

**CORE
CONFIDENCE**

CORE CONFIDENCE

OWN YOUR TALENT • FACE YOUR FEAR
CREATE YOUR FUTURE

KATE BOORER AND FIONA PEARMAN

www.coreconfidence.com.au

This is a work of nonfiction. Nonetheless, some of the names and personal characteristics of the individuals or events involved have been changed in order to disguise their identities. Any resulting resemblance to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental and unintentional.

First published in 2018 in Australia

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ISBN: 978-0-6483551-0-6 (paperback)



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A catalogue record for this book is
available from the National Library of
Australia

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Kate Boorer and Fiona Pearman are available as consultants and keynote speakers on the subject of confidence. For further information, visit www.coreconfidence.com.au

For working women everywhere

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The act of
confidence comes
before the feeling
of *confidence*¹

INTRODUCTION

We have been in the business of empowering professionals – from established leaders to emerging talent – for many years. In that time, we have become aware through our coaching practice, corporate leadership programs, conferences and workshops of an alarming trend among the women we’ve met, and continue to meet - a lack of sustainable confidence.

Our research tells us that most women will experience a crisis of confidence at some point in their career, regardless of what they do, who they work with or how highly they are regarded.

When we ask our clients to define what confidence is however, neither men nor women find it easy to quantify. The people we work with usually list a series of qualities they associate with confidence to describe it, or they point to the most confident person in the room to show what confidence looks like. Given confidence is a performance measure in most companies – and women receive a lot of feedback in this area – it’s concerning that a working definition is not universally agreed or understood.

While as a society we believe in the concept of fairness and equality, and raise our children upon these pillars, many workplaces have a long way to go to demonstrate equality in action. Gender balance at senior levels is still an issue. Combined with the undermining of women’s confidence from an early age, is it any wonder women are left wondering “am I good enough?”

We have now spent over a decade working with a variety of modalities, programs, coaching techniques and experts to unpack the beliefs and behaviours that limit forward movement in business and life at large.

This journey has been driven by a passionate fascination with personal development and the research and resources available to help people tap into their truth and power. While many esteemed books and authors (who we admire) line our shelves, few if any provide a step-by-step guide to uncovering Core Confidence.

Which leads us to this book and you.

The beginnings of the book started many years ago as an experiential Confidence Workshop (that continues to run to this day). We wanted to explore the confidence deficit we were encountering and enable women to:

- Connect or reconnect with their inner strength and power
- Design their lives mindfully and purposefully
- Have the courage to ask for what they want and deserve

Through our work, we have witnessed thousands of women making profound and courageous decisions for their future; transforming their lives by asking themselves the right questions at the right time. These women have proved that even when Core Confidence is neglected, it is never too late to listen in and take positive action.

Now, we want to share the “**How-To**” of Core Confidence on a larger stage for the benefit of women everywhere.

The goal of Core Confidence is to challenge you to take ownership of your talents and put them in the service of your best and most daring self, not only for your own advancement but to act as a strong role model for those girls and women behind and beside you. Creating new rules for yourself and the environment you work within requires curiosity, experimentation and courage, and that’s where we come in.

In this book we will provide you with:

- A working definition of Core Confidence
- Ten dimensions (internal and external) - the building blocks to a confident self
- The practices and coaching that will reconnect you with unshakeable unbreakable Core Confidence

- Insight into the systemic, gender and personal barriers to confidence
- Suggestions for how to use your confidence to advocate for others

We will also share stories of the women we've met who have bravely faced their fears and developed or rediscovered their Core Confidence and explore why your network is one of your biggest professional and personal assets.

We are grateful to have learnt from some of the most talented and inspiring people and teachers throughout the years. Core Confidence is a tribute to our network and most importantly the women who have inspired and encouraged us to bring this work to life.

The book is divided into three sections. In Section One we explore why the conversation around confidence is so important, personal confidence barriers and lay out our definition of Core Confidence. Section Two contains the ten building blocks of Core Confidence and includes practical exercises designed to help you integrate the information on a deep, personal level. Finally, in Section Three we unpack the role of advocacy to create sustainable change that addresses the systemic, gender and practical barriers that women continue to face in the workplace.

As you read through the book you will notice we've included our stories and those of clients and colleagues. When sharing our own stories we identify whether it's Kate or Fiona's story by putting our name in brackets after the first 'I'. We've used the same conversational language we do in our workshops, which means at times we use 'we' to refer to us as authors, women and collectively with you the reader. We also speak directly to you as the reader inviting your participation in reconnecting with your Core Confidence.

Now, it's all about you. We are thrilled to take this journey by your side.

Kate & Fiona

**SECTION
ONE**

THE ILLUSION DELUSION

Whenever you set off on a new path, it's important to know where you're headed, the terrain in front of you and the types of obstacles you might encounter along the way. The road to confidence is no different.

In this Section, we begin the conversation about the current social, political and organisational landscape (with a full discussion in Section Three), explore the unique barriers to women's progression and clearly define Core Confidence.

THE LANDSCAPE

“When I first entered the workforce, in 1991, there were just as many women as men going into entry-level jobs. I looked to the side of me, and it was equal. But I looked above me, and it was almost entirely men. As my career progressed, I had fewer and fewer women in every group I was part of. If you look back at the 1950s, '60s, or '70s, of course we've made progress. But we have not made progress in getting a greater share of the top jobs, in any industry, in the past decade.”

- Sheryl Sandberg

Let's set the scene.

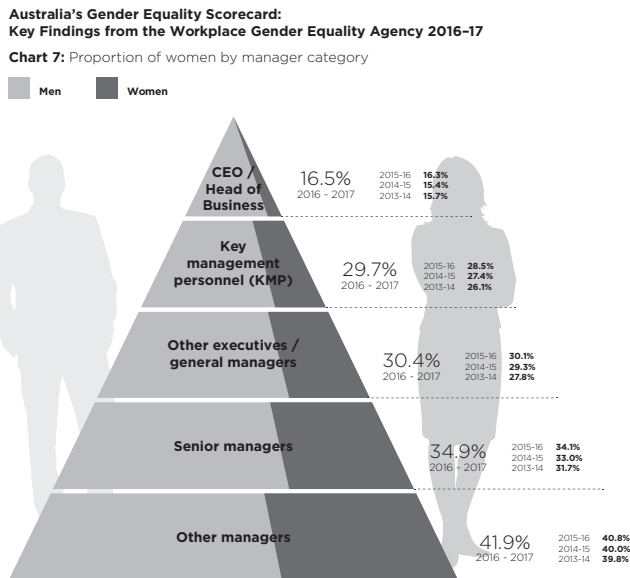
There is a casual assumption that the battle for women's liberation has been won – that the glass ceiling has been smashed at all seniority levels, equitable pay is mandated and the ability to both raise a family and progress your career is institutionalised. It follows then that *feminism* has no place in this new world and is simply an outdated ideology pushed by angry women.

The research however, provides a stark contrast to these assumptions. So stark in fact, we experienced a sense of unease when reading the latest reports about women's so-called liberation. The statistics for women in leadership, women's economic outcomes (pay and super) and support for working parents are shocking. Surely, we couldn't still have so far to go?

While most children are raised with the same rights and opportunities irrespective of gender, by the time boys and girls become men and women in the workforce their rights, opportunities and outcomes look very different:

- In Australia women represent 47%² of graduates; by the time they reach senior management level they represent 35% of senior managers but by the time they reach executive levels, they only account for 16% of CEOs³ and only 5% of ASX 200 CEOs⁴.
- The gender pay gap has remained relatively steady, hovering between 15% and 19% over the past 20 years⁵. In fact, based on the 2017 Global Gender Gap⁶ Report by the World Economic Forum, it will take another 217 years to close the economic gender gap.
- Only one in four mothers with children under the age of 5 works full time⁷.

Some of the most compelling data comes from the most recent *Workplace Gender Equality Agency*⁸ (WGEA) report, representing 4 million employees, 11,000 employers and 40% of employees in Australia (of which 50% are female). Their 2017 report shows limited progress for women in management over the last four years:



In this landscape, women remain significantly underrepresented at the highest levels of power and decision making across all areas of society, government and business.

THE BARRIERS

We have met many women who despite being seen by others as confident and having it all together, share within the safety of a coaching conversation or workshop their truth: “inside I don’t feel confident at all”. These women have convinced themselves that they are the problem, however we know that a multitude of factors are at play.

Many of the barriers to self belief and self agency sit outside of your immediate control. This is good news. When women are clear about the landscape, they can determine the skills, capabilities and attributes they need to rise to the challenge.

We have categorised the *barriers to confidence* into four core areas. Some are part of a complex interplay of societal expectations and bias, while others are practical and structural issues which limit women’s progression in the workplace. It might be time to change the question from “What’s wrong with me?” to “What’s wrong with the system?”

The four barriers

1. *Systemic barriers*

The subtle and long-held views that cause society to treat girls differently and structure careers and parenthood in a way that challenges women

2. *Gender bias barriers*

Those specific, well documented ways in which gender bias effectively limits career progression for women

3. *Practical barriers*

The entrenched traditional model of full-time male breadwinner is hard to disrupt when there is little support and incentive to do so

4. *Personal confidence barriers*

The way in which women consciously and unconsciously limit themselves

The first three barriers are explored in more detail in Section Three. There, we'll show you how your confidence journey can impact the future of women. For now, let's focus on the personal confidence barriers.

Let's get personal

Our job is to shine a light on the complexity of this issue, unpack the dynamics of your relationship with confidence and show you the areas where you have ownership and opportunity to reconnect with your confident self. As you read, get curious about whether any of these barriers are familiar to you:

52%

of the 2000 women surveyed by Women's Agenda for their 2017 Ambition Report said confidence in their abilities could hinder their ambitions

Self-sabotage through perfectionism

We can be our own worst enemies. Many women end up pursuing perfectionism in their career believing that by working hard and learning all there is to know, confidence and progression will be the natural outcomes. Along the way, these women have failed to understand that in most careers this won't get you to the top of your field. In fact, perfectionism sets such an unrealistic goal that it sabotages our efforts.

If this is you, you'll be familiar with:

- Investing too many hours to stay on top of issues and information for fear of being asked a question you can't answer
- Not speaking up in a meeting for fear of getting it wrong and how this might impact on your reputation
- Compromising everything personally to prove your value or worse, cross every 'i' and dot every 't' so that failure is prevented no matter what the cost

Self doubt

In our experience, women are likely to apply for a job only when they feel they meet 100% of the criteria listed, while men are more likely to apply for jobs when they think they have 60% of the criteria.

We have learned that women – on the whole – underestimate their abilities, downplay their strengths and want to be 120% sure they are able to do something well before they put their hand up. In 2011, the Institute of Leadership and Management in the United Kingdom surveyed British managers about how confident they felt in their professions. Half the female respondents reported self doubt compared with fewer than a third of male respondents⁹. In another study published in 2011, Ernesto Reuben, a professor at Columbia Business School, found that men consistently rated their past performance about 30% higher than it actually was¹⁰.

Being invisible

Young girls are socialised to be good and not make a noise, mess or fuss. Unfortunately, for women, that no fuss attitude can make it difficult for others to see you, and therein lies the problem. A study in 2012 by researchers from Brigham Young University and Princeton found that, when a mixed group collaborates to solve a problem, men will take up 75% of the conversation¹¹. If women don't learn how to or fail to speak up, we can guarantee they cannot be heard or seen. Learning how to find your voice and hold your ground are critical skills that influence how others think about you and what you're trying to say.

Lack of self acknowledgement

Women tend to have an inclusive and collaborative perspective; they will often promote the achievements of the whole team and readily praise the performance of others. A 2013 study by Michelle Haynes and Madeleine Heilman, found that when men and women were assigned to work on a project together, women gave more credit to their male teammates and took less credit for themselves¹². While this approach fosters team spirit and performance, it can mean that women fail to acknowledge their personal achievements, impacting how they are seen in

Whether you *think*
you can or you
can't, you're *right*

- Henry Ford

the organisation (their personal brand), something that men tend to do more naturally.

Maybe women think it is egotistical to *self promote* or *big note* themselves and many highly successful women have attributed their success to luck and being in the right place at the right time. A 2011 study by UK based think tank Catalyst¹³ found that of all the career advancement strategies used by women, making their achievements known was the only one associated with remuneration growth.

While acknowledging your achievements might not come easily to you, there are ways to do it that do not require an overinflated ego, as we will discuss in later chapters.

Not asking for what you want

When coaching men and women to negotiate salary, it is surprising how often women shy away from asking for what they are worth. They are less likely to negotiate salary (either when taking on new roles or as part of the annual review process) and are more likely to accept what is first offered. Linda Babcock, a professor of economics at Carnegie Mellon University and the author of *Women Don't Ask*¹⁴, found in studies of business-school students, that men initiate salary negotiations four times as often as women do, and that when women do negotiate, they ask for and get – on average, 30% less money than men.

We see these barriers play out regularly in the workplace: holding your tongue in critical moments when your voice could make the difference, hiding your skills, talents and insights and reaping fewer rewards than you deserve.

IT'S TIME TO RISE

The landscape we find ourselves operating in poses unique and interesting challenges that need to be met by strong and confident women. The conversation now is **how**. How do we get you thinking, feeling and doing things differently?

We continually hear our workshop participants say things like, “I have been told

I have the capability to progress, but need to work on building my confidence”, or “I wanted the opportunity but wasn’t confident enough to go for it”. Many clients ask us how to develop confidence or tell us that their confidence has taken a beating and they don’t know what to do.

These comments are all too common for women in Australian organisations. In 2017 a study by Chief Executive Women and Bain¹⁵ found that women are twice as likely as men to be told that they need to display “more confidence” and that women are less likely than men to receive clear feedback on what they need to do to be ready for promotion. The lack of actionable feedback for women trying to progress their careers was one of the things that drew us to investigating the notion of confidence and how it plays out for women and men.

WHAT IS CONFIDENCE?

Despite this new focus on women and confidence in the workplace, the definition of confidence still remains somewhat vague. What are these talented women lacking exactly? Is it a quality? A skill? An energy? All of the above or something else?

As it stands, the most common definitions of confidence are:

- Confidence is the feeling or belief that one can have faith in or rely on someone or something
- Confidence is the state of feeling certain about the truth of something
- Confidence is a feeling of self assurance arising from an appreciation of our own abilities or qualities, and acknowledgment of our current limits
- Confidence is risking failure, knowing you will be ok
- Confidence is turning thoughts and decisions into action

While each of these aspects are important, they don’t encapsulate all that we know to be the felt sense of confidence. And given the ambiguity, how is anyone ever held accountable for getting it wrong?

Our proposition
is that *Core
Confidence* is
within you and our
job is to reconnect
you to it

I'VE GOT THIS (AND SO HAVE YOU)

We break our confidence definition into three distinctive parts:

1. *The working definition of confidence*

The mantra you need to bring confidence to mind effortlessly in any situation.

2. *The expression of confidence*

What confidence looks and feels like to you and those around you (the measurable aspect of confidence).

3. *The building blocks of confidence*

The 10 dimensions of confidence and the tools and strategies to leverage them.

CORE CONFIDENCE MANTRA IS QUITE SIMPLY **“I'VE GOT THIS”**

Sarah, a client of ours, changed organisations after nearly 10 years with her old company. It was a risk, but she was ready. Sarah told us that for the first time in her career she turned up on Day One with excitement rather than fear. When we asked what was different now, she said “It’s a mindset. I knew I had this”. What Sarah understood about herself was that no matter what challenge she faced, she would be ok. She knew she had the skills and experience to learn quickly, adapt and figure out the elements of the role. She wasn’t afraid of mistakes and looked forward to sharing what she already knew. But, more than that, she trusted herself. If the organisation turned out to be the wrong fit, she would make a different decision. Sarah couldn’t lose.

While it may be fleeting for some of us, we all know that feeling. The feeling of being in flow, knowing what we stand for, connecting with others in a productive manner and managing challenges with positivity. When we are excited about what we’ll learn and how we’ll grow, rather than weighed down by our perceived flaws or lack of knowledge.

Think about the last time you stood in your power and said “I’ve got this”. What’s getting in the way of you experiencing it, right now?

Core Confidence expressed

“I’ve got this” is shorthand for *I have the physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual capacity to meet the task or situation in front of me*. It is an internal alignment visible to others through our actions, energy, body language and speech. It is an essence rather than a *thing* and when it is expressed in the world it is unmistakable:

- ***Taking action*** – moving forward and doing
- ***Being decisive*** – free of doubt, no second-guessing or approval seeking
- ***Self belief*** – having faith in who you are and backing it
- ***Resilience*** – navigating failure and difficulty with humility
- ***Self honesty*** – acknowledging the truth even when it is hard
- ***Authentic energy*** – a total absence of pretending
- ***Awareness*** – understanding self in relation to others and the environment
- ***Curiosity*** – the ability to learn rather than know

It takes our workshop participants no time at all to pinpoint where they shine and what they shy away from. They feel for the first time they can name specifically the areas where confidence is absent for them.

When leaders give the feedback that you need more confidence, they are highlighting an area of confidence they can’t see in you. Using the expressions of confidence provides the language to delve deeper with your leaders and ask, “which characteristic of confidence is currently not being demonstrated?”

Core Confidence - The building blocks

In Section Two we have identified ten interwoven dimensions of Core Confidence. It is not our intention or belief that Core Confidence only exists when you have nailed them all; they are simply elements that when activated can help reconnect you with what we know is already present.....your Core Confidence. The first five factors may be somewhat familiar, as they cover the traditional subjects of leadership theory and training:

External elements of confidence, those aspects focused on **what you are doing**

- Get Clear (Chapter 1)
- Set Goals and Take Action (Chapter 2)
- Know Your Stuff (Chapter 3)
- Work Hard (Chapter 4)
- Build Relationships (Chapter 5)

While these elements are crucial, on their own they can be a fragile foundation that when challenged can come falling down like a pack of cards. To be able to trust yourself in new and challenging situations, you'll need to know who you are beyond your goals and subject matter expertise. Core Confidence is an inner game.

Internal elements of confidence, those aspects focused on **who you are being**

- Be Focused and Present (Chapter 6)
- Maintain Resilience (Chapter 7)
- Be Authentic (Chapter 8)
- Ask for Help (Chapter 9)
- Face Fear (Chapter 10)

As you work through the book, we can't promise you immediate change and unassailable self belief. But, we can promise that you will develop:

- Awareness and clarity about what true confidence is

- A map to understand what is going on for you and your relationship with confidence in any moment
- The tools and strategies to get yourself back on track

Confidence is a self-fulfilling prophecy; the more you connect with the ten dimensions of confidence the more you will reinforce your sense of self. For those who choose self-doubt, the only outcome is more of the same.

It's time to move beyond wondering why and take control of the how. How you, personally, get to your *I've got this* moment.

Core Confidence is when, at in the deepest part of your soul, you believe in who you are, the value you contribute and the person you are becoming. Simply put, it is the ability to know “I’ve got this” and be unshakeable in your resolve

