

Confidence

Noun

the feeling or belief that one can have faith in or rely on someone or something

Confidence

Ethos of Learning

“Decide what you want to be confident in and then do something about it.”

Alex Wallace, Deputy Headmaster

My family and I had a wonderful half term visiting relatives and friends in Dorset, Devon and Cornwall. The weather was excellent and most importantly the surf was sublime! On the first weekend I was playing in our annual Beach Touch Rugby Tournament in Poole. The event is essentially a group of about 40 pals who set up the tournament, organise a BBQ afterwards and much merriment ensues. The standard is decent and being from a family of 4 sporty brothers and an aggressively competitive older sister we always enter a family team - “The Wallies!” Last year we won the tournament and a bit like Manchester City everyone was very keen to ensure that history would not repeat itself. Things did not go well and we lost our first two matches. I could handle this, whilst disappointed it had still been great fun and crucially my wife and two out of my three children appeared to be enjoying the day at the beach. However, my eldest son, George was in floods of tears, I assumed he had been stung by a jellyfish, or had a chunk of his leg taken by a shark such was his uncontrollable sobbing. Or even worse, perhaps he had dropped his ice cream! As it turned out, he was so upset because his Dad’s team had lost the first two games! I managed to console him and all was well by the time we were knocked out in the semi-final. He was so confident that we would win, it came as a great shock to realise that actually we

weren't good enough! A week later, and it was time to watch the Champions League Final. George and I are very keen Spurs supporters. We headed up to the local bar and before I had even ordered a drink we were 1-0 down. I looked at George expecting to see some form of sadness, rage or frustration. However, he just took a sip of his drink and carried on watching, just a little disappointed. As we all know Spurs went on to lose the game 2-0. We walked home and I asked him if he was disappointed and he simply said, he was not confident at all that Spurs would beat Liverpool, he felt Liverpool were always going to win!

I was delighted he dealt with the defeat so well, but it was purely because he did not have any confidence in his beloved Spurs and yet the previous week he had been completely deluded in his outrageous confidence in his ageing father! The interesting thing about these examples is that they are to do with confidence in others rather than confidence in oneself!

Having confidence in others is incredibly important for the smooth running of any organisation and the RGS is no exception. I have a great deal of confidence in the Assistant Headteachers and Subject Leaders that I line manage let alone the wonderful students. I hope by showing confidence in them, it allows them to have the opportunity to develop and flourish. Being trusted by your line manager builds confidence in oneself. Not only confidence to deliver on the targets set but hopefully confidence that your line manager will also be there to support and guide if needed.

You often hear about people being referred to as a confident person. In fact, I will often make comments like, "Jimmy is a confident young man". Different people have different levels of confidence, but I actually think this depends on what people are doing. Some colleagues may suggest that I come across as confident and maybe I am if it is delivering a lesson, taking an assembly or playing a rugby game, but I would be the complete opposite if I was singing in a choir, doing the Year 7 Maths Battles, baking a cake or refereeing a fencing competition. The truth is that everyone can be confident in one or two areas but completely lacking in confidence in most other areas. The aim of the Ethos of Learning is to try to develop our skills so we can cope with these areas we are not so familiar with.

The good news is that you can gain confidence. I know nothing about cars but when I have to buy a new one, I become an expert. Once, I have managed my wife's expectations of what we can afford (this takes 6-9 weeks and

a lot of spreadsheets) I start my research. Within 6 weeks I know everything I need to know about cars in the dull and affordable category. The hours and hard work have paid off and I am now confident in my knowledge and my mundane choice of car.

I talk to many of my exam classes about confidence in exams. It is just like gaining confidence for Sport or Music. You wouldn't dream of just turning up for a cricket match or a school concert without having trained for large periods of time for either event. This should be exactly the same for your exams. You can't feel confident for anything without putting the practice in. My GCSEs were the only time I have ever felt confident for exams and it was simply through hard work and practice, the result meant that I was going into the exam hall calm and relaxed (except for Physics obviously!).

So how do you gain this confidence? The truth is it requires hard work for many of us. Putting your hand up in class to hear praise and cement your learning builds confidence. Practice papers with good feedback builds confidence and asking for clarification can also be a significant aid. It might be worth asking your son what went well during the current exam process and what he wishes he had done differently. Could be worth keeping a copy for this time next year!



A final thought...

If you're ever worrying you are not as confident as the next person, just consider if the topic changed from public speaking to war hammer figurines (or whatever your passion might be!), how would they be feeling? The biggest decision is deciding what you want to be confident in and then doing something about it!

For further information on the Ethos of Learning please refer to the RGS website: rgshw.com or Alex Wallace, Deputy Headmaster, arw@rgshw.com