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| Number of pages: | 233 |
| Book Club rating: | 4.0 |
| Reviewed by: | Agata Kowalska |

***Plot Summary:***

As the title states, book focuses on a various aspect of confidence. Authors explore the impact of gender differences in confidence level, its origin and reflection in professional success. Its starts with a discussion on competence vs. confidence question with going over interesting studies and statistics. Even the most successful women had to work on their confidence and believing in themselves. They share their different stories and approach with a clear message that it takes effort, action and taking risks to build confidence. Women are often perfectionist. That drive to always be prepared and have all the answers leads to what is perceived as indecisiveness and prevent them from taking the opportunities when they arrive. This hesitation and doubt are holding women back. On the other hand, every time we act, we build confidence. Getting accustom to just trying and failing builds the feeling of accomplishment which translates to confidence. Next, authors walk the readers through various scientific studies and genetics explanation of the feeling of confidence. It talks about nature vs. nurture arguments and how different ways of upbringing influence our ability to take actions. This part concludes that we can shape our personality if we only have willingness and take actions. As women, we not only have to overcome the genetics or challenges of the environment that we grew up it in, but also the double standards once we are ready to take risks. Women are not always perceived the same way when they are decisive or bold.

Based on these different factors, authors provide the guidance on building your confidence mainly by taking actions and failing fast. They encourage their reader to stop trying to be perfect and “When in doubt, act”. Ability to take fast decision and owning your action is critical to feel and be perceived as confident. One method highlighted in the book is killing NATs (*negative automatic thoughts)*. Changing the way you think about your challenge or doubt can make a significant difference on how you react to it. It’s the mindset that corelates to the feeling of confidence. You can also find a list of do and don’ts to work on your confidence. When we understand how we can control our own confidence, natural progression is to understand how we can pass that on. There are different theories on how to raise children to prepare them for successful life. Book compares extrema approaches of Asian and Western schools. One focuses on challenging kids to teach them persistence, and that they can achieve anything when they work hard enough. Second, is the culture of participation trophy, making sure that kids are not discourage by losing or failing. Another norm challenged in the book is praising your kids achievement. Books discusses the conflicting views of when is the frequent “great job” or “I’m so proud of you” setting your child to be confident, and when is praise encouraging compliant behavior prohibiting them from challenging the status quo in the future. The discussion brings up influence of gender expectations and stereotypes. Authors offer some perspective on these provoking questions. Book ends with adding one more important factor, authenticity. You must be true to yourself and believe in your abilities even when its not easy.

Main underline message from the book is to take actions, fail fast and be authentic.

***Book Club Meeting Discussion:***

Overall book was very well received by the team. Despite our different confidence levels and career stages everyone has found something to take out of the book. Some of us loved the statistics and research, some of us the stories and messages that remind us of our own struggle. On the other hand we challenged the fit of authors personal and some parts seem a bit too long . What all felt that this book is a great reading recommendation for young woman who are just entering their working life.

We discussed the question of competence vs. confidence, which has resonated with many of us. We discussed our surprise with confidence having a significantly higher impact on career than the competence and experience we have been working so hard to get.

We discuss nature vs. nurture: most of us felt encouraged by the examples of how you can change and improve your level of confidence.

Topic of being bold and being considered “bitchy” led us to sharing stories on double standards for men and women that we encounter at works. We also discussed the positive change that we have seen in our workplace regarding gender difference. One member mentioned that in this new COVID-19 work environment, becoming more empathetic as a leader is even considered a bit of a trend with her male colleagues.

Most of us felt that we wish we did some of these things in earlier stages of our career and life. We heard real life stories on how just asking for what you want get you exactly that, either a raise or a better job. We share regrets of not taking these actions before because we did not feel ready or we were afraid of failing. To summaries, we are all keen to take actions and don’t be afraid to fail.

***Personal Comments:***

One part of out discussion that I would like to add is that at the very end, we all shared an accomplishment with each other. It was a great exercise to remind ourselves of what we can do well and boost our confidence. I also love to hear the stories of people with different life experience than mine. Discussing the book with others just give you totally different view of the book and learnings than just interpretation through your own paradigm.