Open Your Class With This Tomorrow- *Open When: A Companion for Life's Twists & Turns—Research-Backed Skills for Managing Vulnerability and Responding to Mental Health Challenges*

Confidence isn't something you're born with — it's something you build through action. The good news is that the recipe is simple, but it has to be applied differently depending on what you're trying to master. Whether you want to get better at test-taking, sports, public speaking, or managing anxiety, the steps are the same: practice, challenge yourself, reflect, and adjust.

As Dr. Julie Smith wisely says, *"Confidence is the bus that never arrives while you sit waiting. It usually makes an appearance after you have decided to walk and you're almost at your destination."* In other words — you can't wait to feel confident before you begin. You have to start walking, and confidence will meet you along the way.

This activity will guide you through a four-step process to start building confidence right now in any area of your life. Ready to take the first step?

Directions: Choose one area you'd like to build confidence in — whether it's public speaking, test-taking, leadership, cooking, sports, or something else important to you. Then, follow the four-step framework below. You'll apply these steps individually to whatever challenge you want to tackle.

Step 1: Put in the Reps
Repetition is how your brain builds and strengthens new neural pathways. Progress may feel slow at first, but every repetition makes the next one easier.
What to do:

- List 3 small, specific actions you can repeat consistently to build this skill.
- Set a time or frequency for how often you'll practice.

Example (Test-Taking Confidence):

- Complete 5 practice multiple-choice questions daily.
- Take one timed mini-quiz (10–15 questions) twice a week.
- Review one set of past mistakes and correct them every Friday.

Step 2: Stress Test Your Skills
You can't jump straight from low-pressure practice to high-stakes test day. Gradually add realistic challenges that simulate the pressure you'll face.
What to do:

- List 3 ways you can gradually increase the difficulty or pressure.
- Schedule them in order, from easiest to hardest.

Example (Test-Taking Confidence):

- Time yourself completing 5 questions with no notes.
- Take a half-length practice test in a quiet room.
- Complete a full-length practice test with strict timing and light distractions (like soft background noise or sitting in a library).

Step 3: Examine Each Performance
Don’t just practice — reflect. Every performance is a chance to learn.
What to do:
After each challenge, ask yourself:

- What went well?
- Where did I struggle?
- What specific skill needs more work?

Write down 1-2 insights after each attempt.
Example:
"I noticed I panicked during time crunch questions but did better when I skipped tough ones and came back. I need to practice pacing."

Step 4: Turn Insights into Action
Progress only happens if you take what you’ve learned and put it back into practice.
What to do:

- Identify your biggest weakness or the skill you struggled with most.
- Create a mini-practice plan to focus on that specific area.
- Keep repeating until it improves — then move on to the next challenge.

Example (Test-Taking Confidence):
If pacing was a problem:

- Practice timed question sets with 1 minute per question.
- Learn and test new strategies like “flag and skip tough questions.”
- Track how many questions you finish on time each session.

Reflection:
After 4-6 weeks, revisit your progress. How do you feel about this skill now? What changed? What’s next? Confidence grows not from hoping it will happen — but from consistent, intentional action.