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Coaching Series 3: Building Confidence

Learn How to Talk to Yourself to Success

-- Tuesday, February 06, 2007

By Michael Scholtz and Greg Hottinger, BLC Experts

Editors Note: From time to time we will be running a series about how to achieve long-running weight loss success. Here is the third in that series.

"I think I can. I think I can"

Who can forget the Little Engine That Could? His memorable mantra was enough to pull him through a really tough task. Would your self-talk stand up to that test?

When you run into an obstacle like a plateau, a deadline at work, a tempting buffet, a drop off in your motivation to exercise, or worse, an outright slip, how well you react is an important key to your success. And how you react is controlled to a large extent by your confidence in your own abilities.

In fact, your confidence needs to be even higher than the little engine's. He only "thought" he could. To be successful, you need to know you can!

What It Means to be Confident

- Self esteem

One aspect of confidence is self-esteem, which is your overall belief in your personal worth and capability. It is a generalized self-concept based on many environmental and emotional factors including but not limited to relationships, health, career, financial success, education, and body image.

Self-esteem is related to confidence in that it depends in part on your feelings of competence or incompetence.

But, it is also shaped by:

Locus of control – How much you believe that you control what happens in your life vs. having it forced upon you by the world. The more internally (you) vs. externally (the world) controlled you feel, the higher your self esteem.

Self-acceptance – How much you like yourself and how unconditionally loved and accepted you feel by those around you.

While it is your overall picture of yourself that is called self esteem, people do place different amounts of value on each piece of the puzzle. And the amount of importance placed on each may change as circumstances and priorities change.

For example, younger people typically put a lot of importance on looks and body image. After school, career, and/or marriage, our priorities can shift to success with relationships or finances. And, as we age, independence and health might take center stage.

- Self efficacy

Another aspect of confidence is your "belief in your ability to bring about a particular outcome," or self efficacy. Unlike self-esteem, your efficacy is specific to each situation or task that you face.

For example, you may have a very high self efficacy in your work but struggle in relationships or not be able to control over-eating.

Self efficacy is strongly influenced by your experiences and feedback in particular