

Confidence and Crutches is the follow-up to Mark McDowell's first book, Stepping Through Grief. By way of case studies, this book brings to the reader insight into the emotions and behaviour of those experiencing low self-esteem and poor levels of confidence. It shows how we may foster unsuccessful relationships, take on weight, or rely on alcohol to see us through. More importantly, it shows how these problems can be overcome using logic and hypnosis.

## **Confidence and Crutches**

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# *Confidence* & CRUTCHES

HYPNOSIS *for* CONFIDENCE

Mark C H McDowell

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## INTRODUCTION

John Watson, the founder of Behaviorism proclaimed; “Give me a dozen healthy infants and my own specified world to bring them up in and I’ll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select; Doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant, chef, and yes, even beggar man or thief.” This guarantee was given regardless of any inherent ancestral talent he or she might have been born into the world with. Conversely, the renowned geneticist William Bateson believed that ancestry alone was responsible for our ability to be actors, farmers, musicians, poets, scientists and servants.

For me, *all* children, if supported but left *unhindered*, have a *spiritual predisposition* towards their own *individual* ability, and therefore, are equipped to explore the length and breadth of their *own* potential. It is of course possible that the child borne of artistic parents, may want to pursue an artistic career, but it is also possible for that child to wish to pursue something altogether different. It may also be that the child will have a *genetic* ability to be an artist, but that by no means should be taken as an indication that they wish to be an artist. We do of course live in an insecure world, so it is a brave parent that can give way to their own fears and doubts in order to allow their child to express themselves fully, and without what can often be an undermining influence from our selves.

There is no doubt that the early, formative years of our life, from birth up to around our twelfth year, dictate enormously the way in which we act through adolescence and on to our adulthood. If a child is encouraged to ‘Follow in their Fathers footsteps’ or do to what the parents think is best for them, the child will more often than not apply themselves to fulfilling the parents expectation, while negating their own.

I remember a client in his late twenties who asked me if I could help him to become a better student. He was taking the bar exam in order to

be a barrister and having already failed the exam twice, was facing, as he saw it, his last chance in life. I told him that we could indeed use hypnosis to help him with his focus of attention, but then, when I went on to ask him why it was so important for him to pass, and why he wanted to be a barrister in the first place, he seemed confused by the question and allowed several moments to pass before he remarked; 'My Father was a barrister and so was my Grandfather.' I then asked him if he held any interest in his studies and he replied that he didn't. Finally, I asked him if he really wanted my help to encourage him to work towards something that held no excitement for him, after another moment's pause he decided that he didn't.

This is by no means an exceptional case; I once worked with a *successful* client who said that he wanted me to help him to enjoy his job. He worked in the city as a financial consultant and at the age of twenty six, he claimed that the only thing that he was looking forward to was his retirement. I told Simon that it would be impossible to make him enjoy something that he simply didn't like doing, and pointed out that perhaps instead he should concentrate on a career that could satisfy him. He said that he didn't think that would be possible, for both financial reasons and apparently, the kudos that the job seemed to offer. Simon was a referral from another client, Dawn, and I learned from her sometime later, that he left his home one day and drove to a well known spot in order to take his own life; thankfully he was in two minds and just before making that last fateful decision, he rang his parents who immediately jumped in the car and came to his rescue. I also learned that sometime after that, he left his job in the city to study for a new career.

I have worked with countless clients working in jobs entirely unsuitable for their emotional needs and they always have at least one emotional thing in common, they feel unfulfilled.

If the child is allowed to intuitively explore their own potential, they will feel empowered and resourceful. *They will have a reason to be.* If

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the child is manipulated in to a *way to be* then the very best that they can achieve is a sense of purpose, the worst a feeling of failure.

I have no doubt that both genetics and behaviorism can play a part in the child's development, and, therefore, the shaping of the adult, but if their spirit, *their soul*, is allowed to roam freely, then it will undoubtedly prove to be the most powerful ingredient towards an enjoyable neurosis free life. If the child is persuaded from their natural instincts, their intuition, by an authority figure such as a parent or tutor, the child will endeavor to take on their will as their own. In this way they become spiritually lost and ego-motivated. When that happens they begin to live in fear, trying to find their feet in a world in which they don't feel comfortable. They will spend more time considering failure than success, and with the future constantly in mind, the natural everyday opportunities will pass them by. Conversely, if the child's intuition is encouraged, they will remain *spiritually* aware, and so the future becomes less of a focal point for them, as they expect each day to be full of potential.

The ego is afraid of failure and so will often refuse to take part in many exciting and positive life situations. The soul is not held back by fear nearly so easily, relying on a natural intuition that always knows best for us, it treats each new opportunity with an excitement that doesn't allow failure to be a considered option.

There is also a group of people that are neither ego-motivated, nor spiritually driven. Having neither been encouraged to follow their pathway, nor having been enticed by parental indoctrination, they can develop in to *non-life participants* who see chances arriving by the dozen for others, while they themselves feel lost and unable to commit themselves to life affirming experiences. They are those clients, who look me in the eyes and *confidently* tell me that they are lacking in confidence. They don't feel cheated by life and they don't feel that they have a right to expect more from it. In actual fact, what they are suffering from is low self-esteem.

While it may be the intention of the parent or teacher to impart *constructive* criticism, I have yet to work with the client, who as a child, interpreted the criticism leveled at them as anything but *destructive*. Criticism is not encouragement and therefore derogatory. If we put an onus upon people to perform passionless tasks, then it makes sense that they will perform them without passion. If they perform them without passion, they won't be able to give their best. If they cannot give their best, they will never be as good as they can be. If they can never be as good as they can be, they will feel a failure, and if they feel a failure, they will have poor self-esteem, and if they have poor self-esteem, they will feel... *passionless*.

At schools we are force-fed knowledge, regardless of whether we have any interest or ability for it. I remember as a child spending countless hours trying to master the mathematical principal of logarithms, I never did, and I felt then, as I do now, that my time would have been far better spent in more English lessons, where I enjoyed learning and was fairly proficient, [who knows, I might have found this book easier to write if I had!] or on the sports field, where I was passionate...if not entirely proficient.

From our schools we go on to Colleges and Universities, who it would seem, have criteria of their own. My daughter is in college at the time of writing, she is studying art, a subject she very much enjoys. However, because of her *failure* to achieve the necessary pass mark while in school, she also has to spend an inordinate amount of her time studying Mathematics', a subject that she detests, in order that she can progress to University. [And yes, I do realize that Mr. Bateson might have something to say at this point, but it's my book, so he can't!] By the way, neither my daughter nor I expect her ability as an artist to be enhanced should she achieve the necessary mark.

This book isn't intended to be an indictment of the educational system however, in fact it isn't meant to be an indictment of anyone. It is written in the hope that it can provide some insight for those living in the shadow of the past and following the dreams of others, rather than



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the dreams of their own. It is also hoped that it can provide some warmth to parents who already take the risk in allowing their children room to breathe and, by way of forethought to those parents who either feel that they can't, or that they shouldn't. Remember; it is *emotion that should come before thought*, so, better it is surely, that your child learns to act on their own *emotions* rather than someone else's thoughts.

## **The Power of Expectation**

In 1807 Thomas Jefferson, a former president of America, declaimed the idea of the placebo, stating; “One of the most successful physicians I have ever known has assured me that he used more bread pills, drops of colored water and powders of hickory ash than all of the other medicines put together. I consider this a pious fraud.”

Medicine and Presidents have moved on since then and the placebo is now recognized as a powerful force. All pharmaceutical companies are now required by law, after all safety and possible beneficial tests have been satisfied, to submit any proposed medicine to a ‘double blind test.’ This test requires that a number of patients all suffering from the same malady, attend a drugs trial. The patients are informed that they will either be taking the real drug or an imitation, a sugar coated tablet that will be the placebo. The patient will also be informed that they will remain unaware of which tablet they have been given. It is then up to the patients to inform an impartial observer, again unaware of which tablet it is that they have been given, of their progress. The value of the drug against the placebo is then calculated across the whole group and if the drug is seen to have no greater value than the placebo, then it will not be allowed to be marketed.

The power of suggestion against pain has been well documented through placebo studies and clinical investigators have found that even severe pain can be relieved by administering a salt or saline based solution, a placebo, in place of all analgesics including morphine. The fact that thirty five percent of patients report a marked relief by receiving the placebo alone, whatever their illness, underlines the importance of positive expectation in our physical and emotional well-being.

For me, the following true story represents what we can achieve by drawing on our inner belief, *our own placebo structure*.

### **Peter Carey**

In 1957 Peter Carey became known as ‘The man with no face.’ Imagine if you can, jumping clear from a blazing sea-plane, your clothes have caught fire, your hair is singed away and you have suffered extreme burns to your body, especially your face, you lose your eye-lids, your nose and your ears. In Peter’s words; “I realized that the only bit left of my face was a small area of flesh under the nose, like a Charlie Chaplin mustache: the rest had been burnt away. But I was lucky to be alive.”

Whilst in Hospital he saw many severe burns victims die around him and he truly thought that he would suffer the same fate. “I was lying in bed one morning feeling incredibly low. The pain had been terrible for days. It would have been so easy at that moment to let go and just slip away into death. Then I heard a Cockney voice come through the door and say to the nurse beside my bed: ‘Ave you adya cuppa dearie? And it made me laugh.

“I thought, God-what am I doing?” After that, I never had any problems with myself. I made myself believe that the pain was only in one half of my body. Every morning I would wake up and mentally drive the pain, into, say my left half. I would then think only of my right side. Next day I would drive it across to the right, and think only of my left. I found that in that way, I could live with the pain as it only seemed half as bad.”

### **Nocebo Response**

While the placebo response is now widely acknowledged and highly respected, the nocebo response is an action barely mentioned. Indeed, as I write this, my computer recommends that I check my spelling. The nocebo or, ‘I will harm’ response though is a very real phenomenon. Just as with the placebo, it offers a huge margin of emotional involvement in our well-being. If we can react positively to an expectation that something will do us good, then it stands to reason that we will respond negatively to an expectation that something will do us harm. This doesn’t apply only to the forces of medicine. It is equally

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important and apparent in the way that we approach our everyday life. Many people suffer needlessly, both emotionally and physically, by mismanaging or, simply not understanding their spiritual needs. When we deem our *feelings* to be irrelevant, we risk emotional distress and physical disorder.

The mind and the body though, have remarkable recuperative powers. If we can turn things around and make sure that our emotional needs are met, then most, if not all conditions can not only be controlled, but more often than not cured. As a living being we react to emotional stimuli. If we perceive that stimuli to be positive, we will react positively. If we perceive that stimuli to be negative, we will react negatively.

#### **Consider this scenario:**

The housewife that is expected by her Husband to do everything according to *his* needs. Each day he arrives home and expects his dinner to be on the table. He takes it for granted that his shirts will be freshly laundered and hanging neatly in the wardrobe, perhaps their sex life revolves around *his* needs and wishes. Each day he arrives home and...his wife, for reasons she may be unaware of, *simmers*, she feels uncomfortable, agitated and frustrated. Day by day she becomes increasingly disenchanted with her lot. However, either through lack of confidence or a feeling of poor self-esteem, she feels unable to state her case and remains firmly rooted in the 'flight' mechanism or *nocebo*.

As time passes and the situation remains unchanged, she may become prone to headaches, perhaps a migraine here and there; she may wonder why she doesn't sleep that well lately. She may even find herself visiting the Doctor to get herself something to feel a little bit more relaxed. It's possible that she is at the stage where she is feeling run down and open to viruses. 'Anything going around and you can bet I will catch it!' When she spots her friends in the street, she becomes aware that she is not looking her best, perhaps older than her years. She probably doesn't go out much these days either, probably feeling that

socializing requires too much effort and anyway, there is always too much to do at home. When her Husband asks her 'Whatever is the matter with you' she is unable to communicate her real feelings. She remains disempowered and replies, in all honesty, because by this time she has completely lost track of her own dynamic, 'I have no idea.'

Now let's look at a different response, the 'fight' mechanism or placebo; The same housewife is busy going about her chores. She recognizes that things have to be done and the tasks that she is carrying out, are she feels, her responsibility, part of her personal dynamic. Her husband comes home early from work one day. The moment that he gets in, he says that he is hungry and wants to know when dinner will be ready. The wife takes exception to this, she's been busy all day and still has things to do, so replies; 'As you are home early why don't you cook for a change. Actually I haven't had time to make the beds yet, so why don't you do those first and then we can sit down early together and relax.'

Whichever way her Husband chooses to react to her statement is unimportant... the wife is empowered. No headaches, no restless nights and no unnecessary medication.

Consider the person who seldom has a day of work through illness; are they likely to be working on the placebo or the nocebo response? What about the person who is always phoning in sick; the backache, the headache, the colds... Placebo or nocebo?

The placebo response *empowers* us and it comes about by completing a dynamic. That dynamic consists firstly of an emotional impulse, an inner directive to do, think, or say something. In order to complete that dynamic we have to *physically* act upon the *emotional* directive. In other words we need to bring our *emotional* needs to fruition. Conversely, the nocebo response leaves us *power- less* and occurs when we deny ourselves the right to *physically* express our *emotional* needs.

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Emotion creates energy. The power of that energy depends upon the depth of the emotion. They run parallel to each other. If we feel emotionally immobile, then we will remain physically static, the energy will remain trapped within our physical self and become destructive. This can lead to gastritis, heartburn, ulcers, hiatus hernia, colitis, persistent and frequent headaches, migraine, stuttering, high blood pressure, Candida, nervousness, sinusitis, depression, et al.

I know that you will have all witnessed the small child having a temper tantrum. As a parent, we often imagine them to be out of control. As they jump up and down and scream and shout, our impulse is to try and bring them back in to line. We may be concerned for them and perhaps, even more concerned about the spectacle we may feel that they are making of themselves! In fact the child is in complete control. They are acting through and successfully completing their dynamic, they are empowered.

I have spent many hours with clients who as children, were persuaded to 'dumb down' their natural feelings of fear, anger and sadness by either a parent or some other authoritarian figure. You wouldn't want to stop your child from laughing, so why stop him from crying? You want them to experience happiness, so don't try and shelter them from feeling sad. They need the polarity of the emotions in order to recognize which is which.

#### **When a parent says to a child;**

'What are you afraid of son, grow up and be a man.' What the parent may actually mean could be; 'your sensitivity worries me, it's a big hard world out there and the way you are going, I'm not sure that you will be able to cope and that makes me afraid for you.' Or perhaps; 'I can't cope with your fear and I don't know how to help, so, pull yourself together and then hopefully I can forget all about it.' Or maybe; 'I'm disappointed in the fact that you are afraid, it reminds me of my own fears and therefore, the disappointment I have in myself.' What the child understands you to mean is; 'I am not allowed to be

afraid.’ As a result; The child develops a fear of fear itself and in adulthood displays nervousness and an unwillingness to take part in life.

Let’s see how this can apply when we suppress the emotion of anger; ‘Be quiet and calm down or you will be sorry. You’re behaving like a spoiled brat.’ What the parent may actually mean could be; ‘I need to be in charge here or I don’t feel in control and I can’t afford for my authority to be threatened.’ Or maybe; ‘If I let you speak your mind, I may find out that you resent me and I don’t think that I could deal with that.’ Or perhaps; ‘Your anger scares me for you. It will only get you in to trouble and I want you to stay safe by controlling your emotions... just like my Father taught me.’ What the child understands you to mean is; ‘I am not allowed to be angry.’ As a result; The child becomes apathetic in adulthood, resentful and subject to mood swings.

Let’s see how this can apply when we suppress the feeling of sadness. When a parent says to a child; ‘What on earth have you got to cry about? Stop feeling sorry for yourself and find something to do.’ What the parent may actually mean could be; ‘Please don’t cry, there’s nothing that I can do to change things and that makes me feel like I have let you down, I feel powerless.’ Or perhaps; ‘I am doing the best I can for you and it still doesn’t seem enough, and that makes me feel useless.’ Or maybe; ‘My Mother was never able to offer me emotional comfort and therefore I don’t know how to offer it to you.’ What the child understands you to mean is; ‘I don’t have the right to be unhappy.’ As a result; The child struggles to find meaningful relationships. The premise being that; ‘If I don’t care about someone, then I can’t get hurt and I don’t have to break my parents rule about being sad.’

If we don’t feel free to express ourselves emotionally, we cannot complete a positive dynamic by taking the appropriate physical action. Whenever I see a parent trying to prevent their child from exhibiting emotion, *whatever* that emotion may be, I see an emotionally inhibited parent.

If you hear a voice within you say 'You cannot paint'  
then by all means paint and that voice will be silenced.

Vincent Van Gogh



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