads to soft language that weakens our message.

❌ “I just wanted to say...”

❌ “Sorry, but can I add something?”

❌ “Maybe we could try this?”

✓ Remove “just.” → “I wanted to say...”

✓ Drop unnecessary apologies. → “I have something to add.”

✓ Be direct. → “Let’s try this approach.”

Try This Challenge: For one week, catch yourself whenever you say “just” or “sorry” unnecessarily. It will change how people perceive you.

3. Speak Slower & Use Pauses

Nervous speakers tend to talk too fast or use filler words like “um” and “like.”

How to Fix It:

✓ Slow down. Confident people don’t rush.

✓ Eliminate fillers. Silence is more powerful than “um.”

✓ Pause after key points. It makes people absorb what you say.

Example:

❌ “So, um, I think maybe we should like look into different options?”

✓ “I recommend exploring different options.” (Pause.) “Here’s why.”

Fun Fact: Margaret Thatcher trained herself to lower her voice and slow down to project power and authority (Krook & O’Brien, Gender and Political Voice, 2017).

4. Own Your Space & Use Confident Body Language

People respond to how you present yourself just as much as what you say.

Avoid:

- Looking down or avoiding eye contact
- Hunching your shoulders
- Fidgeting or playing with your hair

Instead:


- Stand or sit tall. Shoulders back, chin up.
- Make eye contact. Hold it for 2-3 seconds before shifting.
- Use gestures intentionally. Keep movements calm and controlled.

Try this: Next time you speak, record yourself. Watch your body language. Does it match the confidence you want to project?

5. Handle Pushback & Interruptions Like a Pro


Ever been interrupted or had someone dismiss your point? Here's how to take control.

If Someone Interrupts You:

 “Oh, sorry—go ahead.”


✓ “I’m going to finish my point, and then I’d love to hear your thoughts.”

If Someone Dismisses Your Idea:

 “Oh, maybe it wasn’t a good idea.”

✓ “I’d like to revisit my point because it’s important to consider.”

If You Need to Push Back:

 “I see your point, but I kind of disagree.”

✓ “I see your point. Here’s why I have a different perspective.”

Pro Tip: Lower your voice slightly when making an important point. It makes people lean in and listen.

Speak Up Challenge

To truly build your confidence, you have to practice speaking up. Try these:

Day 1: Speak up in a meeting, even if it's just to agree with a colleague.

Day 2: Remove “just” and “sorry” from your emails and conversations.

Day 3: Start a conversation with a strong opening sentence.

Day 4: Record yourself speaking and adjust your tone or pace.

Day 5: If interrupted, calmly say, “I’m going to finish my point.”

Small changes lead to big results.

Speaking up isn't about being the loudest person in the room. It's about being heard, respected, and valued.

Your ideas? **They matter.**

Your perspective? **It's worth sharing.**

Your voice? **It deserves space.**

So from today forward, promise yourself this:

- ✓ No more staying silent.
- ✓ No more letting doubt hold you back.
- ✓ No more waiting for permission to speak.

You don't need permission.

You are already enough.

Chapter 7

Ask for What You Deserve – The Confidence to Negotiate and Advocate for Yourself

"You get in life what you have the courage to ask for."

– Oprah Winfrey

Samantha stared at the email.

Her heart pounded as she reread the job offer—\$80,000 a year.

Not bad.

But then she remembered a conversation she had just last week. A male colleague with the same experience, same role, and same company had casually mentioned his salary over coffee.

\$95,000.

That was \$15,000 more than what she was being offered.

Her first instinct? Accept the offer and be grateful. After all, it was a good salary.

But then another thought crept in... "Why am I so afraid to ask for more?"

She was just as qualified. She brought just as much, if not more value to the company.

And yet, here she was, hesitating.

She typed a reply, her fingers trembling slightly.

"Thank you for the offer. I'm excited about the opportunity! Based on market research and my experience, I'd like to discuss a salary closer to \$95,000. Let me know if we can chat further."

She hit send.

Her stomach twisted in knots.

What if they thought she was being greedy? What if they took back the offer? What if they said no?

An hour later, an email popped up.

"We appreciate your counteroffer. We'd love to bring you on board at \$92,000."

Just like that, she earned \$12,000 more—just by asking.

Samantha realized something that day: No one is going to hand you what you deserve. You have to ask for it.

So if you've ever felt nervous about negotiating your salary, asking for a promotion, or advocating for yourself at work, this chapter can help you.

Because when you learn how to ask with confidence, you stop settling. You start earning what you're truly worth.

And trust me, once you do, you'll never go back to playing small again.

Why You Must Start Asking for More

Many women hesitate to negotiate salary, ask for a promotion, or request better opportunities because of:

- Fear of rejection – "What if they say no?"
- Fear of being seen as greedy – "I don't want to come across as too demanding."
- Fear of damaging relationships – "What if my boss gets upset?"

- Imposter syndrome – "Do I even deserve more?"

Most people don't get what they're worth because they never ask.

Studies show that women are less likely to negotiate their salaries than men, and as a result, they often earn less over their lifetimes (Babcock & Laschever, Women Don't Ask).

When women do negotiate, they are just as successful as men (Harvard Business Review, 2020).

The difference isn't ability, it's the courage to ask.

And today, you're going to learn how to ask with confidence—without fear, guilt, or hesitation.

Once you master this skill, everything changes.

The 3 Big Mindset Shifts You Need to Negotiate with Confidence

Before we dive into how to ask for what you want, let's address the mindset blocks that might be holding you back.

1. You're Not Asking for a Favor. You're Asking for Fairness

Many women hesitate to negotiate because they feel like they're asking for too much or being difficult.

Negotiation isn't about taking advantage—it's about fairness.

Think about it this way:

Would a company underpay you if they could? **Yes.**


Would they overwork you if you never pushed back? **Yes.**

Would they automatically give you a raise if you didn't ask? **No.**

It's not personal, it's business. And in business, people who negotiate get more.

2. You're Bringing Value, Act Like It

Many women feel the need to "prove" why they deserve more. You already bring value. That's why they hired you.

 "I was hoping for a raise because I work really hard."

✓ "Based on my contributions and industry benchmarks, I'd like to discuss a salary adjustment."

See the difference? Your value isn't based on how much you beg. It's based on facts.

3. Silence Isn't a Strategy

A common mistake is waiting for someone to recognize your worth.

❌ “I’ll just work hard, and they’ll notice.”

✓ “I’m going to have a direct conversation about my salary.”

No one is sitting in their office thinking about how to pay you more. If you don’t advocate for yourself, who will?

You have to make the first move.

The 5-Step Formula to Asking for More

Step 1: Research thoroughly to understand your worth.

Before you negotiate, you need data.

1. Use salary websites like Glassdoor ([glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com)), Payscale ([payscale.com](https://www.payscale.com)), Salary.com
2. Ask around. Talk to colleagues, mentors, or industry peers about salary trends.
3. Factor in your years of experience, your skill set, your location, and your industry demand

Example:

❌ Instead of saying, “I’d like a raise because I work hard,” say:

✓ “Based on market data and my impact, I’d like to discuss adjusting my salary to \$85,000.”

Data makes your request stronger.

Step 2: Build your case by highlighting your impact

Most employers don’t give raises just because “it’s been a while.”

You need to show them **WHY** you deserve more.

Have you increased revenue?

Have you saved the company time or money?

Have you taken on extra responsibilities?

Have you improved the process?

Example Phrases:

✓ “Over the past year, I’ve led a project that increased sales by 15%. I’d like to discuss a raise to reflect that impact.”

✓ “Since my promotion, I’ve taken on additional leadership responsibilities. I’d like to adjust my salary to align with my role.”

Make it easy for them to say yes.

Step 3: Practice Your Request (Out Loud!)

Confidence comes from preparation. Practice your negotiation script so you don't get nervous at the moment.

Here's a Simple Script:

Start strong: "I'm excited about the work I'm doing here, and I'd like to talk about adjusting my salary to reflect my contributions."

Back it up with facts: "Based on my performance, market benchmarks, and the results I've delivered, I believe a salary of \$90,000 is fair."

End with a confident close: "Can we discuss how to make this happen?"

Pro Tip: Role-play with a friend or practice in front of a mirror. The more you say it, the more natural it feels.

Step 4: Be Ready for Pushback and Stay Calm

Sometimes, your employer will say no or try to lowball you.

Here's how to handle it:

If they say, "*We don't have the budget.*"

- "I understand budgets are tight. Can we discuss a future raise timeline?"

If they say, *“We’ll think about it.”*

- “I appreciate that. When can we follow up to finalize?”

If they lowball you:

- “I was hoping for something closer to \$85,000 based on my research. Is there room for movement?”

If they say no:

- “I respect that decision. Can we explore other benefits, like additional PTO or professional development funds?”

Always stay calm, professional, and persistent.

Step 5: Know When to Walk Away

If you’re constantly undervalued, it might be time to move on.

Ask yourself:

Are they refusing to pay me fairly?

Do they consistently overlook my contributions?

Am I growing in this role, or just staying stuck?

Sometimes, your best negotiation move is finding a company that values you. A new job offer is often the fastest way to increase your salary.

You Deserve More. Period.

Here's what I want you to remember:

- ✓ You are NOT asking for a favor.
- ✓ You are NOT being greedy.
- ✓ You are NOT going to lose opportunities by advocating for yourself.
- ✓ You bring value.
- ✓ You work hard.
- ✓ You deserve to be paid fairly.

And the only way to get what you deserve?

Ask.

Chapter 8

Speak Up, Stand Out – The Power of Owning Your Voice

"Speak your mind, even if your voice shakes."

– Maggie Kuhn

Olivia sat in the conference room, her heart pounding.

She had spent weeks preparing for this presentation. The data was solid, the strategy was sharp, and she knew her solution would save the company thousands of dollars.

But as she looked around the room at her boss, the senior executives, and her colleagues, doubt crept in.

"What if they don't take me seriously?"

"What if I stumble over my words?"

"What if they challenge me, and I don't have the perfect answer?"

The meeting began. The conversation drifted away from her idea. People spoke over each other, and Olivia felt her moment slipping.

She hesitated.

Then her colleague, Brian, spoke up.

"Actually, I have an idea," Brian said.

And to Olivia's horror, he started explaining her exact strategy. Her research. Her work.

And everyone listened.

The executives nodded in approval. The CEO even said, "Brilliant idea, Brian. Let's run with it."

Olivia sat there, stunned.

She had done all the work. But because she didn't speak up, someone else took the credit.

Ever been there?

Maybe it wasn't in a meeting. Maybe it was in a job interview, a networking event, or a simple conversation where you held back instead of speaking up.

If you don't speak up, people assume you have nothing to say.

And if you keep quiet, you'll stay invisible.

This chapter is about changing that—forever.

Once you gain the courage of speaking up, you'll never let yourself shrink again.

Why Speaking Up is a Game-Changer

How many times have you had a great idea, but stayed quiet?

How often have you wanted to say something, but worried about sounding stupid?

How many moments have you let pass by, only to watch someone else confidently say what you were thinking?

If you don't speak up, you stay invisible.

And in the workplace, visibility equals opportunity.

The people who get promotions? They speak up.

The people who get recognized? They share their ideas.

The people who get leadership roles? They make their voices heard.

The good news is: **Confidence in speaking up is a skill, not a personality trait.**

What Holds You Back From Speaking Up?

Before we dive into solutions, let's address the real reasons why so many women hesitate to speak up.

1. Fear of Judgment

"What if I sound stupid?"

"What if people disagree with me?"

"What if I mess up?"

You worry that others will judge your ideas or think less of you.

Reality Check: People are far too busy worrying about themselves to overanalyze what you say. If you speak with confidence, they'll listen.

2. Fear of Conflict

"I don't want to rock the boat."

"I hate confrontation."

You might worry that if you speak up, someone will challenge you.

Reality Check: Disagreement isn't a bad thing. It's how strong ideas are built. Leaders respect people who have the courage to voice their thoughts.

3. Imposter Syndrome

"Am I even qualified to say this?"

"Maybe someone else knows more than me."

You second-guess yourself and assume others are smarter, more experienced, or more deserving of attention.

Reality Check: Studies show that women are more likely to underestimate their competence, while men are more likely to overestimate theirs (Kay & Shipman, *The Confidence Code*). Your thoughts are just as valuable—**own them**.

4. Habit of Staying Silent

Maybe you've been quiet for so long that it feels normal. Maybe you've been taught to be "polite," to wait your turn, or to let others go first.

Reality Check: If you don't make space for your voice, no one else will.

Now that we've tackled the fears, let's talk about solutions.

5 Practical Ways to Start Speaking Up

1. Speak Early in Conversations

The longer you wait, the harder it gets.

Ever been in a meeting where you planned to say something, but hesitated... and then someone else said it first?

The trick? Jump in early.

How to do it:

- ✓ Start small. Ask a question, agree with a point, or add a quick thought.
- ✓ Use a simple opener. Try: "One thing I'd like to add is..." or "Building on what Sarah said..."
- ✓ The more you get used to hearing your voice, the easier it becomes.

2. Use “I” Statements to Own Your Perspective

Instead of saying:

- ❌ “I think this might be a good idea...”
- ❌ “Maybe we should try this, but I’m not sure...”

Try this:

- ✓ “I believe this approach will work because...”
- ✓ “I recommend we try this method based on...”

Own your thoughts. Don’t water them down with weak language.

3. Lower the Pressure; Not Every Statement Has to Be Perfect

A lot of people think they have to say something groundbreaking every time they speak up.

Speaking up isn’t about being perfect; it’s about being present.

Try this:

- ✓ Ask a question. (“How do you see this playing out in the long run?”)
- ✓ Support a colleague. (“I agree with Jessica’s point because...”)

- ✓ Summarize a discussion. ("It sounds like we're deciding between A and B. Did I get that right?")
- ✓ You don't have to dominate the conversation. You just have to be in it.

4. Improve Your Delivery by Speaking with Confidence

The way you say something is just as important as what you say.

Simple tips to sound more confident:

- ✓ Drop filler words like "just," "um," and "I think."
- ✓ Slow down. Don't rush your words.
- ✓ Use pauses to emphasize key points.
- ✓ Sit up straight. Posture affects how people perceive you.

Confidence is a vibe. And the way you present yourself changes how people respond.

5. Practice, Practice, Practice

The more you speak up, the easier it gets.

Action Steps:

- Set a goal: “I will speak up at least once in every meeting.”
- Rehearse key points before meetings.
- Use voice notes to practice speaking with confidence.
- The more you train your brain to use your voice, the less fear you'll feel.

When you find your voice, here's what changes:

- ✓ People respect you more.
- ✓ You stop second-guessing yourself.
- ✓ Opportunities find you instead of you chasing them.
- ✓ You feel more powerful in every situation.

Speaking up isn't about being the loudest person in the room. It's about making sure your ideas, thoughts, and contributions are heard.

Because your voice matters.

Chapter 9

The Confidence to Negotiate – Asking for What You Deserve

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

– Eleanor Roosevelt

Sophia stared at the email draft on her screen. Her heart was pounding. Her palms were sweaty.

This was it! The moment she had been working toward for months.

She had exceeded every goal at work. She had taken on extra responsibilities. She had even trained new employees while still handling her full workload.

And now, it was time to ask for a raise!

She had rehearsed the conversation in her head a hundred times. But as she hovered over the "Send" button, anxiety crept in.

"What if they say no?"

"What if I come across as greedy?"

"What if they fire me for even asking?"

So, she did what so many women do. She deleted the email.

And instead of asking for what she knew she deserved, she told herself:
"Maybe next year."

- Have you ever wanted to negotiate a raise... but hesitated?
- Have you ever undervalued your work, assuming you should be "grateful" for what you have?
- Have you ever accepted less than you wanted—whether it was salary, flexibility, or respect—because you were afraid to ask?

Why Negotiation is Non-Negotiable

Let's be real, negotiation can feel uncomfortable.

Maybe you don't want to seem pushy or greedy.

Maybe you worry about how your boss will react.

Maybe you tell yourself: “I should just be grateful for what I have.”

But here’s the reality: **If you don’t ask, you don’t get.**

Studies show that women are far less likely to negotiate their salaries than men. In fact, men initiate salary negotiations four times more often than women (Babcock & Laschever, Women Don’t Ask).

And the worst part?

Not negotiating your salary at the start of your career can cost you over \$1 million in lost earnings over your lifetime (Linda Babcock, Carnegie Mellon University).

That’s right. One million dollars.

So, let’s break down exactly how to ask for what you deserve – without fear, guilt, or hesitation.

What Holds Women Back From Negotiating?

Before we dive into strategies, let’s talk about what really stops women from negotiating.

1. Fear of Rejection

“What if they say no?”

"What if they laugh at me?"

The fear of rejection is deeply rooted in human psychology because, historically, being accepted by a group was crucial for survival. Today, this fear often shows up as hesitation to speak up, ask for what we want, or take risks. However, rejection is rarely as damaging as we imagine—it's often just a redirection toward a better opportunity. The key to overcoming it is realizing that a "no" is not a reflection of your worth, but simply one step on the path to success.

Reality Check: No one is going to fire you for negotiating. The worst-case scenario: They say no. The best-case scenario: You walk away with more money.

2. Fear of Being Liked Less

"I don't want to seem difficult."

"I don't want them to think I'm greedy."

Many people hold back from speaking up or asking for what they deserve because they worry it will make them seem pushy, difficult, or less likable. But the truth is, people respect those who are clear about their values and set boundaries. Confidence doesn't make you less likable—it makes others take you seriously. In fact, when you advocate for yourself, you often inspire others to do the same.

Reality Check: Asking for what you're worth isn't greedy, rather it's smart. Studies show that women worry more than men about being "liked" in the workplace (Harvard Business Review, 2021). But the most respected professionals are the ones who know their value and advocate for it.

3. Thinking Hard Work Speaks for Itself

"If I just keep working hard, they'll notice."

Reality Check: Nope. It doesn't work that way. Your hard work is valuable, but it won't magically get you a raise unless you ask for it.

Many people believe that if they just work hard enough, their efforts will be noticed and rewarded. But in reality, hard work alone isn't always enough. Visibility matters just as much. Managers and decision-makers are often too busy to notice every detail of your contributions unless you make them known. Speaking up about your achievements, advocating for yourself, and strategically positioning your work ensures that you get the recognition and opportunities you deserve.

Your boss isn't sitting around thinking about how much more they should pay you—you have to put it on their radar.

4. Not Knowing What to Say

"I wouldn't even know how to start the conversation."

That's exactly what this chapter is for. Keep reading—I'll give you a step-by-step script.

How to Negotiate Like a Boss (Step-By-Step Guide)

Step 1: Recognize your value

Before you walk into any negotiation, you need to back yourself up with facts.

How to do this:

- Research industry salaries. Check sites like Indeed, PayScale, or LinkedIn Salary to see what others in your field make.
- Talk to people. Network with industry peers and ask about salary ranges.
- Make a list of your accomplishments. What have you done that adds value to your company? Think about revenue impact, efficiency improvements, leadership, and key projects.

Example:

"I led a project that increased customer retention by 15%. I took on extra responsibilities by mentoring junior employees. Based on industry research, my current salary is below market value. I deserve a raise."

Step 2: Rehearse your negotiation

Rehearsing makes all the difference. Here's a simple yet powerful script:

"I'd love to discuss my compensation. Over the past year, I've [mention achievements], and based on market research, I believe an increase to [\$X amount] aligns with my contributions. I'd like to explore how we can make that happen."

Why this works:

- It's direct. You're not asking—you're stating.
- It's data-driven. You're backing up your request.
- It opens the door for discussion.
- Practice saying it out loud until it feels natural. The more you practice, the less nervous you'll be.

Step 3: Time It Right

Best times to negotiate:

- After a big achievement or successful project
- During performance reviews
- When your company is doing well financially

Avoid asking when your boss is stressed or when layoffs are happening.

Step 4: Stay Silent After Your Ask

Once you make your request, stop talking.

Many women feel uncomfortable with silence and try to "soften" their ask by filling the gap with nervous chatter.

 Wrong Approach:

"I'd love a raise, but I totally understand if that's not possible. I know budgets are tight, so no worries if you can't do it."

✓ Right Approach:

"I'd love to discuss a salary adjustment based on my contributions. What are your thoughts?"

Then stay silent.

Let them respond. Silence creates pressure—and it works in your favor.

Step 5: Be Ready for Pushback

Your boss might say:

“We don’t have the budget.”

“No one is getting raises right now.”

“You need to prove yourself more.”

Here’s how to handle it:

If they say no:

- "I understand budget constraints, but I’d love to revisit this conversation in three months. Can we set a date to check in again?"

If they say you need to prove yourself:

- "I’d love to know exactly what I need to accomplish to justify this raise. Can we create a clear plan with measurable goals?"

What Happens When You Start Negotiating?

When you ask for what you deserve, here's what changes:

- ✓ You make more money.
- ✓ You gain respect.
- ✓ You stop doubting yourself.
- ✓ You realize you have power over your career.

The first time is the hardest. But once you successfully negotiate, you'll never fear it again.

No one is going to hand you more money, more flexibility, or more recognition. You have to ask for it.

And now, you know exactly how to do it.

So, the next time you're faced with a negotiation, will you shrink back, or will you step up and ask for what you deserve?

You know the answer.

Chapter 10

Owning Your Success – Walking in Confidence Every Day

"Don't watch the clock; do what it does. Keep going."

– Sam Levenson

Mia stood at the podium, the spotlight warm on her face.

A sea of faces stared back at her, waiting. Some with curiosity. Others with skepticism.

She took a deep breath, gripping the edges of the podium to steady her hands.

"You've got this," she told herself.

Six months ago, she never would have imagined standing here, leading a major presentation in front of executives. She used to sit in the back of the room, taking notes while others spoke.

She used to hesitate before sharing ideas in meetings, afraid they weren't "good enough."

She used to downplay her accomplishments, brushing off praise with:

"Oh, it was nothing."

"I just got lucky."

"Anyone could have done it."

Not anymore.

Today, she was standing tall. Speaking with authority.

Because she had finally realized something that changed everything:

Confidence isn't something you're born with. It's something you build, moment by moment, choice by choice.

And right now, you're at that moment too.

You've learned the strategies. You've seen the shifts.

But the real question is: Will you step into the confident version of yourself—not just today, but every day?

Because confidence isn't about a single moment. It's about a way of life.

Make confidence your default setting, so you never shrink, second-guess, or settle again.

Confidence Isn't a Destination. It's a Habit

Most people think confidence is something you either have or don't have.

It's not the truth. **Confidence is a muscle. The more you use it, the stronger it gets.**

Think about it:

You don't go to the gym once and expect to be fit forever.

You don't read one book and suddenly know everything.

You don't give one speech and become a world-class speaker.

Confidence works the same way. It's something you build over time—through action, repetition, and belief.

You don't have to feel confident to act confident.

Many women wait until they feel ready before they take action.

“I’ll speak up in meetings when I feel more sure of myself.”

“I’ll go after that promotion when I stop doubting myself.”

“I’ll start my business when I feel totally prepared.”

But waiting to feel confident keeps you stuck.

Instead, take action first, and confidence will follow.

The 5 Habits of Confident Women Who Own Their Success

You’ve come a long way in this book. You’ve learned how to silence self-doubt, speak with authority, and ask for what you deserve.

Now, let’s make sure this confidence sticks.

Here are five habits of women who walk in confidence every day:

1. They Speak About Their Wins Without Apology

Have you ever downplayed an achievement?

Maybe someone said, “Wow, you did an amazing job on that project!” and you responded with:

“Oh, it was nothing.”

"I just got lucky."

"I had a great team."

Stop. Right. There.

Confident women own their success. They don't apologize for it.

❌ Instead of this: *"Oh, I just got lucky with that promotion."*

✓ Say this instead: *"Thank you! I worked really hard on that, and I'm proud of how it turned out."*

Because when you own your success, others take notice. Success isn't just about what you do. It's also about how you talk about what you do.

2. They Stop Over-Explaining & Justify Less

Have you ever found yourself over-explaining why you deserve something?

"I need to leave early today because I have to pick up my kids, and I'll make up for it tomorrow, and I already finished my work, so I hope that's okay?"

"I think we should go with my idea, but if you don't like it, that's totally fine, just a thought!"

Over-explaining weakens your presence. It makes you sound uncertain, even when you know exactly what you're doing.

❌ Instead of this: *"I think I deserve a raise because I've been working hard, and I've done a lot, and I hope you agree."*

✓ Say this instead: "I've exceeded my goals and taken on additional responsibilities. Based on my contributions, I'd like to discuss a salary increase."

Confident women state their point—then stop talking.

3. They Take Up Space (Physically & Verbally)

Confidence isn't just about what you say; it's also about how you show up.

Shrinking behaviors:

- Crossing your arms and legs to make yourself smaller
- Speaking too softly or too quickly
- Looking down when you talk

Power moves:

- Standing tall, shoulders back
- Making eye contact when speaking

- Speaking at a steady, calm pace
- Taking pauses instead of rushing

Your body language shapes how others see you and how you see yourself.

4. They Take Action Before They Feel Ready

Do you ever hold back because you're waiting to feel "ready"?

"I'll apply for that leadership role once I feel more experienced."

"I'll start speaking up in meetings once I feel more confident."

You'll never feel fully ready. And that's okay.

Confident women don't wait. They act despite uncertainty.

Fear doesn't mean stop. It means go anyway.

5. They Keep a 'Confidence File'

Everyone has bad days—days when doubt creeps back in. When that happens, confident women have a secret weapon: a Confidence File.

What's in it?

- Positive feedback from coworkers, bosses, or clients
- Notes about past accomplishments
- Screenshots of emails or messages where someone praises your work

Why it works:

When doubt kicks in, your Confidence File is proof that you're capable, talented, and worthy.

Never forget how far you've come.

What Happens When You Own Your Success?

Here's what happens when you stop second-guessing yourself and start owning your success:

- ✓ You get taken seriously.
- ✓ People listen when you speak.
- ✓ You attract bigger opportunities.
- ✓ You set a new standard for how you deserve to be treated.
- ✓ You stop playing small and start playing BIG.

Imagine waking up tomorrow fully owning your worth.

Speaking up without hesitation.

Walking into meetings like you belong there.

Negotiating for what you deserve without fear.

You already have everything you need inside you. You don't need permission. You don't need more qualifications. You don't need to "fix" yourself.

You just need to decide: Today is the day I own my success.

And now, after everything you've learned, **you are ready.**

This Is Your Moment

Imagine yourself a year from now.

Not the version of you who hesitates, second-guesses, or shrinks to make others comfortable. No.

Imagine the version of you who walks into any room with confidence, knowing she belongs.

The one who speaks up without fear, because she trusts her voice.

The one who negotiates for what she's worth, without apologizing.

The one who goes after what she truly wants: boldly, unapologetically, powerfully.

That woman? **She's already inside you.**

This entire journey has been about one thing: helping you see what has always been true.

✓ You are capable.

✓ You are worthy.

✓ You are powerful.

And now, you have a choice:

- A. You can close this book and go back to playing small.
- B. Or you become the confident, unstoppable woman you were always meant to be.

Confidence isn't about waiting for the perfect moment. It's about deciding that this moment is enough.

So take the leap. Speak up. Stand tall. Own your value.

You are more than ready. And the world is waiting for you to show up.