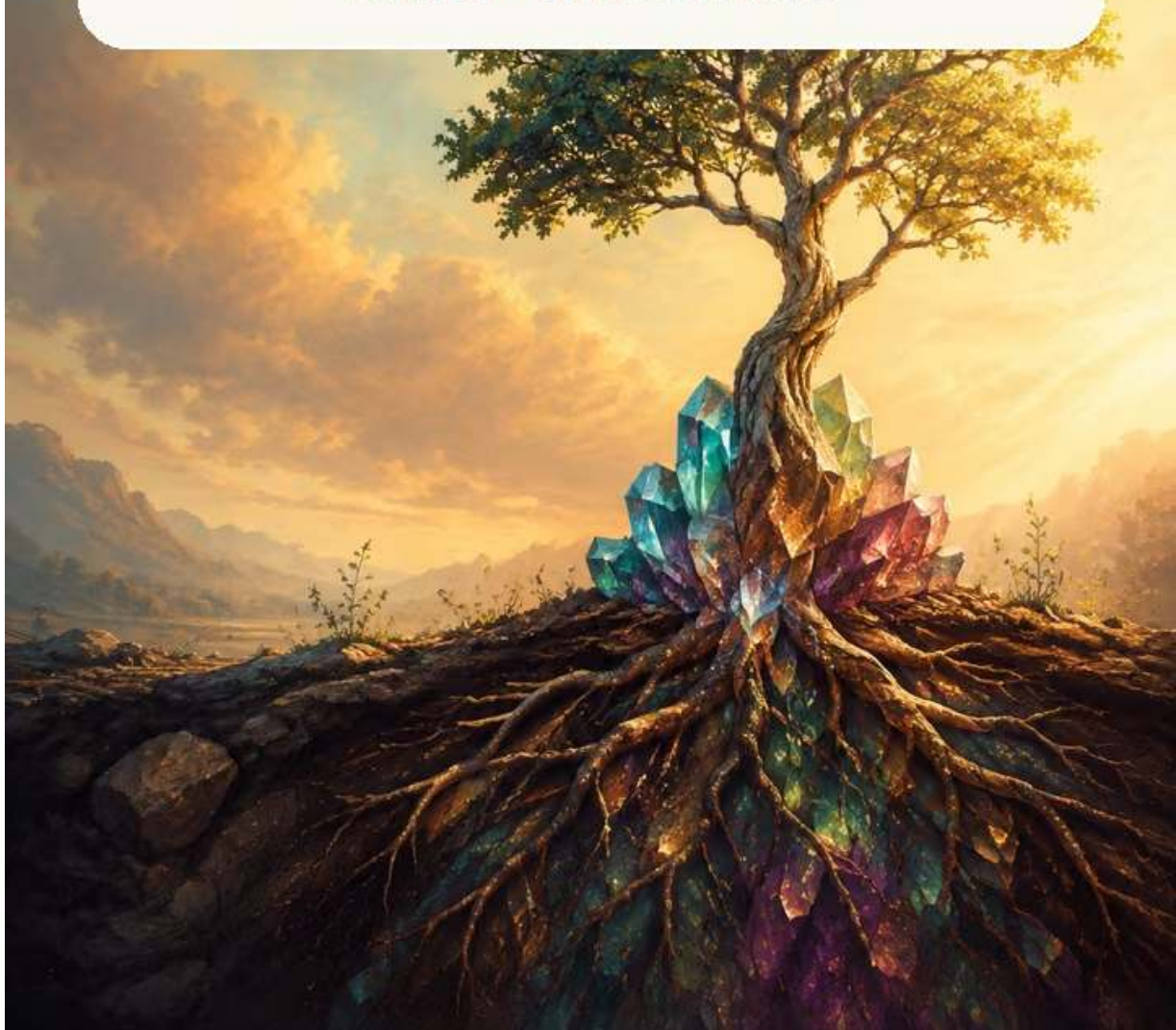


THE JOURNEY OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE

BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN YOUR IDENTITY

Growing self-belief from a foundation of acceptance

ARTICLE 4 • BY MAGGIE LEAROYD



Building Confidence in Your Identity

Growing self-belief from a foundation of acceptance

"You alone are enough. You have nothing to prove to anybody." — Maya Angelou

Introduction

Self-acceptance and self-confidence are often spoken about as though they mean the same thing. In reality, they are quite different.

Self-acceptance is about recognising your worth regardless of how confident you feel.

Confidence is about believing in your ability to cope with situations, challenges and new experiences.

For many LGBTQ+ people, confidence has been shaped by years of receiving messages—both direct and indirect—about who they should be. These messages may have encouraged them to stay quiet, hide aspects of themselves or seek approval before feeling worthy.

The good news is that confidence is not something we are born with.

It is something we develop.

More importantly, confidence that grows from self-acceptance tends to be stronger than confidence built solely on the approval of others.

Understanding Self-Worth

Many people spend years believing that confidence comes from achievements.

Getting promoted.

Finding a partner.

Receiving praise.

Being accepted.

Although these experiences can feel rewarding, they do not create lasting confidence on their own.

If your confidence depends entirely on external validation, it can disappear as quickly as it arrived.

Healthy confidence begins with a different belief:

- "My worth is not dependent on someone else's opinion of me."

That belief creates stability during both success and disappointment.

The Trap of Seeking Approval

It is natural to want acceptance from others.

However, when our self-worth depends entirely upon approval, life can become exhausting.

You may notice yourself:

- Worrying what people think.

Avoiding conflict at any cost.

Constantly apologising.

Trying to make everyone comfortable.

Changing your opinions to fit in.

Feeling responsible for other people's reactions.

These behaviours often develop from a desire to feel safe rather than from a lack of character.

Recognising this allows us to respond with compassion rather than criticism.

Confidence Grows Through Experience

One of the biggest myths about confidence is that people feel confident before they act.

More often, confidence develops afterwards.

You speak honestly once.

Nothing terrible happens.

Your brain learns.

Next time feels slightly easier.

Then easier again.

Confidence grows through repeated experiences of discovering that you can cope.

Waiting until you feel completely confident before living authentically often means waiting forever.

Celebrating Your Identity

Building confidence also means recognising the strengths your experiences may have developed.

Many LGBTQ+ people describe becoming:

- More empathetic.

More accepting of difference.

More resilient.

Better listeners.

Strong advocates for fairness.

Deeply compassionate.

While nobody chooses discrimination, many people recognise that overcoming challenges has shaped valuable qualities.

Acknowledging those strengths is not arrogance.

It is recognising your growth.

Letting Go of Perfection

Some people believe they must become the "perfect" LGBTQ+ person.

Always informed.

Always confident.

Always resilient.

Always an advocate.

This expectation can become another source of pressure.

You do not have to represent an entire community.

You are allowed to have difficult days.

You are allowed to change your mind.

You are allowed to make mistakes.

Confidence grows through authenticity, not perfection.

Building Everyday Confidence

Confidence is strengthened through small, consistent actions.

Consider:

- Speaking kindly to yourself.

Challenging self-critical thoughts.

Spending time with supportive people.

Trying something new despite uncertainty.

Acknowledging your achievements.

Setting healthy boundaries.

Allowing yourself to receive compliments.

These actions may seem simple, yet together they reinforce a powerful message:

- "I can trust myself."

Reflection Questions

Take a moment to reflect:

- Where does your confidence currently come from?

Are you relying on approval from others?

What strengths have your life experiences helped you develop?

What would confidence look like if it came from self-acceptance instead of external validation?

What is one small action you could take this week that reflects confidence in yourself?

Key Takeaways

Self-confidence and self-acceptance are different but closely connected.

Lasting confidence develops from recognising your inherent worth.

Seeking constant approval can undermine self-belief.

Confidence grows through experience, not perfection.

Your experiences may have developed valuable strengths and resilience.

Small, consistent actions build genuine confidence over time.

Final Thoughts

Confidence is not about becoming fearless.

It is about learning that fear does not have to make your decisions.

There will always be situations that feel uncomfortable. There will always be moments when self-doubt appears.

What changes is your relationship with those feelings.

Instead of asking, "Am I confident enough?" you begin asking, "Can I trust myself to cope?"

That shift is powerful.

You do not need to become someone different to deserve respect, belonging or happiness.

You already possess the qualities needed to build a meaningful life.

Confidence grows each time you choose authenticity over approval, self-respect over self-criticism and compassion over perfection.

And with every step you take, you strengthen the most important relationship you will ever have—the relationship with yourself.