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Confident *and* *Killing it*

A practical guide to overcoming
fear and unlocking your most
empowered self

Not every single thought about yourself is the truth about who you are.

We can't always control what thoughts pop into our head, but we can control whether a negative thought is repeated so much it turns into a limiting belief. If it does, it's going to require some awareness to first identify the limiting belief and then break the pattern. This chapter will give you some insight into what some of your limiting beliefs could be and how you can let go of them. I really wish I'd known this earlier, but now I do, and I'm sharing it with you, so you know too.

Not every single thought about yourself is the truth about who you are. Some are lies with a sprinkle of truth, some are straight-out lies and some are actually the truth. It is your job to filter them and decide which ones you're going to keep as beliefs and which ones you're going to label as rubbish and bin. Try viewing your thoughts as objects floating past you, you can stop and observe them or you can just let them pass.

Now you might be thinking, 'Tiwa, you don't understand – my Mean Girl is *mean*. Like worse than Regina George type of mean. She's been this way my whole life. I don't think she'll ever go away.'

First, I want you to know I totally resonate with what you may be thinking and any doubts you might be having. I was the same seven years ago before I started my journey towards becoming Confident and Killing It. However, the goal is *not* for the Mean

Girl to disappear forever. Unfortunately, she can't be annihilated. **Confidence is not the absence of negative thoughts or self-doubt.** Confidence is not feeling happy and clappy all the time. Confidence is *not* perfection. I would be lying if I said I had the magic equation to get rid of self-doubt forever. I don't. But I do know that confidence is about having a deep belief in yourself and your abilities. It's about learning to move past the fear and insecurity and *bet* on yourself. It's about understanding that even when you don't know what the future holds, you believe that you are worthy of living an abundant life, a life you truly desire and a life you will take action on.

So, as I said, the goal is not to get rid of the Mean Girl forever. A little bit of self-doubt actually keeps us grounded, because it forces us to reflect, slow down and acknowledge our imperfections. So it's not all bad news, you just need to learn to reprogram your mind, so your default is no longer negativity, self-doubt and fear, but confidence, positivity, self-worth, abundance, joy, peace, excitement, passion and all the other good stuff.

At 21, I made the life-changing decision that my default would no longer be allowing my Mean Girl to bash me but instead I would wake up every day and *choose love*, because loving yourself is something you *choose* to do, not something you're born knowing how to do.

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So, I would look in the mirror every day and say, *'Tizwa, I. Love. You.'* Every single day, even when I didn't feel like it, I still said it, because I wanted to send a loud and clear message to my Mean Girl that she no longer had power over me and that regardless of my emotions, as a bare minimum I would always love myself. This is something I recommend you do too. You may look in the mirror every day, but do you really look into your eyes and see yourself and appreciate what's there? Looking into your eyes and thinking nice things about yourself is a quick self-care practice you can tag on at the end of your morning skin-care routine.

Now, this battle we're fighting isn't easy. It's hard, but as author and activist Glennon Doyle says, 'Life is hard but we can do hard things.' You might not believe it's possible for you, but I believe it is, and I believe in you. You might not love yourself, but I love you. You might not see your greatness, but I see it. I see it all. And I want nothing more in life than to see you winning. I want nothing more in life than to see you make your mind work for you rather than against you. So, let's put the Mean Girl in her place.

In 2018, I was hosting one of my Confident and Killing It events in London. There were about fifty women in the room who had bought tickets to come and hear me speak. The event was called 'Own Your Story' and was about learning to know your truth, speak your truth and celebrate your truth. As I was speaking, I was met with a sea of faces looking intently, taking notes and processing all that I was saying. At that moment, my Mean Girl showed up and whispered, 'Look at all their faces. They're bored. You need to shut up right now. You need to end this event. You've been talking for too long. They don't care, they just want to go home. Shut up, shut up, shut uuuuup.'

Bear in mind, all of this was happening as I was standing in front of fifty women, talking to them about confidence. This was *not* the time for this BS. In that moment I had two choices, choices which are available to all of us. I could listen to my Mean Girl (and end the event early) *or* I could ask myself some questions to confirm the validity of what she was saying. I did that using the Negative Thought Detector. Here's how it works.

NEGATIVE THOUGHT DETECTOR

QUESTION 1:

***'IS THIS 100 PER CENT FACT OR AM I MAKING AN
ASSUMPTION?'***

The first step I took was to get inquisitive. I asked myself, 'Is it 100 per cent fact that people are bored or am I making an assumption?' How accurate is this thought? What evidence did I have to prove that people were actually bored and wanted to go home? I had none. I couldn't read their minds, so I had no idea what they were actually thinking and no one was sneaking out the back door. I was making an assumption. A negative one at that, and one that wasn't serving me in any way.

If your thought is a fact, then fine, focus on what you can control and leave what you don't have the power to change. For example, if people were actually bored, I would have probably had a quick fifteen-minute interval, played some music, got everyone moving their body and passed around some snacks! Then I would have had

a quick debrief with my team to see if they had any opinions on what was missing, I'd take their feedback on board then get back into it.

However, if your thought is an assumption, then it can be changed. In *Why Has Nobody Told Me This Before?* therapist Dr Julie Smith says a big step towards taking the power out of negative thoughts is to notice when they appear and understand them for what they are. Let's look at a few different types of thought biases we all experience:

- **Mind reading** – making assumptions about what others are thinking for example assuming everyone was bored at my event.
- **Overgeneralising** – taking what happened in one experience and assuming it's the same for all future or past experiences. For example one piece of negative feedback about your work means all your work is now terrible.
- **Musts and shoulds** – having unrealistic expectations and putting pressure on yourself to be, look or feel a certain way. And then assuming you're a failure when you don't measure up.
- **Catastrophising** – always assuming the worst possible outcome without considering more likely and realistic possibilities.
- **Emotional reasoning** – thinking if you feel a way about an event then it must be true. How many times have you felt you messed up an interview so badly only to get a call that you got the place. Feelings aren't facts, more on that in the next section.

- **Black or white thinking** – thinking in absolute extremes like if I’m not pretty, then I’m ugly. If I’m not 100 per cent good at it then I’m terrible. It’s all or nothing.

Dwelling on these types of thoughts and taking them as the absolute truth will keep us in a low mood and get us into trouble later down the line. If your default is to assume the worst of people and yourself as a safety mechanism, really pay attention to this as most of your assumptions may end up being inaccurate.

QUESTION 2:

‘WOULD I EVER SAY THIS TO A FRIEND?’

We are so nice and loving to our friends and family, but so mean and critical to ourselves.

Would you ever say this to a friend?

- ‘Don’t speak up, you might say something stupid.’
- ‘Why are you so awkward with people? Honestly, you’re so cringe.’
- ‘Everyone is low-key looking, judging you. Btw, this was a very bad outfit choice.’
- ‘Yup, I knew you were going to mess this up. They’re going to find out you have no idea what you’re doing. You should quit asap.’
- ‘Mmmhh, you don’t really look good today. Delete that picture and don’t keep trying.’

You would *never, ever, ever* say these things to your best friend, would you?!

Well, listen up, you are your own best friend. So give yourself some grace and kindness too. If you would never say something out loud to a friend, don't say it to yourself either. You're just as worthy of the love and encouragement you give other people, OK? OK!

Back to when I was freaking out internally. In that moment, I caught a glimpse of my friend Leanne, who was sitting in the front row smiling at me. I tried to imagine what she would say to me. She's one of the most supportive people ever and I knew she would probably say something like: 'Tee, you're Killing It. Did you see the way those girls were looking up at you? Honestly I'm so proud of you, man. I remember when you started in Oxford and look at you now!'

So the thought that I was doing a bad job and everyone was bored contradicted my answer to this second question. I would never say that to a friend. If you find yourself thinking these kinds of thoughts, check whether you'd be happy to say them to someone else.

QUESTION 3:

'DOES THIS THOUGHT SABOTAGE ME OR EMPOWER ME?'

On to the final step. Thinking people were bored and wanted to go home in the middle of my event definitely wasn't empowering. If I'd listened to my Mean Girl, I would have given up halfway through and not given the women in attendance the full experience they paid for. I mean, the goody bags hadn't even come out yet!

Here's my rule of thumb:

If a thought sabotages you, *bin it*.
If a thought empowers you, *run with it*.

#CAKIMantra

Sing it with me, ladies:

If it sabotages you, *bin it*. If it empowers you, *run with it*.

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If it sabotages you, *bin it*. If it empowers you, *run with it*.

Sabotaging thoughts belong in the bin, the trash, *la poubelle*, *la basura*, whatever you call it. They keep you stuck in a life you don't want. They make you shrink and want to give up. Empowering thoughts elevate you. They encourage you to keep moving forward and most of all, they are who you really are.

Sabotaging thoughts belong in the bin.