



9 People

Who Make Being Confident

Look Simple –

*And the one who made it needlessly complicated!*

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## What Is This Booklet About?

9 people.

Ordinary people.

You may have heard of only one of them.

I crossed paths with each pretty much by “accident.”

Yet, each of these 9 people reminded me

challenged me

taught me

What CONFIDENCE looks like, sounds like, feels like.

Each tells a simple story.

And that’s the thing –

Being confident

“Doing confident”

Doesn’t have to be complicated.

It’s about choosing **WHO** you want to be.

It’s about choosing **HOW** you want that “WHO” to act.

And the 10<sup>th</sup> person reminds us what happens when we don’t choose!

**Read – Reflect – Enjoy – Be – Do!**

## Who Made You Who You Are?

I came across an issue of Esquire Magazine that profiled fifty male celebrities from sports, politics, the arts and entertainment. Each was asked to offer a snapshot of the person(s) who helped to make him the man he is today. Their answers are moving and got me thinking about who has helped to make me the person I am today.

I've been fortunate to have a number of remarkable people cross the path of my destiny. I'm especially grateful to a man who taught me the gift of listening as well as the gift of utter graciousness. That man is Fay Vincent.

If his name sounds familiar it's because he was baseball's eighth commissioner. I first met him, though, a few years earlier when he was Executive V.P. of Entertainment for Coca-Cola, which, at that time, owned Columbia Pictures. I'd just resigned from ministry and was without work, hoping to find my way into the world of film. I was the "bubble boy" coming out of the bubble and I was lost.

Through a friend of a friend (the true Hollywood way), I got a meeting with Fay. At the time, I was clueless as to his stature. I met him at the Beverly Hills Hotel where he was staying. I was nervous and uncertain. "Cordial" doesn't begin to capture his graciousness. After I sat down, he picked-up the phone and called the front desk. He

asked not to be disturbed for the next fifteen minutes. He then turned and matter-of-factly said, *“So, tell me your story.”*

For fifteen uninterrupted minutes that’s what I did. At the end, he simply said, *“Well, we have to get you a job.”* He told me to call his assistant the following Monday and she’d have names for me to contact.

Come Monday, I decided not to call since I thought he’d just been “nice” and didn’t really mean what he’d said. On Tuesday, his assistant called, wondering why I hadn’t contacted her. When I told her, she was taken aback and assured me, *“If Mr. Vincent didn’t want to help you, he wouldn’t have led you on.”*

Eventually I did get a job thanks to his introduction – but that’s another story. Ever since then Fay Vincent has been a hero of mine. He listened when there was no reason to do so. He gave me his full attention when I was desperate for someone to see me. He believed in me when I didn’t believe in myself.

**Confident people are generous sharing their resources because they know – no one of us makes “it” alone.**

**What about you – who helped make you the person you are today?**

**Who can YOU help make the person they are meant to be?**

## Sometimes Life Really Is Simple

Several years ago, while working as the head of college counseling at a private high school, my friend, Sue, ran a summer boot camp for the incoming juniors. The workshop focused on college application essay writing.

Sue and I have known each other for more years than I care to admit to in public, but we seldom have opportunities to work together. Being part of the workshop staff was a fun treat as it gave me the chance to observe her in her element and to see her in action.

The first summer she had forty teens who were drenched in sweat with an early onslaught of nerves over the college application process. Through it all Sue was calm, focused, humorous and gracious.

Each day Sue provided lunch for her team and everyone appreciated her taking care of them. Maybe it's that I'm jaded but I fully expected to be fed – hey, the pay is modest and a worker is worth their keep!

What I gradually realized, though, was that her staff was not accustomed to being treated with this kind of appreciation. As teachers, they were used to brown bagging it no matter the school function. For Sue, though, it was a question of hospitality, of caring for those who were helping her.

I'm reminded of a fable told by the great Indian teacher Anthony DeMello, s.j

*"One day, a scorpion stood on the side of a stream and asked a frog to carry it to the other side. 'How do I know you won't sting me?' the frog asked. 'Because if I sting you, I'll drown,' the scorpion said.*

*The frog thought about it and realized that the scorpion was right. So he put the scorpion on his back and started ferrying him. But midway across the stream, the scorpion plunged its stinger into the frog's back. As they both began to drown, the frog gasped, 'Why?'*

*The scorpion replied, 'Because it is my nature.'"*

And so it was – and is – with Sue. She can't do anything other than what she does. As she said to me, *"How could I have them help these kids and not feed them? There'd be no camp without them!"* Sue simply could not not feed us.

Yes, I am biased because Sue is my friend BUT she's also a professional who is on top of things and trusts that the people she's gathered will do what they're supposed to do and in many little ways she reminds them – **"you're doing a great job."**

**A confident person knows how to say "thank you" and enjoys finding ways to do just that. [Who have you thanked today?](#)**

## What “Confidence” Looks Like on Facebook

Maryann, a friend of a friend, asked me if I’d help her draft a eulogy for her brother Ben, who had died after a lifetime battle with Muscular Dystrophy.

Since I didn’t know Ben, I asked Maryann to tell me his story. One of the most moving parts of his story is that because of Ben, Maryann decided to go into the health field. She wanted to be for others what she hoped others would be for Ben.

Maryann, though, wasn’t always so noble. In high school, she was embarrassed by how Ben looked and talked. On the night of Prom she asked her mother to keep him out of sight, as she was worried what her date would think.

Even years after Prom she worried – **“what will they think?”**

After Ben died, Maryann posted to Facebook a photo of her and Ben. With his feeding tube and ventilator there’s no mistaking him for Hugh Jackman. But it’s a sweet photo of the two of them looking happy.

Soon after the photo went up, Maryann’s sister Debbie called – upset. She demanded that she take down the photo. She said Ben looked like he had a double chin and the photo wasn’t flattering. She said to Maryann, **“what will people say?”**

Now, let's take a moment to recap – here's a photo of a man dying from a horrific disease. And here's his sister normalizing his life as best she can with a fun pic of the two of them – smiling. And what does Debbie see? A double chin that sends her into a tizzy over what "they" will say. Life doesn't get more whack-a-do than this!

Maryann told me that she stopped caring about what people say a long time ago. The photo stayed. She decided not to cave to Debbie. She decided that she'd explain why she was keeping the photo on her page.

Oftentimes people say that confidence is not caring about what others think. And, yes, that's a part of confidence. But there's even more to being confident.

Confidence means believing that no matter what "they" say, I can engage "them" and not be intimidated by any intended or unintended judgment. Confidence means not needing to be passive or passive-aggressive in my response to what "they" think.

**Confidence is not so much about not caring as it is about caring so much that you find a way to manage a person or situation, no matter how exasperating their demands.**

**Is your confidence intimidated by "What will they say?"**



## Why Core Values Matter

When not offering communication workshops or coaching clients I officiate non-denominational wedding ceremonies. I love celebrating weddings as I get to share with people one of the happiest times of their lives. I also get to work with some of the most creative and good people I could ever hope to encounter.

I once officiated a wedding in Los Olivos, CA. The couple hired the wildly talented “Shade Tree Films,” for their video.

I want to share with you their “Core Values” as I think they have something to say to anyone who’s in the business of dealing with people – and isn’t that all of us? This is what the guys list for their guiding values:

***“Generosity.** We love working with couples who are givers. Couples who put their guest’s experience above details like centerpieces and place cards. We’re drawn to generous spirits.*

***Trust.** We know this day is insanely important to you (as it should be). We also know you have a lot on your plate and don’t want to be one more worry of yours on your big day. We trust you to have the time of your life, you trust us to do what we do best: get it all on film.*

***Authenticity and Honesty.*** *Couples who are honest with themselves and us and who bring their true selves every time we see them completely rock our worlds. It's that rawness that tells the real story. And there's nothing more beautiful than that!"*

**Generosity**

**Trust**

**Authenticity**

I smiled when I read their take on these values because it suddenly all made sense – why I took an immediate liking to them, why I instinctively trusted that they were going to do a great job capturing the ceremony, why I felt relaxed around them and why the couple knew that they were the team to share in the intimacy of their day.

These guys are artists, but skill alone doesn't get you to the level they're at in their profession. Core Values infuse everything they are and everything they do and I think it makes their work even more riveting.

**Confident people live grounded in the values they've chosen for their "core."**

**What are your CORE VALUES?**

*Is there a value you've not "valued" and want to cultivate?*

*How would your life be different if you did cultivate that neglected value?*

## Being Best

I drive a 2001 Toyota Highlander and recently clocked 300,000 miles on it. I've never had a car for this long. Sure, a new car would be nice, but this SUV suits me just fine.

I bought it at North Hollywood Toyota – and, no, this isn't a paid advertisement! For much of the time, Julio has been my service rep. He's friendly, he's taken the time to get to know me, and, hey, he appreciates my twisted sense of humor.

Okay, so actually we bonded over a woman who yelled at me one day when I'd brought the car in for servicing. She told me to stay away from her and I was mortified. I was convinced they wouldn't let me on the property again. Turns out, I wasn't the only man she delusionally mistook for her hated ex-husband and I wasn't the first hapless customer she'd yelled at!

I know nothing about cars, but I do know that I've got 300,000 miles on my car because I've listened to Julio's recommendations these many years. I trust him.

I'm often asked to speak to companies about customer service. On Amazon, you can find over 93,000 books on the topic of "customer service." That's a lot of writing about a topic that, in its essence, is a no-brainer. We talk a lot about "good" customer care vs. "great" customer care. I'd argue, though, that real care is always great care and that's

what Julio gives me. What makes it great? How I feel when I give him the keys to my car.  
I don't worry because I know he'll take care of me.

There's no better feeling.

I was reminded of this last week when I went in for an oil change. I also was reminded of the flip side of customer care – being a customer who cares. I observed customers come in to the service department stressed, unsmiling, abrupt and snapping, *“How much?”* *“When?”* *“I need it sooner!”* They showed little respect for the service reps. How easy to treat a rep as an “it” and not a person with a name.

Although these customers most likely experienced being treated as an “it” sometime that week at their own work, it doesn't excuse rudeness.

Here's the thing - when I go to Julio, to the supermarket, to the cleaners or to one of my workshops, it doesn't matter how I feel because how I feel is not the “problem” of any one of those people. My feelings are my responsibility.

**Confident people create trust by being their best – even when those around them are not being their best.**

**How generously consistent are you with your “best?”**

## A Lesson From a Framed Stolen Menu

I steal menus and then frame them. I've been stealing them for years ever since restaurants stopped giving away matchbooks. I don't steal from every restaurant – just the special ones, the ones that have a story. My most cherished menu is from *Windows On The World*, the lounge that was atop the World Trade Center. I've another from the Plaza Hotel's Palm Court where I took my goddaughter Clare and her mother for high tea. Clare was just six months old and I wanted to be the first man to take her to The Plaza. And there's the menu from London's Savoy Hotel where I took my friend Anthony to celebrate his premiere at the Barbican Theater.

My menu collection, my collection of short stories really, is displayed on the walls of my dining room and, as with every great story, serves as a wonderful conversation opener.

I have my menus framed at The Canvas Peddler over in North Hollywood where Pam has helped me for years. She manages to turn each menu into a work of art.

When my niece Mary graduated from the U. of Colorado, Boulder she took us after the ceremony to her favorite breakfast joint "Snooze" and, of course, I stole a stained menu. When Mary moved into her first apartment in NYC I decided to have the menu framed as a housewarming gift.

I was excited to show the menu to Pam but I stopped in on her day off. Marybeth offered to help me. I recognized her from all my years of going to The Canvas Peddler but presumed she wouldn't know me. However, as soon as I mentioned the menu, she exclaimed, *"I know you!"* and proceeded to reassure me by calling me by my name before I even could introduce myself.

I was blown away. Yes, we chatted over the years when Pam helped me but I'm not so frequent a customer that I'd expect her to remember me. Marybeth just laughed at my amazement saying, *"Well that's the beautiful thing of a being a loyal customer."*

Yes, that's true but even more I think that Marybeth remembering my name and my collection of menus speaks to her character. It also speaks to the care she and Pam offer to their customers – to the quality of their interest in the people who come to them with their "treasures."

The legendary Dale Carnegie said that the sweetest sound is the sound of one's name. I don't think I ever realized that until Marybeth said my name.

**Confident people know that their colleagues and clients are people who have a name and have a story. Confident people are interested in both.**

**Who can you surprise today with their name?**

## Green Shag Carpet Made Me The Man I Am Today

The Russian novelist Tolstoy believed that **the greatest gift we can give a person is a happy memory from childhood.**

I'm fortunate to have numerous happy memories from childhood and the ones I most cherish are linked with my grandmother, "Nanny Prize." From this vantage point in time I realize what an unusual woman she was – which is a nice way to say she was something of an oddball!

For thirty-five years she was a prison guard on Riker's Island, the largest prison in NYC. She retired her billy-club at the age of seventy-two. To look at her, you'd have thought she sold cosmetics at Macy's. She had been widowed in her early thirties and raised my father by herself. She had no friends (her choice). Her job was her life, but my brother, Peter, and I gave her life.

Throughout grammar school, Peter and I spent almost every weekend at her Bronx apartment – a place we dubbed "Freedom Land." Unlike our mother, Prize let us have the run of her place, letting us do as we pleased. Peter and I turned each room into a magical setting. Before Hogwarts, there was my grandmother's apartment!

The great gift Prize gave us was the gift of setting our imaginations wild. Her home had no rules, no “shoulds,” just a sense of play – creative, imaginative and anchoring. How did she do this? Well, she had the entire apartment wall-to-wall carpeted in green shag so as to give the appearance of grass. She wanted us to imagine that we were on a farm or in the woods.

She saved the boxes her end tables came in and we propped them in the living room, creating a tree house. In an adjoining room, that should have been the dining room, she had a daybed we used as our pirate ship. A legless ironing board was the gangplank that I made poor Peter walk.

Every weekend, without fail, we ate pizza on Friday, steak on Saturday and fried chicken on Sunday. We played checkers and Pokeno and watched the same TV shows weekend after weekend. We loved our days at “Freedom Land.”

With Prize as Oz, we created a safe world that nourished our imaginations and gave us order and meaning.

**Confident people have a sense of playfulness because they know that each of us needs a romp in “Freedom Land” where all creative thinking happens.**

**Do you have green shag carpet in your life?**



## What My Tax Accountant Taught Me

Although I've been going to my tax accountant Pam for just five years, I feel like we went to high school together. She's gracious, funny and competent – and I trust her completely. That's a wonderful feeling to have for someone especially when you see them once a year under "somewhat" unpleasant circumstances!

Last year, while putting my tax stuff together, it occurred to me just how patient Pam is. While I didn't intend to be difficult, the previous two years I showed up at her office not having all the info she needed. Yet, she remained funny and kind.

So I made it a point to thank her for her patience. She was flattered – and then told me something that both surprised and impressed me.

She said that there'd been a time in her life when she had little interest in accounting. She thought banging away at numbers would be boring. She became an accountant, though, and quickly discovered that there's more to it than crunching numbers.

### **There are people.**

People don't just give her figures to plug into tax forms. People tell her stories about those numbers. She listens to the successes and fears and confusions swirling through those numbers.

At times she feels like she's part therapist, part priest.

**She loves her job because she loves people's stories.**

However, not everyone has a story she wants to hear. When she started out on her own she was desperate for business. She'd take anyone on as a client. Now, though, she's reached a place in her career where she doesn't have to work with everyone who comes knocking.

She recently "fired" a client. He was chronically late in getting info to her, had an attitude and complained that she wasn't delivering. Then, one day, he yelled at her. She stopped him – he didn't have permission to yell at her. It was then she realized that she didn't have to work with this man. She didn't need or want him in her life. And so she terminated their relationship.

Pam is fortunate. She works for herself and is in a place where she consciously can decide with whom she wants to work. While not all of us might be in that financial position, each of us can consciously answer the question: *"Who am I willing to tolerate and why?"*

**Confident people do not let people treat them as "ordinary."**

**Is there someone in your life you need to "fire?"**

## What We Can Learn From A Crashing Chandelier

It was a blustery afternoon at Pelican Hill Resort as the floral designer's team was setting up for a wedding. A glistening crystal chandelier hung from the center of the rotunda, site of the ceremony. I was reviewing last minute details with the event planner, Jeannie, when, without warning, the chandelier crashed to the ground. It was one of those surreal moments when your brain can't compute what your eye has witnessed.

Jeannie snapped to and asked if everyone was okay. They were and she exhaled, *"Thank God no one was hurt!"* I marveled at her composure. She turned to the head of the team and asked him to call the floral designer while she called the resort's catering director. Within minutes, the destroyed chandelier was being swept up.

Jeannie suggested we not tell the bride until after the ceremony and she decided there was no time to attempt to replace the chandelier. She was in charge, calm and, yes, we did manage a "what the?" laugh. Throughout this bizarre incident, her attitude was a reassuring – **"I'll handle it. We'll handle it."** And so everyone went about doing what needed to be done.

**What I found utterly remarkable was that in a dramatic moment, there was no drama.**

**Now that's confidence inducing leadership!**

Later, when I told Jeannie how impressed I was by how she handled the situation, she was puzzled, *“How else could I have responded?”* I laughed because she could have responded in so many other ways. She could have yelled, demanding to know who screwed up; she could have debated whether to tell the bride and stir-up emotions by asking for everyone’s opinion; or she could have played the victim, lamenting, *“What am I going to do?”*

Jeannie reminded me what’s needed in a moment of crisis:

- She stayed focused on her goal – having a beautiful ceremony for the couple – and she let nothing distract her.
- She didn’t lose confidence in herself simply because something outside her control happened.
- She trusted and relied on her team.
- She was able to laugh.
- She was not fixated on the original plan – and so she could improvise.

These skills are crucial not only for leaders. They’re crucial for our own wellbeing and success in any crisis.

**Confident people know that chandeliers come crashing down in all our lives – and they also know it’s how we handle the broken shards that make all the difference.**

**Where in your life do you need to say, “I’ll handle it?”**

## The Perfectionist's Curse

For over a decade, I taught part time at Loyola-Marymount University in Los Angeles.

One of my most memorable students, Lauren, was in a class I put together on Interpersonal Communication & Technology. There were thirteen students, all seniors, who were Comm. Studies majors. The final grade rested on just one, ten-page research paper due end of semester.

Lauren handed in an eighteen-page report printed on brilliant white paper that she'd encased in a plastic cover. It was an impressive piece of writing; a solid "A." In terms of her final grade, though, I didn't think she deserved an "A." The class was driven by discussion and she'd never once contributed to any of our discussions.

I gave her an "A-." No sooner had she gotten her grade than she called me. Tears poured through the phone, as she demanded to know why I'd given her an A-. When I explained, she reminded me that I didn't put in the syllabus that she'd be graded down for not participating in class.

She was right so I agreed to change the grade (and made a note to revise the syllabus). I was curious, though. Given that she was so bright, why hadn't she spoken in class?

Her answer still floors me all these years later. Her goal had been to graduate *Summa Cum Laude*. She had a “rough” freshman year and screwed up in one of her classes – she got an A-. In all her other classes, freshman through senior years, she only received A’s, until I spoiled her record with that damnable A- that knocked her down from Summa.

Turns out, she was so afraid of not getting an A that she never spoke in any class for fear she’d say the wrong thing and be marked down. During the four years of college, Lauren went through the experience MUTE. She’d let her obsessive need to be “perfect” silence her.

Although stunned, I understood the logic of her debilitating thinking. As a “recovering” perfectionist myself, her decision to silence herself made sense to me.

Confident people, though, do not demand that they be perfect.

**Confident people strive for excellence and accept that failure is part of being excellent.**

**Is it crucially important for you to be seen as “perfect”?**

**Do you silence yourself out of concern you’ll be judged as less than perfect?**

## So Now What?!

These 10 confident people remind me – and I hope remind YOU – that confident people:

- ✓ Share generously
- ✓ Extend gratitude readily
- ✓ Manage difficult people and situations strategically
- ✓ Ground their life in core values
- ✓ Know how to create trust
- ✓ Are genuinely interested in people
- ✓ Figure out solutions in imaginative and playful ways
- ✓ Treat themselves with respect
- ✓ Use “I’ll handle it” as a go-to phrase
- ✓ Learn from failure in the pursuit of excellence

**How many of these acts of confidence do you consistently practice?**

If you want to become more comfortable being confident –

If you want to explore even more ways you can BE and Do confident –

**Let’s talk!**

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