

TIWALOLA OGUNLESI

Confident *and* *Killing it*

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

TIWALOLA OGUNLESI

Confident
and
Killing it

HQ

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To the women who showed me what it truly means to be unstoppable, my mother Adenike Ogunlesi and grandmothers Elizabeth-White Okuboyejo and Rufina Durogbola Ogunlesi.

And to you, for loving yourself enough to start this journey.

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Introduction

Have you ever wondered what it would feel like to have unshakeable self-belief? To be able to say, ‘This is what I want to do,’ and have everything within you – body, mind and soul – conspire to make it happen? That’s confidence. It’s the belief that you are capable of succeeding in whatever you want to do in life and become whoever you want to be. It’s more than a belief, it’s a practice, so have hope, because it can be built with awareness and intentionality. Confidence is a never-ending journey. It’s a journey that is bumpy at times, but it is the most enlightening, rewarding and life-changing journey you’ll ever embark on. Trust me, I’ve been on it for years now.

Most people think I’m a confidence coach because I’ve just always been confident my whole life, but it’s actually the exact opposite. I’m a confidence coach because I know exactly what it feels like to have a Mean Girl in your mind, a voice that is sabotaging and judgemental of everything you do. I know what it’s like to look in the mirror and hate what you see. I know what it’s like to live in fear of what others might think. I know what it’s like to think, ‘You’re not skinny enough, talented enough, skilled enough, creative enough.’ That was the narrative over and over again. For the longest time I fought to prove to myself and the people around me that I had something to offer. I was an over-achiever and a people-pleaser. I strived to be seen as the ‘good girl’ because I thought, ‘There’s nothing special about me, but at least I can make my parents proud by being good.’ I thought that was the best I could do.

I was wrong.

My ‘wake-up’ moment happened when I discovered the world of personal growth thanks to my mum, who gave me a copy of *15 Laws of Growth* by John Maxwell for my 21st birthday.

Now before I go any further, I’d like to say there are actually two parts to my awakening, and I’d be doing my faith a disservice if I didn’t talk about the part spirituality played alongside the personal accountability I took in my growth. If you’re not a spiritual person or you don’t believe

in God, that's fine, there's still something to learn from my personal story, so please stay with me and I promise not to shout, 'Repent or die!' through a megaphone.

I was leaving a study room at university when a girl I was holding the door open for invited me to Bible study. Having grown up in a Christian home, I'd been taught to believe that God existed, but I'd never really felt a divine presence. I really wasn't up for 'Kumbaya, my Lord' vibes then, but I was tired and they had my favourite snacks... I entered the Bible study for the free food and left in tears – full-on snotty-nosed sobbing.

'What happened?' I hear you asking. Well, after some very cringe-making singing, the guy who was leading the Bible study began to read out the following:

'God says you are fearfully and wonderfully made. You are a precious child to Him. When He created you, He said, "You are good." He knows every hair on your head...'

A light bulb went on in my head.

'Wow, so you mean when God sees me, all He sees is goodness?'

How was it that the battle I'd been silently fighting all those years was laid out bare in that unplanned moment? I couldn't explain it. But we all have moments when life gives us a wake-up call. Something happens that shakes us up and we begin to realise we want something different – we want more.

That day truly made me start believing that I was created by God, Divine energy and if the Divine being that created me said I was good enough, then *that was final!* No ifs, no buts!

Faith might not be your thing, and I totally respect that choice, but you don't need to have divine intervention to wake up to the truth that you are good enough. That, my friend, is simply a gift you must give yourself.

I let my cup overflow and began to share my greatness with the world. That's the Confident and Killing It effect.

And there's more. Since that day, I've experienced the love, freedom, peace and joy that come from building your confidence. As I started to unlock better versions of myself, the energy that rose within me was too much to keep inside, so I let my cup overflow and began to share my greatness with the world. That's the Confident and Killing It effect.

So what is Confident and Killing It? It's a movement, it's an energy, a mindset, a way of life. It's waking people up to their worth so they can be confident, unstoppable and dare to live the life they truly desire.

How did it start? Back in 2016, I was volunteering as a youth leader and saw just how crushingly low the confidence levels were in the girls I mentored. I realised there was a generational cycle of low self-esteem in women and girls.

In the UK, studies show 61 per cent of 10 to 17-year-old girls have low self-esteem, while 7 in 10 girls believe that they are not good enough or don't measure up in some way, with the most common reasons being their looks, performance in school and relationships with friends and family.¹ If nothing is done about it, insecure teenage girls grow up to become insecure women. Insecure women raise insecure daughters and so a generational cycle of low self-esteem in women and girls is repeated over and over again.

In 2011, the Institute of Leadership and Management in the UK surveyed British managers to see how confident they felt in their professions. Half the female respondents reported experiencing self-doubt related to their job performance and careers, compared with fewer than a third of male respondents.² When it comes to entrepreneurship, the stats aren't too exciting either. Studies show nearly two-thirds of men are confident they can start businesses, but less than half of women feel they have this capability. This is despite similar levels of education and experience.³

I found these stats unacceptable so I made it my mission to end this cycle of low self-esteem. I didn't have a huge following on social media, I didn't have any influential connections to lean on but I did have a voice. So, at the time, all I did was use my voice and share my story. Confident and Killing It started in 2017 as a series of inspiring videos on Instagram, then it grew to become a community of like-minded women, a podcast, corporate workshops, an online learning and coaching academy and now a book! I've spoken in person to women in Lagos, New York, Kigali and

Cape Town, as well as all over the UK. I've coached over 120 women who have gone on to get pay rises, start businesses, set better boundaries and level up their life in general. I've run about 100 hours of online workshops with over 10,000 participants. My podcast has been listened to 100,000 times in over 153 different countries in just two years. My confidence tips videos on Instagram have been watched about 1 million times. Now, that's pretty amazing progress for just one woman in five years, but imagine if every single one of you reading this right now joined in and played their part. We could change the world! And Why not?

If you've picked up this book it means you're ready to prioritise your growth and well-being. It means you're ready to be brave and confront your limitations. It means you're ready to honour your calling and become a better version of yourself. And I'm so very proud of you. So many people find it easier to live in the smallness of their limitations than in the greatness of their potential, but you're here, you're committed and you're ready to Kill It.

If you've picked up this book it means you're ready to prioritise your growth and well-being. It means you're ready to be brave and confront your limitations.

As you'll come to see, it *isn't* about traditional views of success. It isn't about money, fame, power, looking like you have it all together, or overworking yourself for progress 'at any cost'. It isn't about becoming a power woman in a boardroom. 'Killing It' is about defining success on your own terms. It's about knowing you are a co-creator of your life and playing your part to make sure you're living in alignment with your purpose, strengths, passions and values. It's about creating a life that you're proud of – a life at your own pace that works for you. So, read on.

Grounded in the science of positive psychology, this book is packed with practical and proven confidence-building tips, inspiring stories from everyday women and insightful mantras that will empower you to wake up to your true authentic self and overcome limitations like fear, self-doubt, perfectionism and imposter syndrome.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Imposter syndrome is a psychological phenomenon where you believe you're an inadequate and incompetent person, despite evidence that indicates you're skilled and successful. You often live in fear of getting 'found out' as a fraud or failure, because deep down you don't feel worthy of your accomplishments and opportunities.

You will learn how to believe in your capabilities, bet on yourself, define success on your own terms, embrace your main character energy and prioritise your needs. And as your very own confidence coach, I'm going to be right here with you, guiding you along the way. I'm going to open up your mind to new perspectives, I'm going to help you learn and level up, I'm going to fill you up with energy and drive, I'm going to challenge certain societal norms you've taken as the 'truth' and sometimes I'm going to ask you uncomfortable questions.

No more doubting your worth and accepting the bare minimum. No more disqualifying yourself from your dreams. No more mindless hustling to prove yourself. This book is going to awaken something special in you and equip you with next-level confidence that you need to live a full, authentic and empowered life... on your own terms. Are you ready to start?

A lot of us go to personal development to fix ourselves. We think we're broken and so we look to motivational speakers to give us the validation we're so desperately looking for. Well, I'm here to tell you that *you are not broken* and *you don't need fixing*. You are naturally creative, resourceful and whole. This book is not here to fix you, it's here to wake up to the greatness that is already within you.

So, wherever you're starting from is good enough. Your worth doesn't depend on where you come from, how many degrees you have, how much money you have, the colour of your skin, or your sexuality. Your mere existence is a gracious gift to the world. You are one of one. Take a second to feel how special and extraordinary that is.

Here's my number one **#CAKIMantra**:

You matter simply because you exist.

You'll come across more of these nuggets of wisdom as you read through this book. Feel free to write them out, put them on sticky notes, tweet them or make them your screensaver. They're here to remind you of what it means to be Confident and Killing It.

Real societal change starts on an individual level, and real societal change is needed. Even with more women getting degrees these days we still get paid less and miss out on promotions. We've been sold a lie that if we just work harder, don't make a fuss and let our work speak for itself we will be noticed and rewarded. If you're waiting for your manager to give you a pay rise instead of asking for one, because you think once they see how hard you work, they'll know you deserve more, then, girl, bye, you'll be waiting forever. People can see when you deserve more, but they'll often offer you less just to see how confident you are in yourself. However you respond is the baseline they'll use to treat you moving forward. I hope that makes you think twice the next time you think about playing small.

Looking at these stats ([pages 21-22](#)) can be quite disheartening. There are so many societal barriers to women's confidence that you might be thinking, is there any hope?

CONFIDENT AND
KILLING IT

**YOU
MATTER
SIMPLY
BECAUSE
YOU
EXIST**

#CAKIMantra

There is.

We can start with working on the things we have control over. Things like internalising rejection, pursuing perfectionism and fearing failure are self-inflicted confidence killers. We can make a choice not to give them power. The focus of this book is self-mastery, which involves knowing and growing yourself. We won't just focus on 'improving' you by forming new habits that rewire your brain for success; we'll also be doing loads of self-exploration and self-acceptance. Instead of sabotaging ourselves, we can own our truths, our voices and our stories, because when we do, change happens, ceilings are smashed and lives are changed.

On the other hand, I'm also not putting all the responsibility on us women to break the cycle when we've seen that many women experience societal backlash for being unapologetic about their worth. I admit there are some things beyond our control, but are we going to sit around and wait for the world to just magically be a better place before we build confidence? No. As an adult, your confidence, like many other things, is your responsibility.

I also want to highlight that things like imposter syndrome and low self-esteem aren't only women's issues. Men doubt themselves too. They aren't superhuman. Katty Kay and Claire Shipman have studied the confidence gap between women and men in their book *The Confidence Code*. In it they explained that most men don't let their doubts stop them from taking action. Doubt is often a catalyst for action. And when they experience failure after taking action, they most likely blame their lack of effort – 'I didn't work hard enough' – or attribute it to external circumstances – 'That was a tough exam' – whereas women put the blame on a lack of skill and capability – 'I'm not smart enough.' Women also tend to feel the fear and retreat, overthink situations and then never take action. Sound familiar?

But the more we hesitate, trying to avoid failure by waiting for the perfect moment to act, the fewer opportunities we have to build our confidence, and when we don't build our confidence, we are more likely to hesitate. It's a vicious cycle. I'm sure you've heard of the popular stat from Hewlett-Packard that showed women applied for a promotion only when they met 100 per cent of the qualifications, while men applied when they met 50 per cent. Feeling we're not good enough leads to less risk-taking in order to avoid any sort of failure, shame or judgement, and

as a result we take fewer opportunities outside our comfort zone, opportunities that could have built our confidence.

Just because there's a confidence gap between women and men doesn't mean we fix it by thinking or acting like men. The good news is no matter who you are or what personality you have, confidence is something you can nurture and express in your own style. I will give you the frameworks and tools to build a solid foundation. The rest is up to you. Throughout the book you'll come across what I call Level-Up exercises. These are exercises to help you grow in your self-knowledge. To get the best out of this book, I recommend completing each exercise before moving onto the [next chapter](#) and using a designated journal or digital notepad to write your answers down so you have them all in one place.

For the longest time, traditional psychology has studied human pain and suffering in the hope that if we know how to manage these situations, we can alleviate them and be happy. However, positive psychology takes things one step further and looks at the science and intentionality behind boosting our well-being so we can live a full and rich life. The PERMA model, created by the father of positive psychology, Dr Martin Seligman, presents five pillars of well-being that have been scientifically proven to help us manage our emotions, feel passionate about our work, develop meaningful relationships, live out our purpose and celebrate our accomplishments.

PERMA

PERMA stands for

P – Positive Emotions

E – Engagement

R – Relationships

M – Meaning

A – Accomplishments

I'll be introducing the five pillars to you in more detail throughout the book, alongside simple and practical ways to apply them into your life. Happiness is a moment in time. Well-being is about having the tools to

thrive and flourish no matter what life throws at you, and that's the foundation this book is built on.

I wholeheartedly believe every single woman and girl out there deserves to love and believe in herself. It's not a 'nice-to-have' or something for a select few in society. No. Loving yourself and believing in your worth is a birth right and I won't stop fighting for it until confidence in women is the norm rather than the exception. Are you ready to join me on this journey?

1

Discovering Your Authentic Self

Growth starts from sitting with yourself in the present moment and exploring what's there. You cannot improve on or heal from what you do not acknowledge, so the first step to building confidence is to become aware of our current situation, your strengths *and* your limitations.

In this chapter I'm going to guide you from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset. This journey will help you wake up to your true authentic self. Authenticity is about being brave enough to be yourself and genuine enough to live according to your values. What you say and what you do must be in sync with what you truly believe.

Here are some fixed mindset traits. If you feel you resonate with any of these, then welcome to the party, you're in the right place and you are not alone.

Authenticity is about being brave enough to be yourself and genuine enough to live according to your values.

A FIXED MINDSET

Leads to a desire to look smart and a tendency to:

- Avoid challenges and always want life to go very smoothly.
- Give up easily in the face of obstacles.
- See effort as pointless and prefer immediate gratification.

- See no value in expressing emotions freely and clearly.
- Want to be loved by everyone and not be open to learning from mistakes.
- Feel threatened by or jealous of the success of others.
- Have a scarcity mindset and believe there's only room for one person to win.

This was me. I ticked every single one of these boxes. On the surface it looked as though I was winning. I was the good girl who did well in school, I always followed the rules so that people would love me and I did everything in my power to look as though I had it all together, but behind closed doors, if things didn't go as planned, I would fall apart. Essentially, I was far from being my authentic self.

If this is you right now, please don't freak out or get stressed. This is actually a very exciting moment for you, because it's an opportunity to see the signs of what an authentic life is and isn't. A fixed mindset breeds inauthenticity because in order to please everyone, ignore constructive criticism, avoid challenges and obsess over looking perfect, you have to play safe, play small, be judgemental and hide parts of yourself to live up to other people's expectations. This is what it feels like to live an inauthentic life. It might not seem like a big deal if you do this from time to time, but continuously living a lie in order to be accepted, or alternatively, being judgemental towards others while thinking you're perfect will have long-term effects on your mental health, emotional health and overall fulfilment. It will leave you feeling empty with regret. And that is not #goals.

How You've Been Shaped by the World Around You

We are constantly bombarded with messages that tell us happiness is found in material things. If you buy this cream, you'll feel worthy, or if you buy this car, people will respect you. We live in a patriarchal capitalist society that thrives off our insecurities. Most of our 'flaws' that apparently need fixing were conjured up by old white men in a marketing suite brainstorming ideas on how to keep women buying

products in the name of self-love. Capitalism has created a ‘perfect’ image of a woman that is so unattainable that some women end up spending all their lives (and money) in the pursuit of something they will ultimately never achieve.

With all this in mind, it’s no surprise that so many of us have grown up thinking we’re not good enough and feeling the need to fight every day to prove our worthiness. But though our insecurities may not be our fault, it is our responsibility to figure out a way to love ourselves and create our own truth despite all the marketing messages around us. There comes a point in our life where we can no longer blame our parents, teachers, friends or society for our shortcomings and we have to take ownership of our life, our dreams and our choices.

If you’re not happy with the life you have right now, the good news is you can create a version that works for you, a version based on *your* truth and vision, which is exactly what we’re going to do in this chapter.

From the moment we’re born, we’re swimming in a massive sea of human beliefs, truths, ideas and practices. Some are expansive and make us feel free; others are unnecessary, limiting and sometimes even crippling. Unfortunately, it’s often the dysfunctional and crippling truths that tend to be the loudest in society and stick in our heads.

In the book *The Code of the Extraordinary Mind*, author Vishen Lakhiani explains how a lot of the ‘truths’ that society tells us to believe about ourselves are relative truths and are waaaay past their expiration date. By ‘relative truths’, he means ideas, concepts, laws and beliefs that are only true for a particular culture or tribe. For example, the rules around what’s acceptable when it comes to marriage are different across cultures. They aren’t true for every single human being on the planet. They *are* true for the people who *choose* to believe in them. ‘Truths’ like ‘Your worth is based on your productivity’, ‘You have to be married with kids by 30’ or ‘You shouldn’t wear a bikini if your tummy isn’t flat’ are also relative. They might be true for *some* people, but they certainly don’t have to be true for *you*.

One of the keys to being Confident and Killing It is knowing what truths serve you and what truths don’t. For example, believing you aren’t good enough for the opportunities you want doesn’t serve you.

When I started my personal growth journey and learned that growth was intentional and I had the power to define myself and my future on my own terms, it became clear to me that the narrative that I wasn't talented, skilled or creative wasn't loving or right and didn't feel good, so I decided to let it go and *create* a new truth. I put my limiting beliefs to the test and found out that everything I believed about who I was and what I was capable of was a lie. Today, I believe that I am creative, gifted, one of a kind, a generational leader, resilient... The list goes on.

Our primary duty is to create our own truth and go about the business of living it. So, now it's time for you to create your new truth.

How to Create Your Own Authentic Truth

Here are five practical steps you can take to create your own authentic truth and build a strong foundation of confidence:

- ✦⁺ **Step 1:**
Identify and articulate your strengths
- ✦⁺ **Step 2:**
Deep dive into your passions
- ✦⁺ **Step 3:**
Define your values
- ✦⁺ **Step 4:**
Unlock your Power Circle
- ✦⁺ **Step 5:**
Create your purpose

These steps are an integral part of the journey you're embarking on in this book and are fundamental to increasing your self-awareness and confidence. Confidence is a skill everyone can learn, so let's get started!

STEP 1:

IDENTIFY AND ARTICULATE YOUR STRENGTHS

CONFIDENCE CHECK-IN: A LOOK INTO YOUR MIND

Time yourself for one minute and write down as many of your strengths as you can think of, then for another minute write as many weaknesses as you can think of.

- Which came easier to you?
- Which do you have more of?

Knowing your strengths is arguably the most important aspect of building confidence and is often the most overlooked step. Your strengths act as the foundation for the thoughts you have about yourself. They also make you feel more secure in your worth.

So take a moment and think about what's going on in your head. If you know your weaknesses better than your strengths, it means you're operating from a place where you don't feel good enough, a place that feels really negative and critical, instead of a place where you know you're good enough. You're not alone.

When I ask people to tell me what their strengths are, they're always looking left, right and down, hoping now is a good time for the ground to open up and swallow them. The first response is hesitation, every single time. But when I ask them to tell me what their weaknesses are, oh boy, the way they roll off their tongue: 'I'm so bad at this, I'm so awkward at that, I'm always late...' The list goes on and on.

CONFIDENT AND KILLING IT IN ACTION

One of my clients, Anna, a qualified medical doctor who runs a successful cosmetic and skincare clinic, suffered from this. She got nothing but glowing feedback from her clients, her referrals were through the roof, she barely did any advertising and could still own her own space in an esteemed neighbourhood in London. Yet after

each session all she could see were all the things she could have done better for her clients. She was hyper-aware of her limitations and completely oblivious to her strengths.

Does that sound familiar?

The first thing I did with Anna was ask her a series of questions to help her see all the greatness inside her. She started the session only aware of about three strengths and left with 30! Life-changing. You will soon be completing these questions for yourself.

Knowing your strengths doesn't just boost your confidence, it also helps you overcome fear and insecurities like imposter syndrome. Are you surprised you tend to feel like a fraud when you have no idea of what you're good at doing? You walk into rooms, a shell of yourself, wondering how you got in there. Sis, stop sleeping on yourself. Again. Stop. Sleeping. On. Yourself.

When you know your strengths, you're aware of what you bring to the table, and you won't let anyone take you for a fool. The world or your negative thoughts might try to convince you that you're nothing special, but because you're awake to your greatness, you don't let it stick. You're bold enough to challenge it with the truth of who you really are.

If you struggle to own your strengths, please don't beat yourself up about it. This is another wake-up moment for you to decide how you want to show up from this point on.

Let me unpack a little why you might struggle to own your strengths and help you to reframe it. The first reason may be because you think strengths are things you are *perfect* at doing. If you think you're organised, for example, you may think you need to be organised every single moment of your life for it to be considered a strength. That's not true. You are human, and perfection doesn't exist. There will be days when you are fiercely organised at work but your life admin is a bit of a mess, that doesn't take away from the fact that organisation is one of your strengths. Or maybe you're a pretty reliable person and you often keep your word, but on a few occasions life hasn't gone as planned and you've had to let people down. Guess what? Being reliable is still one of your strengths.

Knowing your strengths doesn't just boost your confidence, it also helps you overcome fear and insecurities like imposter syndrome.

Don't be so quick to cancel yourself, give yourself some grace and see your strengths as a sort of treasure chest inside you. You can activate this amazing bank of resources at different moments in your life. They might not always be switched on, but they are always there.

The second reason people struggle with strengths is they tend to think, 'If there are people out there who are better than me at it then it can't be my strength.' For example, 'I'm not creative' is something I hear a lot from my clients and also something I used to believe about myself. People often say they aren't creative when they look at themselves in comparison to others or if their creativity doesn't come in a mainstream form like writing, dancing, drawing, painting, singing or playing an instrument. However, creativity is really broad and shouldn't only be limited to those mainstream expressions. We're all inherently creative – think daydreaming, problem-solving, or dressing – it's just that some people start exploring sooner and give themselves opportunities for their creativity to manifest into something. For example, my brother, Gboyega, started expressing his creativity through music and technology at the age of seven. He could take computers apart and reassemble them by the age of 10 – a genius really! My sister, Mowa, started expressing her creativity through fashion and art at the age of 11. She could draw, paint, make handbags, you name it. I finally came to terms with my creativity through my spoken and written words at the age of 25, but before then even though I was an incredible problem-solver and dancer, I struggled to think I was creative because I couldn't draw, paint or play an instrument like my siblings. That was a form of sabotage. In reality all three of us have creativity as a strength, even though that strength is applied in three different ways.

Your strengths are your strengths in relation to you, your life and your journey.

It's time to stop hiding your light

Have you ever wondered what it would feel like to have unshakeable self-belief? To not be held back by self-doubt, imposter syndrome or perfectionism?

Grounded in the science of positive psychology, *Confident and Killing It* is packed with practical techniques and tips that are designed to work.

This book will help you:

- Wake up to your worth and capabilities
- Prioritise your needs, growth and well-being
- Live in alignment with your purpose, strengths and values

Get ready to discover the next-level confidence you need to live a full, authentic and empowered life, on your own terms.



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Tiwalola Ogunlesi is a globally recognised confidence coach, transformative speaker, positive psychology specialist, podcast host and founder and CEO of *Confident and Killing It*.