PREPAREIF

# UNSHAKABLE

# CONFIDENCE

**Get It and Keep It!** 

JASON KIESAU

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14 years ago when I was 23 I made some mistakes that forced me to rethink how I approached the world. I realized I had a lot to learn and put myself on a mission to understand characteristics of success; why some people succeed and others struggle. It became clear that CONFIDENCE is a key characteristic of successful people; perhaps the most important characteristic. Confident people see the world differently and experience less challenges than those who lack confidence.

I was never very confident growing up. I was a follower ruled by anxiety and stress from worrying what other people thought of me. I remember being in school or church and feeling out of place. I was a bigger kid and I still remember the uncomfortable feeling I had in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade as my class watched a film about health and nutrition and I felt like everyone was staring and laughing at me because I was fat. This lack of confidence impacted my engagement in school and participation in sports. At some point I stopped having expectations for myself and it was more about belonging than it was succeeding. I became comfortable with failing and coming in last, in fact, I kind of expected it.

As I started learning about success and realizing how significant confidence was the next question I started asking was "Why do people lack confidence?" People lack confidence for a variety of reasons, but the simple answer to that question is INSECURITY. People lack confidence because they experience insecurity. The more you learn about insecurity the more you will recognize that it's like a disease, but instead of killing people it just paralyzes them mentally and emotionally, preventing them from doing things they want to do and living the life they want to live.

In my book, <u>FOCUSED – Your Future Starts Now!</u> I talk quite a bit about confidence and insecurity. I look at confidence and insecurity as two different roads going to the same destination.

#### **The Confident Road**

The confident road is smooth and efficient. It's a beautiful day and the driving conditions are perfect. The cruise control is set, windows are down, and your favorite song is on the radio. Your passengers are great company and everyone you encounter is friendly. You reach your destination with no problems because the directions and signs are clear. You arrive feeling great, without a worry in the world.

#### **The Insecure Road**

The insecure road is not smooth and efficient. There are times when the days are beautiful and conditions are perfect, but they can quickly and violently change leaving you looking for a ditch or an overpass for protection. The road is windy and bumpy, changes directions frequently, and the signs are not always clear for accurate. The people you encounter are not always friendly or helpful, and your passengers are "backseat drivers," frequently criticizing and making you

second guess where you're headed. The ride can be very uncomfortable and if you are lucky enough to reach your destination, you do so feeling confused, anxious, stressed, and worn down.



Which road do you spend most of your time on?

Most people probably spend their time on both roads, but there are too many people who spend most of their time on the insecure road. For how confident I try to be today, I still have my moments of insecurity and there are times I look in the mirror and feel like a turd. Confidence isn't about eliminating insecurity; I don't think that's possible. It's about managing it, and that's what this e-book is all about.

Over the next several pages we are going to answer the following questions:

- What is insecurity?
- Why are we insecure?
- What are insecurities that hold you back?
- What are the consequences for insecurity?
- How can you manage your insecurities?
- How can you live with Unshakable Confidence?

#### WHAT IS INSECURITY?

In a <sup>1</sup>2013 Psychology Today article, William Berry states that "Insecurity is a form of anxiety. When one is insecure about oneself, it is due to a preoccupation with not measuring up to one's perception of others, or other uneasiness that causes self-doubt."

At its core, insecurity is self-doubt or a lack of self-confidence that can show up in the form of various thoughts and emotions which can sabotage whatever it is we are trying to do in the world.

Here are a number of ways insecurity may show up:

Uncertain	Worried	Afraid	Anxious	Apprehensive
Cowardly	Depressed	Doubtful	Hesitant	Pessimistic
Sad	Touchy	Unsure	Uptight	Jealous
Questioning	Unassured	Unconfident	Scared	Controlling

Have you ever thought or felt any of these things?

How do they impact you?

Tony Robbins sums insecurity up as FEAR. He says fear is what stops us from moving forward. In his <sup>2</sup>Unleash the Power Within workbook he says "Fear can destroy our psychology and immobilize us from taking action. All of us experience fear in some context during our lives: fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of success, fear of love, fear of being alone, or fear of the unknown. In fact, most of us feel a combination of these fears in the course of our lives. Fear is hardwired into every human being – nothing we do this weekend or in our lifetimes will take fear away. The secret is learning how to use fear instead of letting fear use you!" He continues and says "While we all experience countless variations, there are two primary fears that all human beings share: 1) We're not good enough. 2) We won't be loved."

I love what Robbins says about learning how we must learn how to use fear instead of letting fear use us. We must understand our insecurities, own them, and manage them. The risks are too great if we don't.



#### WHY ARE WE INSECURE?

In an effort to better understand and manage our insecurities and protect our confidence it's important to know why we have them. If we can better understand the root causes we can be more intentional about developing strategies that stop them before they take over. There are a number of reasons we have insecurities, none of which are our faults. That's a step in the right direction, right? Your insecurities probably aren't your fault so you can drop the guilt you carry for having them and stop acting like there is something wrong with you. You're probably more normal than you think.

Here are a few reasons we deal with insecurities:

#### 1. Bad experiences

Sometimes we have experiences that "leave a bad taste in our mouths." Some are more serious than others and it's up to us to figure out and control the ones that are a big deal. When I was younger I was a daredevil on my bike and there wasn't a jump I wouldn't try. I was the kid flying down the big hill no handed with my arms straight up in the air and a big smile on my face. I loved it, but haven't done it since the summer of 1989 when I was 12 years old. You know why? Because I had a bad experience. One summer day when I was 12 years old I was zooming down a hill on my bike with my hands in the air and a smile on my face. Even at 12, I felt like the man . . . until I put my hands on the handlebars, pushed on my breaks, lost control, and flipped over the bike, through the air, hitting the pavement and rolling down the street stopping traffic. Thankfully I was fine. But today, 25 years later, going down a hill too fast on a bike scares the hell out of me. I don't do it.

That was a pretty minor example and I know there are some of you who have had some pretty unfortunate experiences that have impacted how you maneuver through the world today. You must acknowledge them, come to terms with them, and manage the insecurity they create.

#### 2. Relative Deprivation

In his book, <sup>3</sup>David and Goliath, Malcolm Gladwell talks about relative deprivation theory. In a nutshell, relative deprivation theory says that we do not build our view of ourselves based on our actual standing in the world. Instead, our view of ourselves is based on how we compare to the people in our social circles. Our motivation, persistence, and confidence will be determined by how we see ourselves within those groups. If we feel good about our place in the group, we are confident. If we don't feel good about our place in the group, we are insecure. Gladwell explains further in this excerpt from a speech he gave at Google sponsored ZietgeistMinds in 2013 "I think it is because as human beings, we dramatically underestimate the costs of being at the bottom of a

hierarchy...this exceedingly robust phenomenon which says that as human beings, we do not form our self-assessments based on our standing in the world. We form our self-assessments based on our standing in our immediate circle, on those in the same boat as ourselves, right? So a classic example of relative deprivation theory is which kind of country — which countries have the highest suicide rates? Happy countries or unhappy countries? And the answer is happy countries. If you are morbidly depressed in a country where everyone else is really unhappy, you don't feel that unhappy. right? You are not comparing yourself to the universe — the whole universe of people out there. No. You are comparing yourself to your neighbors and the kids at school and they are unhappy, too, so you are sort of fine. But if you are morbidly depressed in a country where everyone is jumping up and down for joy, you are really depressed, right? That is a very, very, very profoundly serious place to be and so as a result, you get that sad outcome more often. His following statement says it all: "When it comes to confidence and motivation and self-efficacy, the things that really matter when it comes to making your way in the world, relative position matters more than absolute position."

If you are a person who has a habit of comparing yourself to the people around you, you are more likely to be insecure.

#### 3. Negativity Bias

We have a "negativity bias." In the TRACOM Group's program titled <sup>4</sup>**Adaptive Mindset for Resiliency**, they state that we are hard-wired to focus on negative, unpleasant information compared to positive information. In one study, researchers showed participants positive, negative, and neutral stimuli and found that electrical activity in the cerebral cortex was strongest in response to negative stimuli, indicating we are wired to focus on the negative.

The negativity bias is even evident in our language. For example, of the 558 emotion words in the U.S. English Dictionary, 62% of them are negative and only 38% of are positive. Of the most common words people use, 70% of them are negative. This means that we have a more complex and varied way of conceptualizing negative feelings compared to positive feelings.

TRACOM Group continues: "This negativity bias has a strong influence over us. Even when we experience a lot of positive events in our day, one negative event can dramatically alter our mood. Negative events are more likely to draw our attention and have a stronger, more long-lasting impact on us. This negativity bias means we often feel overwhelmed by challenges, we see threats where none exist, and we fail to see opportunity in adversity. In short, the negativity bias keeps us from being as resilient as we can be."

#### 4. Unrealistic Expectations

Sometimes we set expectations for ourselves that are unrealistic and when we don't meet our expectations we become frustrated, unhappy, and insecure. Expectations can be a fine line between motivation and frustration. When we set our expectations too high and we don't reach them it can hurt us. If we set our expectations too low, we may not be as motivated and may never reach our potential. For those of us that are driven and motivated it is critical that we set expectations that motivate us to get moving, but they also have to be realistic so we aren't setting ourselves up for unnecessary failure and frustration.

This is important for a few reasons.

- 1. It shows how little control we have if we aren't intentional with how we choose to live.
- 2. We are preconditioned to be insecure and our natural human dynamic starts us off at a disadvantage. Experiences that we may not have any control over can hold us back our entire lives. We naturally compare ourselves to others and rank ourselves within the hierarchy. With our Negativity Bias it is more natural and easier for us to pay attention to and attach ourselves to negative thoughts and feelings than positive ones.
- 3. If I'm not purposeful with my thoughts, emotions, and actions and make the conscious decision to manage insecurities and protect my confidence, I will be insecure and limit my quality of life.

To be a great champion you must first believe you are the best. If you're not, pretend you are.

Muhammad Ali



#### WHAT INSECURITIES HOLD YOU BACK AND WHAT ARE THEIR CONCEQUENCES?

In my book <u>FOCUSED – Your Future Starts Now!</u> I reference a 1943 Psychology Review article titled "A Theory of Human Motivation," by Abraham Maslow where he outlines what is known today as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. I'm not going to go into his theory in great detail, but he states one of our most basic needs is the need to feel safe and secure physically and emotionally. There are consequences if our needs for security aren't being met. When we are insecure that becomes our motivation and focus and that focus may impact the attention we give other important needs. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs says that our insecurities may impact our ability to have healthy relationships, develop the self-esteem needed to achieve our goals, and discover our purpose.

The intention of this section is to get you thinking about insecurities that hold you back so you can first, acknowledge them and second, do something about them. Using the previous section as a guide, I'd like to challenge you to think about the following four questions:

- 1. What negative experiences from your past play a role in your life today?
- 2. Who in you your life makes you feel inferior or that you are not good enough?
- 3. What negative thoughts and emotions impact your life today?
- 4. Are your expectations realistic?

#### 1. What negative experiences from your past play a role in your life today?

I grew up with a father that was a loud and angry alcoholic. At a young age I told myself that I was never going to allow that to hold me back and I haven't. Though I have never allowed that to hold me back the journey hasn't always been an easy one. As I got older and faced more self-created challenges I started learning more about adults who grew up with alcoholics and what I found was eye opening. For the first time in my life I was learning about the consequences of growing up in that environment, many that I was challenged by as a young adult. Facing the negative experiences and understanding their consequences helped me better understand myself, but more importantly what I needed to do to stop allowing the past to dictate my future.

What negative experiences from your past play a role in your life today that create insecurity?

a)		
b)		
c)		
d)		
e)		

When I finished my associated out with a group of guys two got a great job at an ad agence fine with my job and the wag realizing it I assumed a role wasn't comparing myself with to my immediate circle and a The really important thing to though I felt inferior or not goway; it was all me. Relative I what we do to ourselves that have Unshakable Confidence	es you feel inferior or that you are not good enough?  ate's degree I moved back to my home town and started hanging yo years older than I was. I went to school for graphic design and ancy, but was only making \$11 per hour. Most of the time I was age because I was only 22 and just starting out, but without even e within the group and had some insecurities. Just as the Relative
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b)	was comparing and ranking myself within our group of friends. With other 22 year old graphic designers; I was comparing myself allowing my perceived rank to impact my confidence, and it did to understand about my story and Relative Deprivation Theory is good enough, they weren't doing anything to make me feel that the Deprivation Theory is not about what people do to us, it's about at we must stop if we are going to manage our insecurities and cee.  ow to make you feel inferior and not good enough and create
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#### 3. What negative thoughts and emotions impact your life today?

Growing up we form all kinds of perceptions about the world and strategies to live. Our thoughts and emotions drive how we see and do most things so it's critical that we try to adopt thoughts and emotions that productively serve us. The truth is many of us carry negative emotions that serve us in some capacity, but aren't really productive. As I became an adult and was trying to make my way through the world I realized I had some negative and unproductive thought patterns that probably made me feel safe, but didn't serve me in any productive way beyond that point. Being a bigger kid growing up I remember feeling a little intimidated and inferior to others who were in better shape. This made me form negative perceptions about myself. When I was a kid finances were a cause of great stress in my home and I remember my how stressed out my mother got when bill collectors would call and the negative impact a risky financial decision from my dad had on our family. As an adult I started out with a very negative emotion about money and people who had it. I made assumptions and passed unfair judgments when I should have been taking the time to learn all I could. Our patterns of thoughts and emotions will make or break us and given that all of us are saddled with the Negativity Bias it's critical that we take ownership over our negative thought and emotion patterns and approach the world differently.

What are your negative thought and emotion patterns in the following areas that are not productive and create insecurity?

What are some negative thought and emotion patterns you have with your HEALTH?	What are some negative thought and emotion patterns you have with your FINANCES?
What are some negative thought and emotion patterns you have with your RELATIONSHIPS?	What are some negative thought and emotion patterns you have with your CAREER?

How do those negative thought and emotion patterns hold you back?				

#### 4. Are your expectations realistic?

Happiness in life can really be summed up to whether or not we are meeting our expectations. When we are meeting our expectations and the world around us is meeting our expectations, we will be happy. When we have expectations that aren't being met, we won't be happy. It's as simple as that. Expectation management is critical and when we set unrealistic expectations for ourselves and others we are setting ourselves up for failure because we will always be disappointed. If I have a goal to lose 20lbs in 10 weeks (2lbs per week) that means I need to burn 1000 more calories than I consume on a daily basis over the course of those 10 weeks. Let's say I have a crazy schedule and it's hard for me to manage my nutrition and find the time to exercise and I'm only able to burn on average 500 calories more than I eat. This means I would be losing 1lb per week and although that's still progress, I am not meeting my expectations which can lead to discouragement and frustration. Well, something needs to change. Either I need get better control over my schedule so I can manage my nutrition and exercise more or I need to change my expectation.

When we set realistic expectations for ourselves and the world around us we are giving ourselves the best chance to be happy and successful.

When I was 22 and making \$11 per hour, part of my frustration is that my buddies were making two to three times more than I was and in addition to making me feel inferior (Relative Deprivation Theory) I felt like I deserved to make more money. (Unrealistic expectations) When we realize our expectations are unrealistic we need to do one of two things. 1 – Change our expectations or 2 – Change what we are doing and start doing things that align with our goals.

What unrealistic expectations do you have in key areas of your life that create insecurity? What unrealistic expectations do you have for people around you that create insecurity?

What unrealistic expectations do you have regarding your HEALTH?	What unrealistic expectations do you have regarding your FINANCES?
What unrealistic expectations do you have regarding your RELATIONSHIPS?	What unrealistic expectations do you have regarding your CAREER?
How do those negative thought and emotion patter	rns hold you back?

# You cannot have a positive life and a negative mind.

Joyce Meyer

#### **MANAGING YOUR INSECURITIES**

To manage your insecurities you must do three things:

- 1. Admit you have them
- 2. Admit they are hurting you
- 3. Want things to be different

An example of insecurity management that I share in my book, FOCUSED – Your Future Starts Now! is how I served two years as VP of Professional Development for the Young Professional Connection (YPC) in Des Moines. I joined YPC in July of 2008, and the following Tuesday evening, I attended my first professional development committee meeting. The meeting was scheduled to start at 6 P.M. and I walked in around 5:55 P.M.. I remember walking in and seeing a group of well-dressed young professionals sitting around tables talking. I got nervous and walked by them, hoping that wasn't the meeting I was looking for. After walking around the restaurant and bar area once, I realized that was the meeting I was supposed to attend. I got anxious, intimidated, and scared (Relative Deprivation Theory) and I walked right by them and out the door, but that made me uncomfortable as well. I was insecure and it was easier for me to avoid the discomfort than work through it. I stopped in the parking lot and said to myself, "Jason, what the hell are you worried about? Get back in there." So, I turned around and walked back in. I cautiously approached the group and asked if they were the YPC and they said they were. And, you know what? They were awesome. So awesome, in fact, four months later I was VP of that committee.

When I walked out the door I was feeling insecure, but I had to admit to myself that I was feeling insecure and I also had to decide that I wanted things to be different. I'm thankful I did.

A few years ago I got an email from a friend of mine with whom I was on a board. She wanted to grab coffee and chat about her career. The week prior I had facilitated an exercise where I challenged board members to think about what they really want and don't want in their lives. When we met for coffee she expressed that she was frustrated in her current position, but wasn't sure what she really wanted to do. She wasn't confident or fulfilled in her current role, but lacked confidence with the unknown of what she could do next. After going through her resume and learning what she loved and hated about all the positions she's held, a couple things became clear. First, she loved being around people, but not just working with people, serving them and taking care of them. Second, she loved being creative to the point that at night she would go home and make handmade cards for her friends' birthdays and other occasions to give to them. We talked about the unknown with not knowing what's next or what the world offered her that allowed her to both serve people and be creative. We brainstormed how to do those two things in her current situation. Long story short within a year or two she became the president of a non-profit organization focused on giving people the opportunity to experience art in her community and she also started a company selling her own brand of greeting cards.

She did not let her insecurities with her previous position and fear of the unknown dominate her, break her confidence, and keep her down. She admitted that something wasn't right and wanted things to be different. She managed her insecurities and took action.

Another friend of mine is a smart and successful business owner. When she was 30 years old she started having some issues with her health and after two years of pain, frustration, and tests she was diagnosed with Parkinson Disease. Outside of being scared as hell this made her very insecure and she shared it with very few people. She was scared of the unknown, how people would react, and how they would treat her. She was scared of what might happen to her client base and business if people found out.

When I started researching the disease I quickly learned that she wasn't the only one with those feelings. It's like Parkinson's Disease was this big secret that people were dealing with, but nobody would talk about. People were scared to talk about it for fear of how they would be judged, how it might affect their jobs, and impact their insurance. People were scared to talk about it so there was very little awareness of the disease and there lied the opportunity for my friend.

I felt like she needed to face her fears and insecurities and talk about the disease. Because of who she was and the spirit she had, she would demand attention, help create awareness, and inspire others in her shoes to be strong and face their fears as well. Within the next year she did just that. Being an avid runner, she and her friends organized a running team and through merchandise sales, events, and donations raised over \$20,000 for the Michael J. Fox Foundation.

She admitted she had insecurities and that they were holding her back. She knew she wanted things to be different, but wasn't sure what to do. Her desire led her to not only face her fears and insecurities, but allowed her to set the example and positively impact everyone around her. If she doesn't make the decision to manage them, nothing happens.

Managing your insecurities is a decision to be made. It's a decision not to allow them to hold you back and keep you down.

### What would you do if you weren't afraid?

Spencer Johnson

#### The Best Advice I Have Ever Received

Four years ago I scheduled a meeting with my CEO. I wanted to get his approval to hire an executive coach. I'm a big fan of working with trusted advisers, mentors, coaches, and counselors. I think third party perspective can be a game changer, as long as you can trust them and they can be objective.

When I told him what I wanted to do, he initially gave me a confused look like I was crazy. His response was "Why?"

I told him I wanted unshakable confidence and that I recognize in some situations I'm not as confident as I want to be. I told him I wanted to be challenged out of my comfort zone. I wasn't satisfied with average and status-quo and I was committed to reaching my goals.

#### His response:

"Jason, here's the deal. Right now you're on a boat. Your sail is up and the wind is strong; and it's blowing in the direction you want to go. Focus on sailing your boat. Sometimes you are so busy worrying about the unknown, looking for little rips in your sail, or adding to your sail that you aren't focused on sailing your boat. Your boat is good, its sail is good, and the wind is blowing. Stop looking for problems to fix and sail your boat."

That simple analogy changed the way I saw my insecurities. Soon after, when I would feel something, I would ask myself if it was a legit problem that needed my attention or just a tiny rip. 90% of the time they are tiny rips and I stayed focused on sailing my boat.

# What tiny rips are holding you back from sailing?



#### LIVING WITH UNSHAKABLE CONFIDENCE

The term Unshakable Confidence may be a bit misleading. Sorry! But, it's only misleading because the word Unshakable may suggest perfection and this isn't about perfection. Perhaps I should have named this eBook "The Unshakable You" because that's what this is about; it's about you being strong and confident.

Without being too cynical, I kind of feel like the cards are stacked against you. Bad experiences from the past might be holding you back. You probably compare and rank yourself against others without even realizing it. Your Negativity Bias makes you more likely to focus on the negative than the positive if you're not intentional. Your expectation may or may not be realistic. So, there is quite a bit going on behind the scenes that you aren't aware of and it's killing your confidence.

Here's the good news: IT'S MANAGABLE!

Yes, it's all manageable and that is one of the keys to confidence. Managing all the "stuff" the world throws at you, both good and bad. If you've had bad experiences in your life that are holding you back; you don't ignore them, you deal with them. If you compare yourself to other people, you need to stop. If you tend to focus more on the bad than the good, you need to be more positive. If your expectations are unrealistic, you need to change them. Everything you have done in the previous pages of this eBook should support your journey to developing Unshakable Confidence.

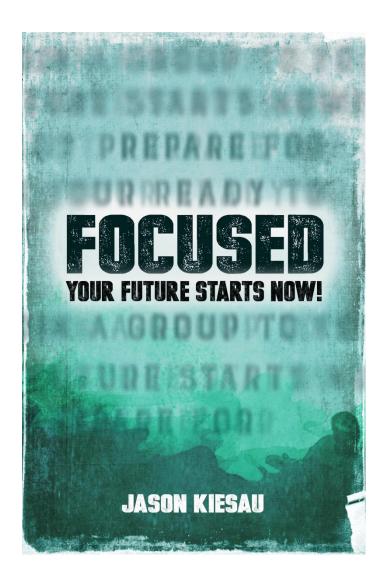
Another key to confidence is understanding your values and focusing on the right things for the right reasons. That's what my book <u>FOCUSED – Your Future Starts Now!</u> is all about. In my book I walk you through the process of defining your personal values, creating your five year personal vision, and setting goals that align with your values and vision. When you focus on the right things for the right reasons, you will be more engaged, motivated, and confident because everything you do will be meaningful.

I've been studying personal, professional, and leadership development for the past 14 years and have been fortunate to work with clients all over the United States. I don't care who you are or what you do; managing your insecurities and living your life in alignment with your values will be your key to living a high quality and confident life.

To learn more about my book, <u>FOCUSED – Your Future Starts Now!</u> and to purchase your copy, please visit:

#### FOCUSEDBOOK.COM

Thank you!



Life is about FOCUS. Who you are today is the result of what you FOCUSED on in the past. Your future will be the result of what you FOCUS on right now.

FOCUSED is about you confidently doing the right things for the right reasons; reasons that are meaningful to you. When you FOCUS on the right things, you are more secure, confident, happy, and fulfilled.

Are you FOCUSED?

YOUR FUTURE STARTS NOW!

# FOCUSEDBOOK.COM

Jason has been studying personal, professional, and leadership development for over 14 years and is passionate about helping people confidently pursue and achieve meaningful results. Today he travels across the United States speaking to groups and working with leaders in the areas of unshakable confidence, self-management, relationship building, high-performing teams, and strategic thinking & planning.



Learn more about Jason at

# **JasonKiesau.com**



## **Notes**

- 1. Berry, W., "Insecure? It Has Its Benefits" July 10, 2015 at PsychologyToday.com https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-second-noble-truth/201305/insecure-it-has-its-benefits
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- 4. The TRACOM Corporation. Adaptive Mindset for Resiliency Concepts Guide, 2014