

Book Review

CONFIDENCE: THE SURPRISING TRUTH ABOUT HOW MUCH YOU NEED AND HOW TO GET IT

Author: Tomas Chamorro, **Year of Publication:** 2013,

Publisher: Profile Books Ltd, **Pages:** 257, **Price:** Rs.299

Saumya Aggarwal*

From bygone times, people have been postulating that optimism plays an imperative role in the success of a human being. Martin Seligman, the renowned Psychologist and Educator also emphasised on the theory of learned optimism. The fruits of optimistic thinking cannot be certainly denied, when one reads his decades of work on positive psychology. However, there is an existing intriguing yet contradictory theory on Optimism which makes it even more interesting and significant to read Tomas Chamorro work on Confidence and Competence.

We always believe and propagate that a person becomes what he thinks of himself as also exemplified in the popular Book 'Secrets' by Rhonda Byrne which mentions the universal law of attraction. But one never pondered until reading this book that optimism can be the root cause of narcissism. The author is a professor of business psychology at University College London and has empirically supported via his social-research experiments that overconfidence can construct delusional competence in the human mind. He emphasis on the Confidence-Competence Grid and explains that the overconfidence can indeed be the reason for complacency with one's incompetence and the root cause of seeking future failures. While one should be worried about developing competence over time, people unnecessarily worry about their low confidence which can actually be a blessing in disguise.

The author mentions about four possible quadrants, incompetent confidence, realistic self-doubt, perfectionistic self-criticism and realistic confidence. The most peril one is the incompetent confidence wherein the person has high confidence but low competence level. This is the quadrant where one can understand the big

* Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Delhi, Delhi.
E mail: aggsaumya9@gmail.com

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difference between feeling good and being good. The high level of positivism creates a contaminated vision of our over competence, which inhibits further learning and improvement process, causing the downfall rather the uprising of the individual. At this phase, one should seek out the critical criticism of people that would underrate us and break the myopic version of the distorted reality.

The author explains through his research that people who are self-evolved are narcissistic, egoistic and often arrogant and overconfident, in contrast to people who are still focusing on self-evaluation and are hitherto more humble, polite, social and empathetic. Author propagates the benefits of having low-confidence. He illustrates that Depression and anxiety which are the symptoms of low confidence can indeed be beneficial. This is referred as “Depressive Realism”, which enables the person to take a reality check on his competence and results in a minimization of losses approach by promoting a calculated risk averse attitude. This reality check can be fruitful at both individual and country level. For an individual, he can be saved from taking risky financial decisions, curb gambling possibilities, improvise a relationship in personal life and for the nation, it can prevent catastrophic implications like war type situation and can better prepare the country for future disasters.

For every person there are two types of self-projections, one is how you look at yourself and the other is how people look at you. The author beware readers about being too much involved into themselves. Both over-confident and low-confident people are so self-driven that they overlook ‘empathy’ that is nurtured through social skill development. Through the perception of life from others point of view can save one immensely from being self-obsessed, and also drive him towards achieving competence than to keep focusing on his confidence, a direct consequence of self-obsession. The successful people are perfect epitome to exemplify the significance of having good social relationships that determine a person’s reputation, and recognition in the public domain. The author talks about ‘fake it, till you make it’. He says that for being successful it is required to create a public image which may be very different from the real you. But, this gives a reflection of people’s viewpoints on you, and one should never forget that people make opinions based on one’s behaviour when they can never really gauge the true feelings flowing below the surface. So, one can shield his insecurities while projecting confidence to maintain on his social network, which is a real mirror to one’s competence level.

The author refers to the game of power play, and talks about the vulnerability of being more scandalous as one reaches to higher powerful positions in his/her career. The Confidence has two faces: one is the character and the other is the reputation. The character is how one identifies himself and reputation is the people's outlook of your personality. Social Science research validates that reputation gives a more clear reflection of one's competence and character is uncorrelated and gives a falsified impression of one's competence level.

The author also talks about the psychologist concept of 'pygmalian effect', the concept of 'self-fulfilling prophecy', he explains through the example of societal gender stereotype that portrays masculine image in countries like Japan, Turkey and this manifest into thinking of having more male leaders in the society, an obnoxious incursion on the career advancement of women in the society.

To conclude, there is always a gap between confidence and competence level. The difference is always a surplus or deficit. The surplus ensures resentment from co-workers as people dislike boasting individuals while the deficit is an attestation of being modest and this humility attracts likeability from others and enables overcoming in-competencies in one's personal and professional life.