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Speaking Tips # 30 061104

Overconfidence may trigger an avalanche!

In Speaking Tips # 20 I said that you could start building self confidence by focusing on you. Upgrading yourself and de-dramatizing others is a mental necessity to master unnecessary and exaggerated respect for others. That turns us into underdogs. The first step is thus to respect yourself as you are, regardless how you are, and by realizing that others are not so terribly superior, but rather your equals. In this way we help strengthening our self respect although we may not yet have improved our self confidence. What's the difference you may ask. The difference is that we can respect a person although that person has low self confidence.

The building of self confidence includes to a high degree also a practical part, where we have to do something to attain respect also **from others** and not only from us. With our self respect as a basis we have much better possibilities to live a richer social life. And when we improve our social relationships, we obtain positive reactions from those with whom we communicate. When we get positive reactions from the world around, confidence in us improves, which in turn improves our social relations. It is the beginning of a good circle. OK you may say, but how do I do in real life to make others respect me and appreciate my personality? Well, this is where your focus on others comes into the picture, rather than on you. Rather to focus on what others say than what you say.

In Speaking Tips # 21 I spoke about the sympathy which a good listener arouses with a speaker and the antipathy that the bad listener will be met with. Listening is therefore the key to obtain the positive reactions from others that I just mentioned. Such positive reactions are fundamental to our belief in us. After all, our low self confidence originates from the negative attitudes which we imagine that others have towards us. Positive reactions therefore perform wonders. Next to food, money and sex our primary need tends to be recognition. We need to be recognized and confirmed. A good and active listener gets that recognition. This means that we don't have to be gallant speakers to obtain good enough response from others to improve confidence. What we need to do is to listen actively and sympathetically, after which the rest will come by itself! And listening should be a lot easier than speaking. But beware! Once we feel strong, it is vital not to become overly strong!

Or, let me describe this with a metaphor. We climb a height and enjoy the exhilarated feeling of having reached the top. We experience the fantastic view, symbolizing a rich life. But now it becomes a matter of staying there in humble gratitude. We must neither fall backwards, nor forwards. If we again suffer from fear or doubts, then we fall backwards. If, on the other hand, we are struck by overconfidence and self-righteousness, followed by arrogance and a know-it-all wise guy mentality, then we fall down on the other side, a fall which could trigger an avalanche and finish in disaster.

Speech Tracker AB, Kronhjortsgatan 8, S-412 68, Göteborg, Sweden, Tel. +46 (0)31 7034520, Mob. +46 (0)708 242888,
info@speechtracker.net, www.speechtracker.net

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