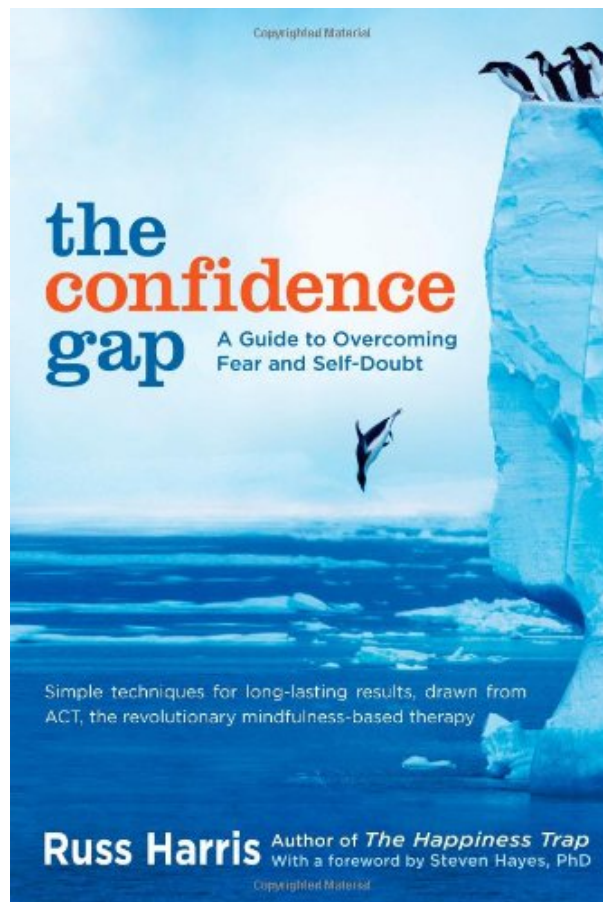
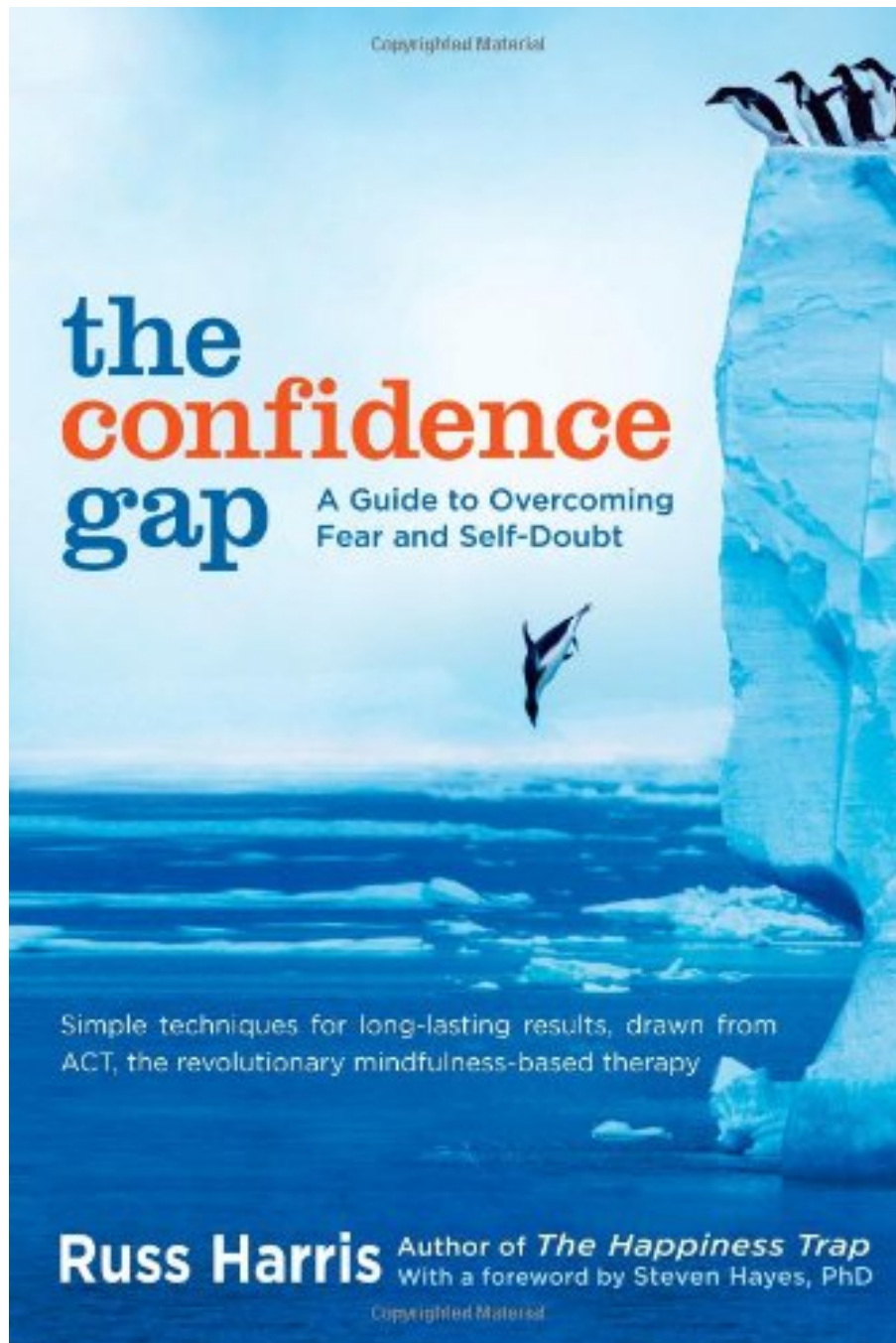


THE CONFIDENCE GAP: A GUIDE TO OVERCOMING FEAR AND SELF-DOUBT BY RUSS HARRIS



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Review

“This book could save you years of psychological struggle, yank you out of negative emotional patterns, and help propel you to a much happier, more productive life.”—Martha Beck, author of *Finding Your Own North Star*

“An exciting alternative to the usual approach of so many self-help books. Harris explains how we can work with ourselves as we are, rather than aggressively trying to alter ourselves. I’m impressed by the simple and effective methods of ACT.”—David Richo, PhD, author of *How to Be an Adult in Relationships*

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About the Author

Dr. Russ Harris is a physician, therapist, and speaker specializing in stress management. He travels nationally and internationally to train individuals and health professionals in the techniques of ACT. Born and educated in England, he now lives in Australia. For more information, visit actmindfully.com.au.

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Too many of us miss out on opportunities in life because we lack self-confidence. Whether it's public speaking, taking on a leadership role, or asking someone for a date, there are situations in which we just don't feel equipped to handle the challenges we face.

Russ Harris offers a surprising solution to low self-confidence, shyness, and insecurity: Rather than trying to "get over" our fears, he says, the secret is to form a new and wiser relationship with them. Paradoxically, it's only when we stop struggling against our fearfulness that we begin to find lasting freedom from it.

Drawing on the techniques of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), a cutting-edge form of cognitive-behavioral therapy, *The Confidence Gap* explains how to:

- Free yourself from common misconceptions about what confidence is and how to build it
 - Transform your relationship with fear and anxiety
 - Clarify your core values and use them as your inspiration and motivation
 - Use mindfulness to effectively handle negative thoughts and feelings.
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Review

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Most helpful customer reviews

113 of 118 people found the following review helpful.

Must read for overcoming doubt and fear!

By Barbara S. Reeves

Ah, just as I suspected: all that think-positive-Pollyanna-drivel is poppycock. According to Russ Harris, author of "The Confidence Gap", we evolved to think negatively. A hundred thousand years ago, if you weren't on constant vigil for dangers like lions, tigers, and bears in your environment, you didn't live very long, certainly not long enough to pass on your Pollyanna genes.

So thinking negatively is ingrained in us, and I'm happy to hear that because I sure was getting sick and tired of those Stuart Smalley daily affirmations.

"The Confidence Gap" is a guide to overcoming fear and self-doubt. As a recovering drug addict it's important, very important for me to learn how to deal with fear, because I always dealt with this problem with drugs and "liquid courage." That was my solution for overcoming low self-confidence, shyness, and insecurity.

Hellen Keller said that life is a daring adventure or nothing. If we're stifled by fear then our life will certainly be nothing. We'll stay stuck in our comfort zones as life passes us by. Harris lists four common reasons why we're afraid to leave our comfort zones:

1. Obstacles - our minds point out all the obstacles.
2. Self-judgements - our minds point out all our weaknesses.
3. Comparisons - our minds compare us to others who seem to be better than us.
4. Predictions - our minds predict failure.

Before I published my book, I thought it would be the greatest thing I'd ever accomplished, but as soon as it came out, I was attacked by self-judgements. I thought what I'd written was stupid, and of inferior quality, and I almost regretted doing it.

Even worse, I had to write for this website. Every time I wrote something and posted it, I would wake up in the middle of the night berating myself, "Stupid, stupid, stupid. I can't believe I wrote that." I wanted to give up. I discovered that I was "fusing" to these thoughts. That's all they were: thoughts. They were not based on fact, and if they were, so what?

Don't I have the right to say stupid things and make mistakes? So I continued to write and consider it all practice, because there's no way I'll ever get better if I don't continue to plug away. I "defused" from those negative thoughts. They still come up every time I write something, but now I can say, "There's that stupid, self-judging thought. Bye-bye stupid self-judging thought." So I was glad to read this quote from best-selling author Peter Carey in "The Confidence Gap": "Writing is being prepared to be stupid and make mistakes."

There's a lot more useful information in "The Confidence Gap" including Harris' golden rule for winning the confidence game: "The actions of confidence come first; the feelings of confidence come later." There are nine more rules, so instead of listing them here, I'll recommend you buy the book and discover them

yourself.

David Allan Reeves
Author of "Running Away From Me"

60 of 63 people found the following review helpful.

Filling the confidence gap

By Deb

Do you feel like a lack of confidence is holding you back in life? Do you often find yourself waiting to feel ready before you go after your goals? Do fear and anxiety keep you stuck?

If so, The Confidence Gap make likely change the way you've been doing life.

Based on the principles of ACT--Acceptance and Commitment Therapy--this book offers a refreshing approach to filling the confidence gap:

"Whatever it is that's interfering with your self-confidence, the solution lies in mindfulness, values, and action: defuse from unhelpful thoughts, expand around difficult feelings*, take actions guided by your values, and engage fully in whatever you are doing." (p. 198) This approach can be nicely summarized using the acronym itself:

A--Accept your thoughts and feelings

C--Chose valued direction

T--Take action mindfully

(*Yep, that's right. The solution lies in embracing uncomfortable feelings, and letting them be a guide to helping you become more in tune with living a life that's in line with who you really are. The sweet irony is that when we stop trying to avoid negative feelings, we actually feel better: "When we let go of trying to control our feelings, and instead start acting on our values and engaging fully in whatever we're doing, then pleasant feelings often show up for the ride. We are likely to feel healthier, happier, and calmer." (p. 199))

This approach to building lasting confidence is built around developing the three skills of:

1. Handling your thoughts and feelings effectively using key aspects of mindfulness: defusion (becoming "unhooked" from your thoughts); expansion (making room for emotions, sensations, and feelings); and engagement (being fully psychologically present in the here-and-now)
2. Taking control of your actions, even--and especially--when thoughts and feelings are "negative" or uncomfortable
3. Engaging fully in whatever you are doing, irrespective of the thoughts and feelings you are having

And, in contrast to other self-help approaches which tend to emphasize flooding yourself with positive thoughts so you can "fake it until you make it," the approach presented here just requires you to be real and present:

"When you take action, mindfully acting on your values, there is no need to fake anything. You just do what is important to you, and engage fully in what you are doing. And guess what? In each moment you do this, you already "make it": instant success!" (p. 245)

This book rewrites the rules for winning the confidence game (p 246):

1. The actions of confidence come first; the feelings of confidence come later.
2. Genuine confidence is not the absence of fear; it is a transformed relationship with fear.
3. Negative thoughts are normal. Don't fight them; defuse them.
4. Self-acceptance triumphs self-esteem.

5. True success is living by your values.
6. Hold your values lightly, but pursue them vigorously.
7. Don't obsess about the outcome; get passionate about the process.
8. Don't fight your fear; allow it, befriend it, and channel it.
9. Failure hurts--but if we're willing to learn, it's a wonderful teacher.
10. The key to peak performance is total engagement in the task.

The book addresses the most common culprits of low self-confidence of: excessive expectations, harsh self-judgment, preoccupation with fear, lack of experience, and lack of skills. Overcoming each of these culprits, the solution offered to filling the confidence gap involves (pp. 244-245):

***Unhooking from excessive expectations

***Practicing self-acceptance and self-encouragement

***Making room for fear--and, if possible using it

***Stepping out of your comfort zone to get the experience you require

***Practicing skills, applying them effectively, assessing the results, and modifying as needed

In essence, the way to feeling better involves making space for feeling uncomfortable, and harnessing that discomfort to help guide the way towards values-based, authentic living. In the encouraging words of the author:

"If we choose to make our lives a daring adventure--to step out of our comfort zone; to grow, explore, and face our challenges--then we will fear what people feel on daring adventures. Our hearts will race; our bodies will sweat; our stomachs will churn. Fear will show up in all its different varieties: from anxiety to insecurity, from stress to self-doubt, from "pumped" to panic...However, if we make room for those feelings, unhook from those thoughts, and engage in fully acting on our values, then we are free. We are free to behave like the person we want to be; free to do the things that truly matter to us; and free to live our lives with genuine confidence." (p. 247-248)

I confidently recommend this book for anyone who is willing and ready (or even unwilling and not ready quite yet!) to fill the confidence gap.

46 of 52 people found the following review helpful.

Way to similar to The Happiness Trap.

By Mindcontrol

Even some of the examples and descriptions he gives in this books is identical to the ones used in The Happiness Trap. The Happiness Trap is the best book that I've read all year and since then I've picked up other books on ACT. However, The Confidence Gap just seems like the same ol' book to me. I'm a little disappointed since I really appreciate ACT. I was hoping for something new. This would be a great first book if you are new to ACT. But if you have read the Happiness Trap then I would stay away from this one.

See all 66 customer reviews...

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