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HOW DO I GET MY CONFIDENCE BACK?

Welcome to The Highly Valued Leader podcast where I make it simple for leaders at all levels to amplify their value. My name is Mel Savage and I went from working in the mailroom at a small ad agency to making multiple six figures in senior management at McDonald's, to running my own multiple six-figure executive coaching business. I've had huge successes in my career and epic failures. All of it taught me the world-class leadership, mind and skill sets that I simplify for my clients and share with you on this podcast. I'll help you reset your leadership style, demystify the politics, and help you become the highly valued leader everyone wants on their team. Get ready for the most honest, direct and revolutionary leadership coaching you've ever heard. Let's simplify leadership together.

Welcome back, leaders. Great to have you back on the podcast. Last time I actually made a podcast in under 20 minutes. I'm so proud of myself. We're going to go for it again today. So today's podcast is really all about when you don't feel confident as a leader and you want to. The question that we want to answer this week is, how do I get my confidence back in control? Whatever you want to call it. Maybe you're someone who just tells yourself you're not a confident person. I want to talk about all of that today.

And I want to really address why your lack of confidence is totally normal and how to consistently access more confidence so that you can focus on just being a high-performing leader versus being worried all the time or focused on self-doubt or telling yourself you can't do this, or all that other stuff. I'm not going to call it wasted, but let's call it not useful, not productive thought pattern, thought energy, whatever you want to say that gets in your way of being the best leader that you can be. And it's really important for leaders to be confident.

When you're a leader, your confidence allows you to create the space to make decisions that are best for the business or the situation in front of you. When you are not that confident, when you're thinking about yourself, when you're thinking about how this is going to impact you, then you make bad decisions. Or you make decisions that maybe aren't in the best interest of the business, which are ultimately, by the way, not in the best interests of you.

You make decisions to be safe so you don't say the thing that you need to say, or you act badly to protect yourself by blaming others, or just pointing the finger or not collaborating when you need to collaborate because you're just worried that it's going to take too much time and it's going to look bad on you. Maybe you overwork because you think, *"Oh, by working, that's how I create my value, and they'll want to keep me."* And you think that's more of a defensive mechanism, but really, what it ends up doing is burning you out.

Or maybe you just compare yourself to others. You can't bring yourself to celebrate the success of your peers or other people because you're worried about the impact on you. So you compare yourself to others, not in a good way. I call it comparing and despairing versus comparing as a benchmark of what you want to achieve. How can

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I use this as inspiration for me? And allowing yourself to celebrate those people, because that's how you connect with your peers. They can tell when you don't want the best for them. They can tell when you're in it for yourself.

I had this problem. I had lots of peers who didn't trust me, not because I wasn't always doing the things that were in the best interest of the team, but because I also had this thing like, *"Oh, it's either me or them,"* and that's not a good thought to have. It is not useful, and people can feel it, whether you actually say those things or not. So our goal today is to help you act from a place of confidence more often, particularly in the moments where you often feel self-doubt.

I want to give you some tools today that help you actually access the confidence you already have in those moments. Because when you feel more confident as a leader, life just gets easier. You get to lead with ease, which is my mission. For anybody who has worked with me or talks to me, leading with ease is my mission for all leaders out there, because that's when you're focused on what's in front of you. You're not focused on yourself or what could happen to you or what this might mean for you.

I'm not saying it's not important to focus on your own needs, but not at every decision point or worrying instead of sleeping or hanging out with your family on the weekend or being present. You don't need to worry all the time when you're confident and when you have your own back. You just get to take the problem of self-doubt off the list of things you need to worry about because there's already enough being added to your list of things that are challenging or on fire or whatever. You don't need to add your own worry and self-doubt to it.

Our goal here today is to help you manage and lead the self-doubt that comes up to a better place before you take action. So I have five things that I want to share with you today, and they're not necessarily consecutive things, but because they're all going to be happening at the same time, you need to be aware of all of them in order to really get to a place where you are feeling confident to do your job more often.

The first thing I want you to know is that self-doubting thoughts are normal. They are normal. Your brain is wired to have them. You will never, ever get rid of them. Please stop trying. By the way, everyone has them, not just you, because they all have human brains too. Everyone you work with has a human brain. They may not be having them in the exact same moments you're having them. But we all have self-doubting thoughts. So when you have them, the very first thing I want to offer you is that you don't make them mean something is wrong with you. Because it's normal to have them. You can just tell yourself, *"Oh, there's some self-doubt there. I'm a normal human being. I have a human brain."* That's it.

This leads me to number two–self-doubting thoughts don't need to mean anything. Like I said already, you don't need to make them mean something's wrong with you, which is usually the place we go. *"Something is wrong with me,"* which can then be converted into, *"I'm an imposter. I don't know what I'm doing. I'm never going to make it. I'm not good enough."* All of that starts with our thoughts that we layer on after we self-doubt. We think that it actually means something, but it doesn't have to mean anything because you get to be in control of what you make it mean.

When you have self-doubting thoughts, a little bit of anxiety, or a little bit of nervousness to do something, you get to decide what you make that mean. And all it could mean, again, is that you have a human brain, which is designed to protect you from anything dangerous. And in today's day and age, the most dangerous thing, or the most commonly dangerous thing that we deal with on a day-to-day basis is uncertainty, or some uncertain emotion. So *"I don't know what's going to happen."* And when we don't know what's going to happen, our brain

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turns that into danger. And when it feels danger, perceives danger, it starts feeding you thoughts and emotions that work on you to stop, to hold back, to start to be defensive versus offensive.

And if you're someone who feels a lot of self-doubting emotion, that's because it works on you. Your brain is manipulating you to slow down, to stop, because it thinks there's danger, but oftentimes there is no danger. Your brain just feels uncertain, which makes it uncomfortable. Just know that self-doubting thoughts don't mean to mean anything. They just mean that your brain is working.

Number three, you can leverage the confidence you have. Leverage the confidence you have, not the self-doubt you have. This is what happened to me. I've talked about this before. I was at a coaching seminar. It was an off-site. It was a lovely place. We were all getting coached by different coaches and we were coaching each other. A coach said to me, because I brought up my own lack of confidence, and she said to me, *"On a scale of one to 10, how confident are you?"* I was like, *"Well, kind of a seven."* She's like, *"You're a seven out of 10?"* I'm like, *"Yeah."* She's like, *"So you're confident 70% of the time?"* I'm like, *"Yeah."* She's like, *"So you are confident."* What we are talking about here is the 30% gap in the times when you let your self-doubting thoughts take over.

We tend to think that if we're not confident 100% of the time, we're not allowed to call ourselves confident. But the fact is, even at 70% confident, I'm a confident person. Think about what you're doing 70% of the time. I run three times a week, not seven days a week, and I call myself a runner. I don't have to run seven days a week to call myself a runner, and I don't have to be confident 100% of the time to call myself confident. In fact, for me now I'm like 90%. I'm like a nine out of 10, and other times it's just like my human brain in action.

You don't need to be confident. You can just start to change your narrative right now. *"I am a confident person."* You can just call yourself confident because I don't care whether you're a seven out of 10 or two out of 10. You get to call yourself confident. There's just eight out of 10 times that you're working to deal with your self-doubt, but you can still be confident. I run three days out of seven. That is less than 50%, folks, and I'm still calling myself a runner. I eat chocolate sometimes, like probably, I'm going to say three days out of the week, I'm having something chocolate, but I still tell myself I'm really great at watching what I eat. I've lost 50 pounds by eating chocolate three days a week. A lot less chocolate. A lot smarter about the chocolate I eat when I consume it and why. But I'm still telling myself I am good at watching what I eat.

So you get to change the basic narrative, and the basic narrative here is that you are a confident person who sometimes feels self-doubt versus *"I lack confidence. I'm not confident."* Because you're not confident 100% of the time. That is an argument you're never going to win because you have a human brain that will always feed you self-doubt. Do you see the circle here? You're waiting for yourself to be 100% confident, which is biologically never going to happen. So let it go. Be happy with 20%, 50%, 70%, or wherever you're starting right now, let that be your baseline for being a confident person. And if you want to improve on that, I'm going to give you the next couple of things to do but definitely let go of the 100% narrative.

Number four, once you've let go of the possibility that you have to be 100% confident to call yourself confident, and once you've taken on this new narrative, I would like you to write a narrative of yourself on your best day and refocus on that. On your best day, when you're feeling confident, what are the thoughts that are going through your head? What's the narrative that you're telling yourself? This does not have to be an essay. This does not have to be a full page of thoughts. This can be like four or five things. In fact, the simpler it is, the better. Because then you want to be able to focus and remember this thinking.

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A couple of things to get you started if you're like, *"I don't know, I don't remember,"* ask yourself the question, why is it safe to…? Why is it safe to believe in myself? Have my own back? Why is it safe to celebrate other people? Why is it safe to not worry? Why is it safe to make a mistake right now? I think that's a really big one. This idea of making a mistake.

I'm really going to tell you this really quick story. For a long time in my life, I feared making a mistake, and it wasn't because there was a lack of confidence. Sometimes it's not just our thinking that creates the fear; it's a trauma response. When I was a kid, it was not safe in my house to make a mistake. I won't go into all the dirty details right now, but there was physical and emotional danger if you made a mistake when I was growing up, and that created little traumas.

I've had several clients who had similar traumas to me, and they were very afraid of making mistakes now in their later life, as leaders, as confident people, as people who had no kind of physical or emotional danger in their life today, they were still afraid of making a mistake because the idea of making a mistake still created a sort of small trauma response.

So what you just need to note is there is no danger; you just have to question it. Just remind yourself, *"This is what I do."* I remind myself I'm not that little girl. I'm not living in that space anymore. I have achieved so much in my life. I can handle when things go wrong. That's one of my narratives. I can handle when things go wrong. By the way, things always go wrong, things always go sideways, and I am a master at handling it. That's the narrative I tell myself when I'm having a trauma response, which I still have, and I just don't make them mean something's wrong with me. I make them mean, oh, I'm a human being having a trauma response to a childhood situation, that's it.

And when I give my clients permission to realize that and realize that they're safe, I'm not a psychiatrist; some of them need more support than just that, but for many of them, that's enough to go, *"Oh yeah, that's where it's coming from… Oh yeah, I don't have to be afraid anymore."* Just the permission to have it, to go, oh, it's okay to make a mistake, even if you have a bully boss who reminds you, which I did, several reminded me of my father. Unbeknownst to me, I still learned later that it's okay, I can take care of myself. That it's okay that I'm having a trauma response, and this has nothing to do with anything except this guy is kind of a bully, and I can handle it.

Giving you a question, why is it safe to…, that's going to help you access some of the thoughts that are part of your narrative when you are confident. And another question that you can ask yourself is, why is doubting myself just a normal human reaction right now? That can be something that you ask yourself to help you feed your narrative. Why is doubting myself just a normal human reaction right now? "Oh, because I'm normally afraid to make a mistake... Oh, because I'm a little bit jealous that this person got the job… But it's normal to doubt myself, but I can do this… Oh, it's normal that I'm not sure if I can do this because I've never done it before… But you know what, I normally come through just fine... Why is doubting myself just a normal human reaction?" That is a question that you can ask yourself.

And then number five, I'm going to sound like I'm on repeat, but I have another point to make here. Number five is you got to let go of the 100% story. I know I just went on a little bit of a rant about why you will never be confident 100% of the time. So that is part of it. I think it bears repeating, for sure. You don't need to be 100% confident to call yourself confident.

But I think the other part of this, as you're practicing this work, as you are thinking about your self-doubting thoughts being normal and that they don't need to mean anything, and that I'm going to leverage the confidence I

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have, and I'm going to have this four or five-point narrative to remind me to get back on track whenever I feel self-doubt. Once you have all that in place, now you want to go, *"Now I'm going to do it every single time."*

We go right to all-or-nothing thinking, which is like, *"Now I have this toolbox. I'm going to never feel self-doubt again."* Oh yes, you will. And also, you don't need to be perfect at this, because you will mess it up most of the time moving forward. So I don't want you to think that you're going to address 100% of the situations where you're feeling self-doubt without going into some sort of shame spiral. You will. You'll still go into a shame spiral.

I don't want you to think you need to do this work perfectly 100% of the time. Just work on being 1% more confident or managing to do this once a week. You can set your goal for yourself. I'm going to catch myself with self-doubt once this week. I'm going to be proactive with it once this week, and then maybe one more time this week, and one more time this week, until you kind of have a rhythm where you're learning to manage and lead your self-doubt versus letting it lead you. This is one step at a time. It is not an all-or-nothing scenario.

That's what I have for you today. What I want you to take away from this is that you can already walk after listening to this, and you can just say, *"Oh, I am a confident person."* And if your brain starts to argue with you, let that be normal, because it will. *"Oh, you know you're not because look at all these times you weren't."* Of course, you're not. I'm a confident person who doubts herself sometimes. Let that be your narrative and let that be okay. The minute that's not a problem, the minute you normalize *"I'm a confident person who doubts herself sometimes,"* that can be a great place to start. The minute you allow that to be normal, the less you start to judge yourself.

That's what I have for you this week, my friends. And of course, if you want to work on this together, sign up for a leadership strategy session with me. We'll talk about this and some of the other things that are in the way of you being the world-class leader that you're meant to be and you're totally capable of being. And if you want to invest in yourself and look into executive coaching, come have a chat. It's free, and I'd love to talk to you. In the meantime, I want you to focus on leading with ease, which is my mission in life for everyone. Have some fun with this, and I'll talk to you later. Bye for now.

Hey, if you want to simplify leadership while amplifying your value, then you need to get your hands on my free training. Head over to melsavage.com/simple for instant access to the training and get a taste of how I help my clients lead with ease and make more money in the process. I'll see you there.

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