

# Confidence: 5 ways to get you some

April Clay

All riders want it, and almost all wish they had more. “If only I had more confidence I could win more”. “She needs to ride that horse more confidently and he will respond better”. Unfortunately, it’s not a purchasable item, but you can find ways to get more.

1. Understand this: Confidence is more than a feeling. When confidence is approached as a feeling, the way

to change seems to be through willpower. You tell yourself to feel better, to buck up and believe. It just doesn’t work. Your confidence is a set of beliefs you possess about your riding, it is knowledge gained through experience. The feeling good part is simply a by-product of this new knowledge. So don’t get too hung up on feeling good, figure out ways to be good.

2. Get ready for waves. Confidence is naturally variable. Confidence can be shaken, even the most elite riders sometimes suffer from doubt. This can come on the heels of an accident, or while trying to extend yourself to your next plateau of competence. All doubt tells us is that something needs attending. It sends a message that you are responsible for decoding. If you treat doubt as nothing more than an unpleasant feeling you have to avoid you are



missing something. An opportunity to grow.

3. Make a plan. The business of changing what you know about yourself as a rider entails action or experience. Think about it, if your horse suffered a lack of confidence over a spooky jump, you would not pat him on the neck and tell him to feel better and believe in himself. You would need to show him he could feel better, by leading him through an experience of handling that spooky jump. How you seek to affect your own confidence is ultimately the same.

4. Train for adversity. You say you want to increase your confidence? Be careful what you wish for. Confidence building may not always arise from pleasant circumstances. To be mentally tough, you have to learn how to have ‘good bad days’. Every time something doesn’t go quite right in your

training, this opportunity presents itself. You can either allow yourself to opt out- "I just don't feel quite right today, better quit while I'm ahead". Or, you can grab onto it and reap the rewards-"Sure, I don't feel great today, but I am going to practice dealing with it because who knows how I might feel before my next performance."

5. Abandon perfection. One of the greatest thieves of sport self esteem is the habit of clinging stubbornly to the idea of perfection. Some riders believe if they are not reaching for perfection, their goals are not high enough. The truth is, perfection is not a high goal, it's an impossible one. There is no perfect performance. Each performance that you give will be different, just by virtue of the variables involved. You cannot control everything so don't even try. Aim for excellence in your skills and learning to trust your instincts. This you can control. 🏇



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