

I BELIEVE

Eliminating
Self-Doubt



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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
WHAT IS SELF-DOUBT?	5
HOW SELF-DOUBT AFFECTS YOUR PERSONAL LIFE AND RELATIONSHIPS	6
HOW SELF-DOUBT AFFECTS YOUR WORK AND YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIFE	6
HOW SELF-DOUBT AFFECTS YOUR FINANCES AND POSSESSIONS	7
WHY DO WE DOUBT OURSELVES?	9
WE DON'T HAVE THE KNOW-HOW	9
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT	9
OUR PAST CATCHES UP WITH US	10
WE'VE BEEN TOLD WE CAN'T DO THIS	10
WE ARE FEARFUL	11
WE LACK SELF ESTEEM	11
WE DON'T THINK WE'RE GOOD ENOUGH YET	11
WE'RE MORE COMFORTABLE WHERE WE'RE AT RIGHT NOW	12
BREAK THE CYCLE:	14
MAKE YOURSELF DO IT ANYWAY	15
ASK YOURSELF "WHAT'S THE WORST THAT CAN HAPPEN?"	15
TAKE BABY STEPS	16
CELEBRATE SMALL SUCCESSES	17
FOCUS ON WHO YOU'RE HELPING	18
FIND A MENTOR, MASTERMIND GROUP, OR ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER	18
CREATE A "FEEL GOOD" FILE	19
HAVE SOMEONE ELSE WEED OUT THE NEGATIVE "STUFF"	20
LEARN TO FOCUS ON THE GOOD STUFF – MAKE IT A HABIT	20
STOP SELF DOUBT IN ITS TRACKS	21
KEEP A JOURNAL	21
GET BETTER AT WHAT YOU DO	22
DON'T LET TEMPORARY SETBACKS OR DISTRACTIONS HOLD YOU BACK	22
REMEMBER - NOTHING IS PERMANENT	23
CONCLUSION:	24

Introduction

Everyone doubts themselves. I'm sure you can think of many occasions when you second guessed what you were doing or told yourself that there was no way you could do what you wished you could.

In other words, self-doubt is a normal part of being human. What matters is how you respond to that little voice in your head that whispers "*It can't be done*". You have two choices when it comes to responding to that voice. You can heed it, or you can go on and do something, anyway.

How you respond to self-doubt affects all areas of your life. It affects your personal life, your happiness, your relationships, work, finances, family, etc. That's why it's so important to learn more about self-doubt and how to respond to it. By taking control, we can shape our life the way we would like it to be.

And that's what this guide is all about. We'll start by talking about exactly *what* self-doubt is and what effect it can have on our lives.

Next, we'll cover some of the reasons why we doubt ourselves in the first place, and finally wrap it all up by figuring out how we can break out of this cycle of self-doubt. After all, what good would a guide about self-doubt be without some hands-on tools for taking control and banishing that little voice in your head?

My hope is that you find this guide helpful in learning more about self-doubt, recognizing when you're doubting yourself, and then finding a way for you to deal with it that helps you reach your goals, whatever they may be. I'm not promising it will be easy, but I do promise to provide you with the tools you need to accomplish this. Let's start by taking a closer look at what exactly self-doubt is and what it can do to you and your life.

What Is Self-Doubt?

Self-doubt, by definition, is the “lack of confidence in oneself and one's abilities.” In other words, when you doubt yourself, you don't feel confident in what you're trying to do or accomplish. And that's a big problem.

Self-doubt is that little voice in the back of your head that constantly tells you that you're not going to reach your goals, that you're not doing things right, and that you should just stop right now since you're not accomplishing anything anyway. It's a way to protect ourselves from disappointment. When we set the bar low and don't expect to do well, we won't be disappointed when we don't reach our lofty goals. Or even worse, it's what makes us give up before we even start – while convincing ourselves that it's in our best interest.

Sadly, that doesn't push us to go further, reach higher, and get more done. Instead, that little voice of self-doubt keeps us in a place where we're comfortable. It keeps us at a level where we're doing the bare minimum to stay where we're at. And I don't have to tell you that this doesn't allow for much growth no matter what area of your life you're dealing with – be it your personal life, your business, your job, your relationships, your hobbies or anything else.

Instead, growth and success occur when we step outside of that comfort zone, do the stuff that scares us, and stretch ourselves to do more than we thought we were capable of. But when we let self-doubt get the better of us – day in and day out – that's not going to happen, is it?

And that can have some detrimental effects on all aspects of our lives. It's normal to want to grow and better yourself. Not being able to do so because of self-doubt can send you down a spiral of feeling worthless, getting depressed, and as a result, even more self-doubt since you are continually proving yourself right. It's a vicious cycle and it takes some time and effort to break it... but break it you can and that's what this guide is about.

Before we dive into the next chapter and talk in more detail about why we doubt ourselves and get to the root of things, let's take a look at how self-doubt can have a negative effect on every aspect of your life.

How Self-Doubt Affects Your Personal Life and Relationships

Self-doubt can have a profound negative affect on your personal life. It can keep you from meeting new people who will enrich your life. It can keep you from deepening relationships and friendships because you are afraid to open up.

Relationships are two-way streets. You need to be open, vulnerable, and go out there and communicate. If you are afraid to mess up, or get turned down, you risk missing out on new friends and maybe even that significant other.

Confidence is contagious and we're attracted to people that seem to know what they are doing and who are putting themselves out there. Self-doubt keeps us from developing that self-confidence and the chance of making connections and building relationships with those around us.

Self-doubt can even affect your health. Lack of confidence and happiness can lead to anything from depression to anxiety and with it, high blood pressure, which isn't good for your heart health in the least.

How Self-Doubt Affects Your Work and Your Professional Life

Doubting yourself can also negatively impact your career and your livelihood. Who do you think is more likely to get the new job or the promotion? The person who presents themselves in a confident and self-assured manner, or the doubter?

Of course it's the confident person. And it's not just during interviews and job evaluations that self-doubt will hurt you. It makes it harder to do your everyday job. It's not fun to second guess yourself in everything you do.

Work will go faster, smoother, and be better if you're confident in what you are doing. That's why it is so important to focus on banishing self-doubt and boosting confidence. You'll be happier and better paid in the end.

How Self-Doubt Affects Your Finances and Possessions

Let's go back to those job offers and promotions you're missing out on. How much less money are you making for years and years to come because you missed just one promotion, or didn't get the job offer you wanted and had to settle for something that paid less?

It's hard to guess, but it could easily cost you a couple of hundred bucks per week. And that's just one promotion you didn't get. It doesn't stop there. Since you didn't get that promotion, you also won't make it up to the next level that pays even better and has better benefits and so forth. Over the course of your career, self-doubt could cost you hundreds of thousands of dollars.

And that kind of money can have a huge impact on your family. Without the extra income, you may be struggling to pay the bills each month. This could cause your credit score to go down and, as a result, you'll be paying more for the car and house you're buying because you'll end up with a higher interest rate.

It also means that you have to settle for a used car and a much smaller house than you'd hoped to buy. And let's not forget about all the fun little extras like going out to eat, taking your wife and kids shopping, or heading out on a fun family trip twice a year. That's not going to be possible when you're just scraping by.

Instead, you're living frugally, cutting corners where you can, and staying up at night worrying about money. That doesn't sound like a good life, does it?

To recap, self-doubt makes you feel less confident in your abilities to accomplish things and this can have quite the negative effect on every part of your life. But thankfully the reverse is true as well. As you start to get things done, your confidence goes up and your self-doubt goes down.

Before we dig deeper into how we can break out of this vicious cycle of self-doubt, let's take a closer look at what causes it in the next chapter.

Why Do We Doubt Ourselves?

There are a lot of different reasons why we may doubt ourselves. Some may seem valid, others not so much. But in either case, we don't stand a chance of overcoming these self-doubts if we don't acknowledge them first and then come up with a plan for overcoming them. This chapter is dedicated to the first part. Let's start by taking a look at eight common reasons why we doubt ourselves.

We Don't Have The Know-How

Self-doubt can be caused by not knowing everything there is to know about a job, a task, or a field. It would be great if we could know it all, but chances are that's not going to happen. And the doubt starts to creep up. You may be thinking about different scenarios which you don't feel prepared for, or you're thinking about all the people you know who you think would be much better qualified.

It's very normal to doubt yourself. What you do about it is what counts. And here's the important information to take away. Everyone doubts their skills and know-how. Some are just better at hiding those doubts and doing it anyway than others.

We Don't Know What to Expect

Another big reason for self-doubt to creep up is fear of the unknown. When you're meeting a new person or taking a new job, you can't possibly know everything about there is to know. There are a lot of unknowns and that makes us uncomfortable or even fearful. And this fear turns into self-doubt. If we don't think we can do it and don't put ourselves out there, we don't have to face those unknowns.

The truth is that there is no possible way to know everything that's going to happen on a job, with a project, or in a relationship. Yes, we can prepare, but

there will always be unknowns. The key is to find a way to say yes anyway and figure it out as you go along.

Our Past Catches Up With Us

It would be great if we all had perfect lives with no problems or issues. But that's just not the case. We all come with our own history and our own baggage. And some of those past experiences make us doubt ourselves and our abilities. Maybe it's a failed relationship that makes us think we're just not cut out for a long-term commitment like marriage. Maybe it's an incident with a boss or co-worker in a past job that makes us hesitant to try out for the promotion. Or maybe it's something completely different.

We all have a past and some pasts leaves scars. Some are deeper than others, but they can all undermine our self-confidence and lead to self-doubt. Realizing this is the first step towards overcoming that doubt and, with it, our bad past with all it's baggage.

We've Been Told We Can't Do This

We are social creatures, brought up in a social environment – in the form of family, school, Church, and even the media. And from an early age, we've learned to listen to what those around us have to say. In particular we're paying attention to our parents, parent figures, mentors, teachers, and people of authority. We've been taught to listen to them and heed their advice.

It's only natural to doubt ourselves and our decisions when one of the people we look up to tells us that we can't do something. Sometimes this advice is sound. Sometimes it's self-serving. The key is to learn the difference and realize that part of growing up involves trying things even when our "elders" advise against it. They aren't always right.

We Are Fearful

Sometimes we're just plain scared. We're afraid of the unknown, we're afraid to mess up, and we're afraid to find out that we aren't good enough. Fear is a strong motivator and in this case fear causes self-doubt and motivates inaction.

So, we don't apply for our dream job, we don't go out and get that college education, we don't put our name in the hat for the promotion and we don't go talk to the cute girl or guy at the bar. All for fear of being let down. But guess what? When we let fear rule us, we lose any chance we had for positive change. Isn't it worth doing something, despite the fear, if we have a chance of getting what we really want?

We Lack Self Esteem

We already discussed how self-doubt is a lack of confidence in our ability to get something done. It's also closely related to a lack of self-esteem. The two usually go hand in hand. We don't think we're good enough and we don't think we have what it takes – lack of self-esteem and lack of confidence. The end result is a double dose of self-doubt.

The good news is that as you work on banishing self-doubt, your self-esteem will go up and vice versa. And that self-esteem will help you banish more self-doubt. It's a self-propelling cycle. All you need to do is get the ball rolling. We'll talk about how in the next chapter.

We Don't Think We're Good Enough Yet

Another big issue which causes self-doubt is thinking that we don't know enough yet, or that we aren't experienced enough yet for a task, a job, or a relationship. That's a very normal feeling and to be honest, chances are when you take a new

job or try something new that you may not be good at it. That's because you haven't tried it yet and you're lacking the experience.

It's also normal to doubt that you can do it. The important part is to try things anyway, get some experience under your belt, and get better at what you're doing. Think back to the first few weeks at your latest job. Chances are it was hard and overwhelming, and you didn't know how to do half the stuff you were suddenly responsible for.

And you made it through those stress-full first few weeks.

You got better at your job and, eventually, it became routine – something you could do in your sleep. The same goes for learning how to drive a car or your favorite hobby. It takes time and it's ok to do stuff long before you know everything there is to know... which isn't possible anyway, no matter how well you prepare.

We're More Comfortable with Where We're at Right Now

This next reason for self-doubt is closely related to the last one. Let's go back to the new job example. Yes, in the beginning it was hard and challenging. There was much you didn't know and a lot you had to discern. Now though, that same job has become routine. It's fairly easy and you know what to do. You're comfortable doing your job and that could be what's keeping you from applying for that promotion...using self-doubt as an excuse because you're comfortable.

You have a choice to make. Will you stay comfortable where you're at, or are you ready to get a bit uncomfortable, face your fears, and face the unknown? As nice as it is to stay comfortable, it'll eventually get boring and there could be many missed opportunities as a result.

Are these the only reasons why we may doubt ourselves? Of course not. We each come from different backgrounds and have lived very different lives. As a result,

we've developed self-doubt for different reasons. The ones listed above are, however, some of the more common ones. And while they may not describe you and your circumstances perfectly, they should give you a good idea of where your self-doubt is coming from. And with that information, you can start to work towards silencing self-doubt and listening to your confident voice instead. That part we'll tackle in the next chapter.

Break The Cycle:

So far we've talked extensively about what self-doubt is, what causes it, and how it can affect every single aspect of your life. I shared a few hints on things you can do to overcome this feeling of doubt, but frankly, little tips here and there aren't enough.

Self-doubt can be a vicious, self-propelling cycle. But the good news is that it can be broken. All it takes is a little mind shift and then tricking yourself into doing things, anyway. It may be easier said than done, but I will give you several different tools and strategies to make it happen.

As much as I wish there was a simple step-by-step solution to getting rid of self-doubt, there isn't. And if you think about it for a minute, it makes sense. We all live different lives, have different experiences, and with that have different things that make us doubt ourselves. When you read through the examples of things which can cause self-doubt in the last chapter, some probably resonated much more with you than others.

That's why there isn't a "one-size-fits-all" strategy for banishing self-doubt. And as such the solution will have to be custom tailored for you, as well. Have no fear (or self-doubt), you'll find everything you need to get started in this chapter. Much like the last one, it is broken up into sections. Each of them will describe a different strategy to boost your confidence and lower your self-doubt. The first four tips are universal. Start there and implement them as quickly and as often as possible until they become second nature.

As for the rest, start with the ones that resonate with you the most. Incorporate those into your daily life and, as they become habits, come back and pick out something else to try. Rinse and repeat until you've silenced that little voice in your head that tells you that you aren't good enough or can't do this. Ready to get started on proving that little voice of self-doubt wrong?

Make Yourself Do It Anyway

Let's start with something that sounds easy, but is incredibly powerful. Whenever you feel yourself doubting that you can do something, do it anyway. You don't have to commit 100% all the time, but get in the habit of at least giving things a try before you admit defeat.

For example, let's say you've had this dream of writing a novel, but you keep telling yourself that you'd never finish it, you aren't a good enough writer, and that even if you did manage to write it all, there's no way you could get it published. And even if you did, no one would want to buy it. Sound familiar?

Making yourself do it anyway may mean taking a long weekend, or even a couple of weeks to write a short story, an essay, or a poem. Do the writing but on a smaller, more manageable, and less scary scale. Proof to yourself that you can get some pretty good writing done.

And with that confidence under your belt, you may just be brave enough to show the story to a few good friends or a fellow writer and get some feedback.

Before you know it, by just getting in the habit of trying something despite the self-doubt, you'll be tackling new things in all areas of your life that you never thought you would. It's a great habit to get into.

Ask Yourself "What's The Worst That Can Happen?"

But, what if you try to make yourself do something scary like submitting that same short story for publication and just can't bring yourself to do it? What do you do when the voice of self-doubt is screaming at the top of its lungs?

You ask yourself this: "What's the worst that can happen?"

Seriously, ask yourself what the worst possible negative outcome could be. In other words, face your worst fear before you simply let self-doubt take over. In the example we used in the last section, ask yourself what's the worst that can happen if I submit my short story to a magazine, blog, or publisher? The worst that can happen is that they decline to publish it. And when you think about it, it's not that big of a deal. You can always submit it somewhere else, or edit it and resubmit it down the road. Many famous authors were rejected numerous times before becoming overnight sensations.

Let's run through a few more examples:

Talking to the cute person at the bar – what's the worst that can happen? They're not interested. Hey, at least you tried.

Applying for the open management position at work – what's the worst that can happen? You don't get the job and you're exactly where you're at right now. Nothing gained, but also nothing lost. Might as well try.

When you ask yourself this one little question, the general feeling of fear and doubt vanishes. Instead you're making yourself face the worst possible outcome and it's usually not nearly as bad as you imagine. Use this strategy to help yourself face the fear and doubt and then go do it anyway as suggested in the first tip.

The more you practice both of these techniques the easier it will become and the faster your self-doubt will vanish. If you don't take away anything else from this eBook, I hope you remember to use these two simple strategies.

Take Baby Steps

We talked about self-doubt and confidence. Your confidence in your own abilities can quickly vanish when you're looking at a huge task or facing a big challenge. Let's go back to the writing and publishing the next great American novel

example. That's a pretty daunting task. No wonder we doubt we can do it. Or how about wanting to restore a '57 Chevrolet that you found rusting away in an old barn? It's again completely normal to doubt yourself when you're looking at a huge project like that. Instead of trying to do it all at once and focusing on everything that needs doing, break it down into baby steps.

For the novel, focus on one little part of writing like plot or character development, or even just writing one scene. With the car, think about the first thing you need to do or *can* do. Get it home to your own garage, for example. Next, you may want to begin to assess the damage and work on a list of things you need to repair. From there focus on one thing on that list and get that done.

If you need to leave an abusive relationship, don't give in to the belief you could never make it on your own. People are doing it every day...people with circumstances much like your own. The secret is to start small, look for ways you can accomplish this feat, and begin making plans for your escape (secretly, of course).

Before you know it you're making some serious progress by taking one little baby step at a time. And since these little steps don't seem as difficult or as complicated as the entire project, your self-doubt goes down and with each step you complete, your confidence goes up.

Celebrate Small Successes

As you complete each baby step or reach small milestones along the way, take the time to celebrate your successes. Acknowledge that you're making progress and getting things done. You don't have to go out and buy a cake or host a big party. But make sure you realize how far you've come and what progress you've made.

Why is this important? Because as you celebrate your success, no matter how small, you're building confidence and we've already established that confidence is the perfect antidote to self-doubt. So pat yourself on the back and revel in your progress.

Focus On Who You're Helping

Here's another powerful strategy for you to try. This works particularly well whenever you're feeling that you're not good enough. Instead of focusing on yourself and your level of expertise (or lack thereof), focus instead on who you are helping.

How would what you're thinking of doing help others? Let's say you've been toying with the idea of teaching a class on keeping a personal budget. You've been budgeting for a while and used it as a tool to help yourself get out of debt. But you're no Dave Ramsey, so what business do you have teaching this?

Here's the thing, Dave Ramsey isn't for everyone and you may be reaching people who never heard of him, but desperately need help to get their personal finances under control. You're doing them a disservice by not teaching the class.

Focus on the clients or students you'll be helping with your class... or whatever it is you're thinking of doing. Think about the difference you'll make in their lives. Focus on that and your self-doubt will start to melt away. Try it – it works!

Find A Mentor, Mastermind Group, Or Accountability Partner

I'll let you in on a secret. You don't have to go it alone. It's hard and scary to start a new venture or business, or a new chapter in your life by yourself. Instead of playing lone wolf and figuring out everything the hard way, find a mentor, a mastermind or support group, or just a friend or colleague in a similar situation who can become your accountability partner.

Having someone else there to talk to, to encourage and support you, and to answer questions can make a world of difference. Simply not being alone in this helps. As an added bonus, you have someone there to tell you you're nuts when self-doubt starts to rear its ugly head. These people can be your personal cheerleaders who will lift you up and boost your confidence. And with that you may be ready to tackle some projects, tasks, and challenges which you thought were unattainable.

Create A "Feel Good" File

Here's a cold, hard truth. We all have bad days. We all have days when we doubt everything we do and are ready to throw in the towel. We have them as parents, we have them in our jobs, we have them in our marriage, and we have them as business owners. It happens and it's part of life. The key is to get out of that funk as quickly as possible, boost our confidence, and get back to work.

And there's a sneaky little trick to help us do that. I call it the "Feel Good" File. This can be a shoebox or a special folder on your computer. It doesn't matter where you keep it, just set it up so it's there when you have "one of those days".

In this file, or box, or whatever you choose, keep a record of things that fill you with pride and confidence. It could be the picture your daughter drew of the two of you. It could be the email you got from your boss that praised your work on a project. It could be a heartfelt testimonial or thank you card from a client or customer. It could be a copy of the comment someone left on your social media profile that tugged your heart strings. It doesn't matter what it is. What's meaningful to me will be different from what's meaningful to you. But start collecting these little mementoes of moments when you felt so proud and confident that you thought you could reach the moon.

Keep them in a folder or a box and pull them out whenever you feel down, tired, and beaten down. They will remind you of better days and more importantly that no matter what happened today, what you do matters and you are making a difference.

Have Someone Else Weed Out the Negative “Stuff”

Is there something in your life right now that can ruin your entire day? Maybe it's getting an email from your child's teacher about lack of focus in class. Maybe it's a nasty comment left on your blog or an email from an irate customer. Or maybe it's just some of the ridiculous things people will post on social media. If one little comment or email can send you down a spiral of self-doubt, it's time to weed out that negativity and, if needed, put a gate keeper in place.

Let's say you have a thriving online business and you get plenty of notes from happy customers all week long. (Those are great things to stick into your “feel good” file, btw.). But then, you get that one nasty email from an irate customer that ruins your entire day and makes you second guess everything you do. If that's you, find someone to filter the email for you. Hire a VA, get an intern, or simply have a spouse or friend deal with email for you. Have them handle it and only forward the good stuff to you.

Yes, if there's a serious issue, you are going to want to know about it. You can have your assistant do that... but if it's a simple matter of someone else having a bad day and letting it out on you, and you're not ready to handle it... find someone else to deal with it to keep your self-doubt at bay.

Learn to Focus on The Good Stuff – Make It a Habit

Let's go back to the last example. I mentioned how sometimes we can have lots of great feedback (plenty of happy customers emailing us all week long, for example), with only one bad egg in the bunch. And guess what we focus on?

The negative. And we allow it to color everything else we've accomplished. This has to stop.

Instead of always focusing on the negative, make it a habit to focus on the good stuff. It's not going to be easy and it's not something that comes natural to most of us, but with a little effort it can be done.

Every time you focus on the bad stuff, stop and force yourself to focus on the good stuff, instead. After a while it will become a habit... a habit that will boost your self-confidence and break the cycle of self-doubt.

Stop Self Doubt In Its Tracks

This next tip is similar to the last one... but this time we're looking at the flip side. Learn to recognize when you start to doubt yourself. Whenever you start to second guess yourself or find yourself shying away from something new, different, or challenging, ask yourself if it's a case of self-doubt.

If so, start by validating the feeling. Yes, you are doubting yourself and you aren't feeling confident. Then start using one of the strategies I've shared with you already to stop it in its tracks right away.

Just as being confident and doing things even when you're scared is a habit, giving in to self-doubt is a habit, too... in this case a bad habit. And it's time you start to break it. And you do that by recognizing it for what it is whenever possible and then doing something about it. Keep practicing and before you know it, your self-doubt will go down while your confidence in yourself goes up.

Keep A Journal

Keeping a journal is a great way to force yourself to reflect on what you're doing and what you have accomplished. What does this have to do with self-doubt? The

journal will help you pinpoint cases when you're doubting yourself and allowing it to keep you from doing what you really want to do.

As you write about your day, you'll dig deeper and learn more about what's motivating your decisions. This alone can be helpful in pinpointing times when you start to doubt yourself.

A journal gives you a chance to work through those challenges and mental blocks, but it also does something else. A journal is a personal record of what you're doing and who you are as a person. Even a quick little bullet journal entry reveals a lot about yourself. And more importantly, it allows you to go back and discover how far you've come.

When you begin to doubt yourself, or are trying to kick self-doubt to the curb, browse through your journals and take note of the progress you've made in the past weeks, months, and years. You'll realize that challenges are part of life and though many seemed unsurmountable, you tackled them. This will give you the confidence and the boost you need to work through your current doubts and fears.

Get Better At What You Do

Sometimes our self-doubt is justified. Often it's not, but sometimes it is. When that's the case, it's time to buckle down and get the education, experience, tools, advice, or information you need to take the next step.

Go sign up for a class, talk to a mentor, volunteer ... do whatever it takes to get better at what you do. With specific knowledge and experience under your belt, you're ready for the next chapter in your life, your profession, your hobby, or a making a new acquaintance.

Don't Let Temporary Setbacks or Distractions Hold You Back

Setbacks are going to happen... let's be real about that. And so will distractions. Life likes to throw curveballs and there isn't anything we can do about. But we do have control over how we react to temporary setbacks and distractions.

The first thing to realize is they are just that – temporary. Acknowledge them and then move on. Keep going and don't allow them to fuel your self-doubt. Instead, use it as a challenge to push harder and go further.

Remember - Nothing Is Permanent

Last but not least, remember that nothing is permanent. When you're worried about failing and allowing fear to stop you from doing what you love, think back to the tip about imagining "what's the worst that can happen". Then remember that no matter how bad it may be – feeling rejected, failing, being ridiculed – it is not permanent and it's something you can get through.

Yes, you will make mistakes. But that's ok... it is how we learn and how we get better. Fail fast and fail often to become good at whatever you want to do. Remember, those failures and setbacks aren't permanent.

When you think about it that way, there really is no reason not to give whatever it is you want to do a try.

Conclusion:

I hope you have found this guide helpful. We've talked about what self-doubt is, what causes it and how it can affect every single aspect of your life. The lesson I hope you're taking away is that self-doubt can be a distractive force in your life which you'll need to reign in on a regular basis.

To achieve this, we focused on several different strategies in the last chapter. Remember, the first four will work universally and this is where you should start. Then move through the rest, starting with the tips and strategies which speak to you most.

The key is to pay attention to your feelings, particularly self-doubt and fear, recognize them for what they are and then do whatever you must to reign them in and not allow them to control your life.

The more you practice and the better you get at not allowing self-doubt to take over, the easier it gets. You become more confident and try new things... which builds more confidence. Before you know it, you're creating a self-propelling cycle of personal successes that will make you unstoppable ... and more importantly, allow you to live a happy and fulfilled life.