

A Letter to You

When You Don't Believe in Yourself

Dear you,

I do not know what has happened today, this week, or perhaps over many years to make you doubt yourself this much. I do not know whether somebody's words have stayed with you for far longer than they ever deserved to, whether life has knocked your confidence little by little, or whether you have simply become exhausted from trying so hard and still feeling as though you are not getting anywhere. But I do know what it can feel like when your own voice stops being the one you trust. You can reach a point where every decision feels questionable, every mistake feels like proof, and every achievement is quickly explained away as luck, timing, or something anybody else could have done.

When you are in that place, believing in yourself can sound like an enormous instruction. People may tell you to be confident, think positively, recognise your strengths or stop being so hard on yourself. They may mean well, but confidence does not suddenly appear because somebody tells you that you should have it. Sometimes you have lived through experiences that taught you to question yourself. Sometimes you have spent years being compared, corrected, misunderstood, criticised or expected to function in ways that never fitted you. Sometimes you have tried and failed, tried again, become tired, and quietly begun to believe that perhaps the problem is you.

So I am not going to ask you to suddenly believe that you can do anything. I am asking something much smaller. For today, could you leave a tiny space for the possibility that the way you see yourself right now may not be the whole picture? When confidence is low, our minds can become very selective. We notice the forgotten appointment but not the hundred things we remembered. We replay the conversation we think we got wrong but overlook the person we supported. We remember the opportunity that did not work out and forget the courage it took to try. Your mind may currently be presenting evidence against you while quietly filing away everything that tells a different story.

There are things you have survived that once felt impossible. There have been mornings when you got up without knowing how you would manage the day. There have been situations you worked out as you went along. You have adapted, learned, changed your mind, asked for help, started again and carried things nobody else could fully see. None of that means you should have had to struggle, and it does not mean difficult experiences were somehow good for you. It simply means your story contains

more evidence of your ability than your self-doubt is currently allowing you to see.

Please do not confuse struggling with failing. They are not the same thing. Needing more time does not mean you are incapable. Needing support does not make an achievement less yours. Doing something differently from other people does not make your way wrong. Resting does not erase the work you have already done. Changing direction does not mean the previous road was wasted. And discovering that something is not right for you is information, not a verdict on your worth.

You may also be comparing your middle to somebody else's visible moment. We rarely see the complete reality of another person's life. We see announcements, qualifications, houses, relationships, careers, confidence, photographs and milestones. We do not see every fear behind them, every piece of support, every failed attempt, every advantage, every sleepless night or every private doubt. Your life was never supposed to be completed according to somebody else's timetable. There is no universal age by which you must have become certain, successful, healed, financially secure, confident or completely sure of who you are.

Perhaps there is a part of you reading this that immediately argues back: 'But you don't know me. You don't know the mistakes I've made.' You're right. I don't. And I do not need to pretend those mistakes never happened. Believing in yourself is not about rewriting your history until everything looks perfect. It is about recognising that a human being can get things wrong and still grow. You can regret something and learn. You can wish you had responded differently and respond differently next time. You can take responsibility without turning responsibility into a lifelong punishment.

Confidence is often built after the step, not before it. We imagine confident people feel certain and then act, when very often they act while uncertain and confidence slowly follows. You do not have to wait until fear disappears. You do not need a complete five-year plan. You do not need to know exactly who you will become. Sometimes the next piece of confidence is simply sending the email, making the call, asking the question, saying no, trying once, walking through the door, or allowing yourself to admit that you want something different.

And on the days when even that is too much, your task can become smaller again. Get through this hour. Eat something you can manage. Drink something. Sit somewhere safe. Write down the thought instead of carrying it around your head. Tell somebody you are struggling. Cancel what genuinely needs cancelling. Put one thing away. Open the document. Stand outside for a moment. Confidence can grow from these ordinary acts because each one quietly says: I am worth looking after. My needs are worth responding to. My life is worth participating in.

I want you to notice something else. You opened this letter. Something in you was looking for something. Reassurance perhaps. Hope. Understanding. A sentence that might land differently from all the sentences you have already told yourself. That matters. There is still a part of you reaching toward yourself, even if right now it is only by a fingertip. You do not have to turn that into a dramatic transformation. Protect that small reaching part. Give it a little room.

If your confidence has been damaged by other people, remember that repetition can make an opinion feel like a fact. Being told you are too much, not enough, difficult, lazy, oversensitive, incapable, awkward, dramatic or disappointing does not automatically make those descriptions true. Sometimes people judge what they do not understand. Sometimes environments demand a version of us that is unsustainable. Sometimes our differences are interpreted as deficiencies because nobody stopped long enough to understand what was actually happening.

You are allowed to know yourself again. Not the version built entirely from other people's reactions, but the person underneath them. What makes you interested? What settles you? What do you care deeply about? What are you naturally drawn toward? What have you learned the hard way? What do people come to you for? Where do you feel most like yourself? Those questions can be more useful than asking whether you are 'good enough', because good enough is a moving target. Knowing yourself gives you somewhere steadier to stand.

There may come a time when you read this again and realise that something has shifted. Perhaps not dramatically. Perhaps you still have doubts, but they no longer make every decision for you. Perhaps you have begun to speak to yourself differently. Perhaps you tried something you once assumed was beyond you. Perhaps you learned that confidence is not a personality trait handed to a lucky few; it can be something slowly constructed through experience, boundaries, support, self-understanding and hundreds of very ordinary moments.

Until then, you do not have to force yourself to say, 'I believe in myself,' if those words feel impossible. Try something gentler: 'I am learning not to give up on myself.' Or: 'I don't know what I am capable of yet.' There is room inside those sentences. They do not demand certainty. They simply leave the door unlocked.

And if today you cannot hold any belief in yourself at all, then borrow these words for a while: the fact that you cannot see your worth clearly today does not mean there is nothing there to see. You are still becoming. You are still learning. Your story is still being written. One difficult chapter, one rejection, one mistake, one diagnosis, one lost opportunity, one relationship, one examination result, one person's opinion, or one period of your life does not get to write the ending.

You do not need to become somebody else before you are allowed to move forward. Start with the person who is here now. Tired perhaps. Uncertain. Frightened. Hopeful in a way you hardly dare admit. Start there. Take one small step with that person rather than waiting for a more confident version of you to arrive.

You may discover that they have been here all along.

With warmth,

Maggie

Space to Breathe Therapy