CONFIDENCE TIP SHEET

- Confidence issues frequently come as a result of negative self-talk. By learning to challenge our automatic thoughts and replacing them with thoughts that serve us more effectively, we can develop a more realistic, well-rounded view of ourselves.

- Some of the most common distorted automatic thoughts that can undermine confidence include:

  - <u>All or Nothing Thinking:</u> (also called black-and-white, polarized, or dichotomous thinking): You view a situation in only two categories instead of on a continuum. e.g. "If I'm not a total success, I'm a failure."

  - <u>Catastrophizing:</u> (also called fortune telling): You predict the future negatively without considering other, more likely outcomes. e.g. "I'll be so upset, I won't be able to function at all."

  - <u>Disqualifying or discounting the positive:</u> You unreasonably tell yourself that positive experiences, deeds, or qualities do not count. e.g. "I did that project well, but that doesn't mean I'm competent; I just got lucky."

  - <u>Emotional Reasoning:</u> You think something must be true because you "feel" (actually believe) it so strongly, ignoring or discounting evidence to the contrary. e.g. "I know I do a lot of things okay at work, but I still feel like I'm a failure."

  - <u>Labeling:</u> You put a fixed, global label on yourself or others without considering that the evidence might more reasonably lead to a less disastrous conclusion. e.g. "I'm a loser. He's no good."

  - <u>Magnification/Minimization:</u> When you evaluate yourself, another person, or a situation, you unreasonably magnify the negative and/or minimize the positive. e.g. "Getting a mediocre evaluation proves how inadequate I am. Getting high marks doesn't mean I'm smart."

- Mental Filter (also called selective abstraction): You pay undue attention to one negative detail instead of seeing the whole picture. e.g. "Because I got one low rating on my evaluation (which also contained several high ratings) it means I'm doing a lousy job.

- Mind Reading: You believe you know what others are thinking, failing to consider other, more likely possibilities. "He's thinking that I don't know the first thing about this project."

- Overgeneralization: You make a sweeping negative conclusion that goes far beyond the current situation. e.g. "(Because I felt uncomfortable at the meeting) I don't have what it takes to make friends."

- Personalization: You believe others are behaving negatively because of you, without considering more plausible explanations for their behavior. e.g. "The repairman was curt to me because I did something wrong."

- "Should" and "Must" Statements: (also called imperatives): You have a precise, fixed idea of how you or others should behave and you overestimate how bad it is that these expectations are not met. e.g. "It's terrible that I made a mistake. I should always do my best."

- Tunnel Vision: You only see the negative aspects of a situation. e.g. "My son's teacher can't do anything right.   He's critical and insensitive and lousy at teaching."

- Make a list of your accomplishments or things that you are proud of. Remind yourself of your positive qualities and reflect on them often.

- If you lack confidence due to a specific skill deficit, strive to address it. For example, if you could become a better presenter, get a communications coach, attend toastmasters, or take an improv comedy class. If you lack confidence about your writing, take a technical writing course.

- Instead of "beating yourself up" when things don't go as planned, take a step back and focus on lessons learned. Think about how you could use that experience to benefit you.