

Owning Your Confident Self: First Steps

A while back I published a piece on how to own your confident self and want to revisit and expand on those important tips in a series of articles. Top ten lists are fabulous starting points but sometimes you need a little more detail to really feel like you can implement the change you're trying to create.

The first steps in owning your confident self start at home and are really centered on your physical health. If you physically don't feel good you can't present your most confident self. You may be able to find shortcuts and workarounds if you're in a crunch but healthy habits will help you physically feel better and are a huge factor in feeling good about yourself overall.



The first tip is common sense backed by science: get enough sleep! You know how you'll feel if you don't – your energy level is low and you're dragging all day. Your responses are a little slower, you can't think of the right word or remember a person's name; you'll be worried about the bags under your eyes, your whole body feels heavy. And if you're trying to make a good first impression on three hours sleep? Totally possible but so much easier if you're well rested!

So, just like personal hygiene, there's sleep hygiene. It's basically forming habits or establishing a routine that will help you get a good night's sleep. Now obviously there will be times when getting a full eight hours of beauty sleep is pretty much impossible – hello motherhood! – but if you form the right sleep habits and grab those power naps whenever you can, it will help you in the long run.

It's really hard to relax when you're plugged in. We're so trained to constantly check our devices and social media accounts out of FOMO (fear of missing out) that we can't unwind. Try turning all of your devices off at least 30 minutes before you go to bed – even the television. Receiving automated late night emails or drunk texts could disrupt your sleep and that nagging blue glow can be so tempting at 3 AM so move your charging station out of the bedroom and use an "old-fashioned" alarm clock to wake up instead of your phone.

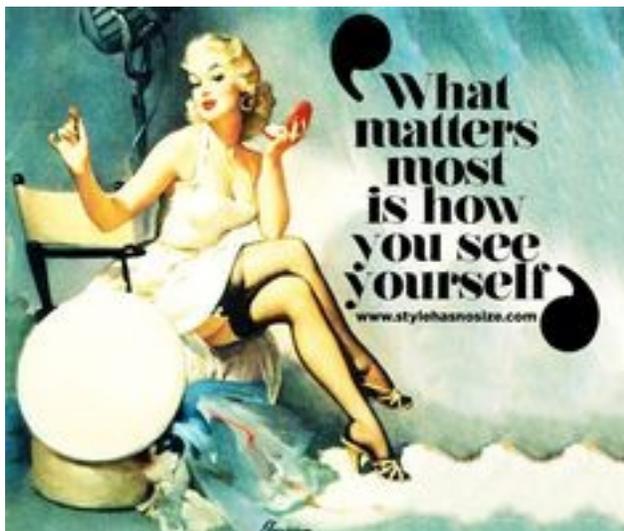
If you're physically wound up, try a warm bath with Epsom salts or a nice cup of chamomile tea before bed. Magnesium sulfate helps relax and detoxify your muscles, so try adding about two cups of Epsom salts to your bath, dim the lights and chill out for a bit. As for the tea, chamomile is well known as a mild tranquilizer and sleep inducer but you could also try lemon balm, lavender or any number of herbal bedtime teas. The

important thing is no caffeine (duh!). There are also a couple of herbal supplements that can help you wind down occasionally: melatonin and valerian. Neither of these is meant for chronic insomnia but are great for infrequent use like adjusting to a different time zone or a different work schedule, but if you're taking other medications you should check with your doctor or pharmacist first!

You can also create a better sleep environment with a sound machine or an essential oil diffuser. If you're a city girl, the sound of crickets and hoot owls might freak you out so maybe try rain or ocean waves and if that makes you have to pee, maybe all you need is a fan – the cool air will also help you get to sleep. Some of the essential oils that are recommended for sleep might sound familiar - chamomile, lavender, valerian – just like the recommended herbal teas! There's also clary sage, bergamot, ylang ylang or marjoram. And just like the herbal teas, there are premade blends available to promote sleep, too.

These suggestions should help you get a good night's rest, creating a sharp mind and a body that feels good for any upcoming event. Get plenty of rest!

The second tip is taking care of yourself. Ladies, I cannot stress this enough! You cannot give your best self when you have given everything away and are burned out. It's okay to recharge; taking care of yourself doesn't mean ignoring others. It's acknowledging that you're a human and need care as well. And honey if you're not going to take care of yourself, who is?



This is about physical work from the inside out. Nourish your body with healthy foods and hydrate with plenty of water. Don't mindlessly fill your pie hole or eat whatever is around just because it's there. Make a conscious choice to give your body the best fuel you can. Eat the foods that make you feel good and reduce the ones that make you feel bloated, tired or headachy. You don't have to deny every craving but you also don't have to give in to every single one. When you do indulge, take time to savor your special treat, stretch it out and when you're done, don't feel guilty. You deserve it!

Regular exercise is a must. When you feel good physically it increases your body confidence. If you're not a big exerciser, try stretching. Stretching on a regular basis will keep your body limber, feeling good and not as stiff. You want to be able to tie your shoes and zip up your own dress, right? Stretch! Make a date to walk with a friend or take the dog to the park. Having an exercise partner (even a four legged one) will pass

the time quicker and makes you a little more accountable. But the best form of exercise is the one you enjoy and will actually incorporate in your routine, not necessarily the trendiest class at the most expensive gym. It's the one that makes you feel good and guess what? It will help increase your confidence!

Beauty services can also help boost your confidence. The effect of a good haircut or a relaxing facial is *real*. It may be temporary, but if it makes you feel beautiful why shouldn't you do it? When you're not worried about your roots, you're more likely to maintain eye contact and smile when you meet someone. And that mani/pedi might encourage you to shake hands with someone who could have a big impact on your life. There's also the pampering factor. Having someone take care of your needs is a kind of validation of your self work and self worth, which, again, feeds your confidence.

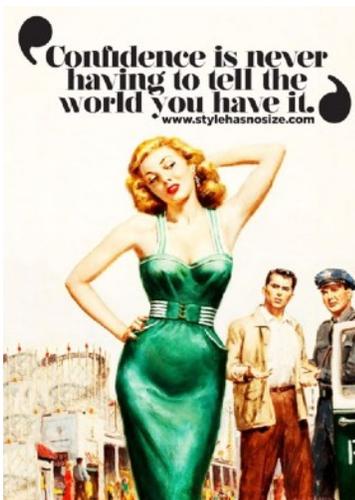
I hope these "at home" tips help you on your way to creating your most beautiful, confident self! Keep an eye out for my upcoming *Ways to Own Your Confident Self* articles. And if you have questions or want to dive deeper into any of these topics, I'm here for you! Please don't hesitate to reach out to me, tara@thestylesignature.com or www.thestylesignature.com. I'd be thrilled to help you own Your Confident Self, crafting the best version of yourself, having it evolve easily and helping to present yourself well - on your terms!

Xoxo
Tara

Own Your Confident Self: Positive Thought & Action

Today we're going to look at a couple more ways to really start owning your Confident Self: positive thoughts and actions. I actually think these are the hardest steps to implement: your mind is powerful and breaking a negative thought cycle is hard, but it's a necessary part of owning your confidence and developing a powerful, profitable presence.

It's kind of a chicken vs. egg thing: do positive actions lead to positive thoughts? Or vice versa? Honestly it doesn't really matter which step you take first as long as you take it. That being said, for me personally, I find that taking positive action helps kick start my reset my attitude if I'm in a negative space.



One of the concrete actions I take is to reread positive feedback I've received. If you have thank you notes from clients, positive online reviews from customers or maybe a love letter from a significant other (it doesn't have to be from your current interest, as long as it's worshipful in content!) reading them is a great way to boost your confidence – these people *know* how amazing you are. They think so much of you that they put it on paper or online for the world to see. Reading about it will spark a memory of how awesome you felt after completing that project or remind you of what a positive influence you were on someone. Sometimes we need reminders, so curl up in a comfy chair and pull out your Thank You File (or whatever you want to call it). You rock!

Another helpful tool is keeping a positive journal. Journaling is about the cheapest form of therapy there is. A blank page is great for dumping out all the things inside your head and heart, but keeping a journal specifically for positive experiences, things you're thankful for, inspirational photos or poems & quotes that touch you creates a tangible tool for you to refer to when you feel like you've lost your mojo. If you're uncomfortable writing about the good things in your life, try reading the biography of someone you admire or who inspires you. They are sure to have overcome an obstacle or two getting to where they are!

Self reflection and meditation are mental exercises to help you get out of a negative cycle. Remember the SNL character Stuart Smalley and his daily affirmations? You're good enough, smart enough, and doggone it, people like you! That doesn't have to be your mantra, but do take a few minutes to sit in a quiet space, uninterrupted, and think about your positive attributes, assets and characteristics – all the things you bring to the table. If you're up for it, you can go deeper into classical meditation and try to quiet all the chatter in your mind. It's incredibly hard for most of us to sit still and not be running dialogue in our head: I forgot to get X when I was at the store, is Y's birthday this weekend or next, I have to get the oil changed by Z, etc. In meditation, you might start with breathing exercises before moving on to observing all the thoughts your having -

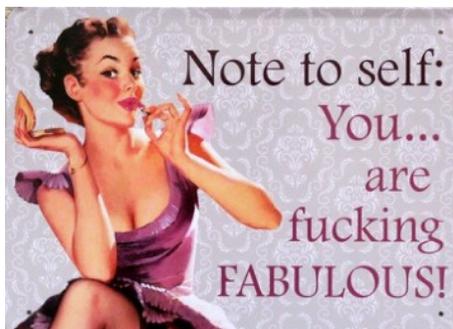
not making a judgment about them, just acknowledging you have these thoughts - then releasing them and sitting silently, peacefully and emerging refreshed and reenergized.

The power of positive thinking cannot be dismissed. I read a great quote recently: “The difference between adventure and ordeal is attitude.” Your mindset can help you overcome any kind of negative experience so keep a positive one.

I like to ask, “What’s the worst that can happen?” Now, I know some of you might go off the deep end and really think of some crazy stuff, but really, be honest. What’s the worst thing that can happen if you flub your speech, trip in your high heels or maybe don’t find the right words to close the deal? You can start your line over, you can laugh at yourself or you look for a bigger deal to close and practice closing. Okay, maybe you don’t get asked back as a speaker but there are other venues to speak at. You break a heel but you get to buy a gorgeous new pair of shoes, *on sale!* It’s not the end of the world; it may be the end of an opportunity, but there will be more opportunities.

We’re human. People expect you to be human. It’s all in how you handle those instances. It’s about holding your head up high, throwing those shoulders back, and saying “You know what? I’m human. I’m not ashamed of being human. I can take whatever the world throws at me.” That last sentence is key. You are capable. Believe it.

If you’re poring over worst-case scenarios (which hint: you shouldn’t be!) and you find something you don’t think you can handle, think of it an opportunity to prepare so that you keep owning your confidence no matter what comes at you. Bad things may happen but it’s probably not as bad as whatever you’ve imagined. It goes back to the power of positive visualization. The mind is a powerful thing – use it for positive thoughts!



Visualize your success. What does it feel like? How does it sound? Like an actor, rehearse it. Stand in front of the mirror in your power pose and say the words out loud. If you can imagine it and bring it to life in a practice arena, what’s to stop you from making it happen? You are beautiful and powerful and confident. Own it!

Maybe this sounds easy and straightforward but I’ll admit it can be hard work, especially if your default setting is “jaded.” It takes practice to be positive, *especially* about yourself. We are often our own worst critics. Give yourself a head start by cutting down on negativity in your life; surround yourself with happy, positive people instead of ones who suck your energy; make it a point to read a few happy news stories; buy yourself some colorful flowers to brighten your mood. Nurture that positivity, it will grow and, eventually, you will reap what you sow.

As always, if you have questions or need some more help in owning your Confident Self, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at tara@thestylesignature.com or www.thestylesignature.com. I would be more than thrilled to help you craft the best version of yourself, be able to present yourself comfortably, and own your confidence!

Xoxo

Tara

Prepare – Don't Compare: Your Confident Self

We've talked about some of the things you can do to feel more confident - the self-work, so to speak. Taking care of yourself physically and mentally are definitely the foundation elements but how about when it's not you looking back in the mirror? What if it's a room full of judgey strangers? that Tinder right swipe? Let's talk about bringing this show on the road: your confidence is going to help you conquer the world!

Like a Boy Scout, be prepared. If you're going to a networking event, think about what you want to get out of it. If there's an advanced registration list available, take a look at it. Who you want to meet at the event? Do you have something in common that might be a good icebreaker? a common acquaintance that could introduce you? Have a strategy so that you don't get flustered in the moment. If you're an introvert or maybe get nervous in larger groups, have a focus, or what I call a little bit of an itinerary, to your networking. You'll feel a lot more successful and much more comfortable if you give yourself a few simple goals. It might be as simple as telling yourself, "I'm going to meet at least two new people before I have any hors d'oeuvres" or "I want to ask the speaker about the X that he/she talked about." As you grow more confident and comfortable, you make your goals a little more ambitious.



Many people are uncomfortable speaking in public; it's one of the most common phobias. Your best and most obvious line of defense is to practice. If you are giving a presentation of any kind, practice makes perfect. Or at very least better than not practicing! Ask your spouse or a friend to be your "fake" audience and try out your speech so that you're very comfortable with it, with actually saying the words out loud. They can help you with both content and delivery. Practice not once, not twice, but as many times as it takes for it to start feeling somewhat natural.

Practice your speech enunciating and speaking very slowly, with intention. We all speed up when we speak, especially if we're nervous so if you practice very slowly, specifically and intentionally, when the nerves kick in, you'll sound confident because you'll have already practiced it really, really slowly. The nerves are going to speed it up to a more normal pace. Have your practice partner(s) keep track of your "fillers", um, uh, like and you know. You might not even know that you're like talking and uh keep saying you know these things that um don't really have anything to do with your topic.

The same thing when it comes to presenting in front of a large audience, practicing that content, speaking it slowly, enunciating and eliminating fillers. With a large audience, with any audience really, you want to form a connection (not run and hide!). Use eye contact to connect with individual faces in the first few rows, look towards your audience

horizon to connect with those seated further back.

If you're using any kind of media for your presentation, arrive early enough to do a technical check. Make sure you have the right cables to connect to the projector and your slides are in order, your video plays or that you have a fast enough connection for any web-based segments. Do a mic check and do a check walking around the room to see if you'll get feedback in a specific area (like right in front of the speakers, hello!).

With a bit of practice you're going to feel more pulled together when you go to whatever event you're headed to. Again, the more preparation, the more your confidence will soar. Preparation and Practice = Confidence!



Another valuable nugget is to compare yourself only to yourself, not to others. Trust me, having been a pageant competitor for over 20 years I'm always the short, curvy brunette on the stage and it's really hard not to compare myself to the long, lean blonde in the elegant evening gown or the tall, leggy brunette with the "perfect" swimsuit body standing on stage next to me. Well, guess what? I'm never going to be 5'10." I'll forever be 5'1", though I joke that I'm 5'10" with my high heels on. Just kidding – it's more like 5'5"! But I can't compare myself to them because I'm never going to have that

physique; I'm never going to have their attributes; I'm never going to have their characteristics. It's physically impossible given my genetics. But guess what? I have my own unique attributes and characteristics, and they're pretty spectacular.

That's what you have to do: not compare yourself to others, but be your best self. Let's face it: our society's beauty standards are pretty ridiculous. Comparing yourself to some unrealistic standard opens the door to negativity and can erode your confidence – the exact opposite of what we're trying to do here. So don't do it. You don't need to.

People come in all shapes and sizes, all shades, ages and economic backgrounds. Everyone is unique and has something different to contribute to society so celebrate *you!* Your particular combination of DNA, life experiences and the times you live in are completely individual. Don't measure by any standards but the ones you set for yourself. You are, in a word, incredible. In another word: amazing. Another? Phenomenal. Pump yourself up and keep a network of people around you that help build you up and support you when you're down.

Ask yourself if you are performing at your best and stepping into your authentic space,

showing the best version of yourself. If you answer “yes” or know you always try to be that best self, there’s nothing more that you can do. And you *will* be the perfect fit: you’ll be the perfect fit for the right client, for a specific job or a particular boss. You will find your perfect fit if you’re being yourself - truly, unabashedly, gloriously you – not trying to fit someone else’s mold but being *your* best, most authentic self. So please, do not compare yourself to others; compare yourself to you. You’re the only you out there, and you will be the perfect fit for whatever you’re looking to achieve. You are FABULOUS!

Feel ready to confidently face the world? Great! But if you still have questions or really want to expand your confidence further, please contact me at tara@thestylesignature.com or www.thestylesignature.com. I’m here to help you craft the best version of you, to find and present your true, Confident Self.

Xoxo

Tara

Ways to Own Your Confident Self

As an image consultant and confidence coach, I'm passionate about helping people find and present their best selves. We've talked about your physical health and mental outlook being key components and we've looked at some of the mental exercises you can do to help grow your confidence; now going to look at a couple of the most obvious ways to boost your image and own your Confident Self.

We all know that we're instantly judged on our outward appearance, whether it's right or wrong. People tend to be visual and that first impression is an important one. So let's make it count! When you can choose an outfit that makes you look *and* feel great it's a big confidence booster. Whether you're gearing up for a big event or a run to the grocery store, your clothes speak volumes about you.



First let's talk color. People have a tendency to wear a lot of black in our culture: it's an easy neutral that goes with anything, a timeless classic. But as much as I love a great little black dress or blouse, putting in a pop of color can enhance your mood and your confidence, especially if it's one of your signature colors (I can help you find them, of course – that's what I'm here for!). Your signature colors will instantly help you look more vibrant, healthy and 10 years younger – you will feel great once you see the difference.

That confidence is going to shine through and you'll get tons of compliments!

Honest to goodness, tailoring can completely make or break an outfit. Look closely at the fit of your clothing. Are your sleeves and hemlines hitting at the right place? Can you move comfortably (i.e. breathe, lift your arms and sit down without fear of a wardrobe malfunction), because if you can't, your discomfort will show! Your outfit goal is to bring attention to your best features and to show yourself off in a positive, professional light. If you have an area that you want to de-emphasize you can certainly do that with shapewear or colorblocking but also by simply pulling attention to your best assets. I'm not saying don't pay attention to those parts, I'm saying don't obsess over them. Play up the positive, always!

If you're heading out to an event, social or professional, test out your outfit. If it's one where you'll be sitting, make sure your outfit is comfortable to sit in, that things don't rise up or drop down and that you can still breathe. You know what I'm talking about: it "fits" when you're standing up and sucking in but when you sit down...? Yeah, guess what? Then it doesn't really fit. If you'll be standing and walking, test out those shoes. Make sure that they don't hurt. Don't just slip them on and walk across the room; keep them on for a few hours, preferably at the end of the day when your feet are most likely to have reached maximum capacity, try walking across a parking lot or cooking dinner in them. Nothing is worse than uncomfortable shoes, because again, your discomfort will show and that will detract from your confidence.

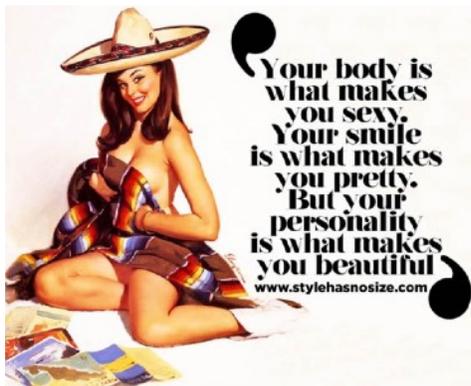
Get your handbag organized, especially if you're going to a networking event. There's nothing more flustering than trying to dig around for your contact information or your business cards in an unorganized handbag. Purge, purge, purge! Carry only the necessities and, if you don't have a dedicated card holder, put your business cards in an easily accessible place where they won't be damaged. Don't put collected cards in the same place – you might end up giving out somebody else's card! That can really fluster you at an event where you're already feeling uncomfortable or less confident.

Give yourself enough time to do your hair and your makeup. If you're not big into makeup you still need to make sure your brows are well groomed and your lips are exfoliated and moisturized. If you wear glasses, make sure they're clean and polished. As for hair, the most important thing is that it looks neat and doesn't hide your beautiful face.

And finally, before you walk out the door, look at yourself objectively. Appreciate your wonderful strengths and assets. Focus on those positives when you head off somewhere that you need confidence. Learn to love yourself!

As great as your outfit may be, you still need to make sure that *you're* wearing *it*, not the other way around. Part of that is in how you carry yourself. Your body language can exude confidence or scream insecurity, so practice for success. Get in front of a full-length mirror or bust out a video camera and practice these posture exercises.

Practice putting your shoulders back – most of us spend a good chunk of our day sitting at a computer or staring down at our devices. We're on auto-hunch, head craning forward. You have to retrain those muscles. For me personally, I know that after 20+ years behind the hairdressing chair, if I don't make a conscious effort to pull my shoulders back, I end up hunching.



You need to roll your shoulders down and back to where it's natural, comfortable and, for ladies, where you don't feel like you're sticking your boobs out. Part of what might be making you feel like a gymnast that just stuck a landing in the Olympics when you do this is that you're also curving your lower back and sticking your butt out. I know your ass is great but keep that tailbone in. Your back will thank you down the road. When you're standing up straight, you immediately display a Confident Self.

You should also practice shaking hands and get some honest feedback on how you give and receive a handshake. I still find people giving me the "limp fish" or the "queen mum" handshake. You're giving away your authority when you do that, plus it's awkward for the person on the receiving end. Your grip should be firm but not crushing: you want to

convey confidence not assert dominance. Practice exchanging business cards. Your business card should be turned to face the other person so they can easily read it.

Eye contact is another critical skill. Nothing says “I’m confident” like someone who can look you in the eye. It’s a practiced skill and similar to a handshake, there’s a balance between not enough and too much. Lack of eye contact can imply a lack of trustworthiness and intense staring just makes people uncomfortable. You want to make sure you’re hitting the right note.

It’s great if you’re using a mirror for body language feedback but you have to practice when you’re not in front of a mirror, too. If you videotape yourself doing these things, it feels a little more objective and it’s easy to see where you need improvement. Remember, your body language speaks louder than words and some of us have a better vocabulary than others, so work on improving yours.

I hope you found these tips to be helpful. I’m here to help you build your Confident Self and available to answer your questions about your signature colors, styling your wardrobe, improving your posture and much more. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me, tara@thestylesignature.com or www.thestylesignature.com. I’m more than happy to help you reach your potential and find your Confident Self!

Xoxo
Tara

Celebrate - But Stay Thirsty, My Friend

Building your confidence isn't as easy as pushing a button, waving a wand or snapping your fingers. It's a continual process that needs to be maintained. Why? Because your confidence is under attack – sometimes it's by a person, sometimes it's by society in general and sometimes it's that little voice in your head. I have a couple more tips to help keep your confidence level up and own your Confident Self.

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We have a tendency to look at our to-do lists and focus the things that we haven't finished; we forget to pat ourselves on the back or acknowledge what we have accomplished. You should recognize and celebrate the hard work you've put in, the goals you achieved and the progress you've made. You might not be all the way there yet, but you are getting there one step at a time and that's worth celebrating.

For example, I'm often challenged in getting the ideas in my head on to paper (computer, really). I'll think of something that I want to share with you and maybe jot down a couple notes or key points but sitting down and writing content isn't natural to me. I'm very visual and tactile so helping you with your wardrobe gives me more immediate satisfaction than writing an article, but every time I finish writing something I give myself kudos as if I've just run a marathon. It sounds silly, but acknowledging my accomplishment helps keep me motivated to do more.



We're often future-focused – thinking of the tasks that loom ahead. When you feel your confidence wavering, take a moment to look back at your successes. You have done a lot just to get where you are! Not long ago I mentioned keeping a "thank you" file – a folder of positive feedback: great reviews from clients, recommendations from employers, thank you notes from friends or family – things that will give you a boost, giving a picture of yourself through someone else's eyes. Don't

be so hard on yourself if you haven't accomplished every goal; it's a process and you've made progress toward those goals.

Celebrate those trail markers as well as the milestones. When you have smaller, more frequent successes you can't help but feel successful. And when you feel successful you feel...? Yep, you feel confident! In this sense, feeding your ego is a good thing. We want you to feel confident, powerful and strong because you are all of those things.

My last tip on owning your Confident Self is to be a lifelong learner. When you continue to learn, you always feel you have something new and exciting to share with the world. And feeling like you have something of value to share boosts your confidence.



It doesn't matter if it's picking up a new hobby or getting an advanced degree – be a lifelong learner. Try something completely out of your wheelhouse or something that you've always wanted to learn. Nothing keeps your brain cells firing, sharpens your language skills or gives you a way to connect with other people like being a lifelong learner. Your thirst for knowledge should never really be quenched, you should always be looking for opportunities to learn something new or develop new skills. So, my last tip on owning your Confident Self is continual education: never

stop learning!

I hope you found these tips to be helpful and if you have any questions or want a bit more guidance to owning your Confident Self, please contact me at tara@thestylesignature.com or www.thestylesignature.com and I would be more than thrilled to help you!

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