



“Insecure Ako!”

Most people are insecure about one thing or another. Here’s how to deal with a problem that can affect your relationships and chances at success. **BY RICA BOLIPATA-SANTOS**

Let me tell you a secret. I’ve been teaching for 13 years now, and every single day, I still feel nervous about class. I make it a point to go to class 15 minutes before it’s supposed to start. Being there early, seeing my students walk into the classroom, and writing my outline on the board or pasting my visual aids all seem to decrease my nervousness. It has happened more than once that I have frozen in fear. Once, I was completely stumped by a student who had a better interpretation of a poem we were taking up in class. And even worse, the class genius corrected my pronunciation!

My malady is insecurity: that awful monster that makes you doubt your expertise, feel physically sick from nervousness, or even want to quit! If any of these past sentences look familiar, you are not alone.

INSECURITY AND ITS EFFECTS

According to Drs. James and Constance Messina of the public service website Coping.org, insecurity creates the feeling of “not being good enough” and the fear of being “discovered” as inadequate in handling certain situations or life’s challenges in general. For example, a newly-promoted teacher may fear that her colleagues will eventually find out that she didn’t deserve that promotion after all. But most feelings of insecurity are irrational. Most of us are, in fact, quite good enough!

Aside from personal anxiety and nervousness, insecurity can also have negative effects on other aspects of our lives. Insecurities can keep us from

achieving more and being the best we can be, since we’re always slowed down by the thought that we “just can’t do it.” Without the confidence to venture out, try new things, we’re hampering our own personal and career growth.

Our insecurities can also affect those around us. Teacher Brandy Santos, who was inwardly afraid that she could never be good enough for her students, saw her classroom as a battlefield where she had to end victorious. In this kind of situation, the

The Confidence COLLAGE

It’s not always easy for you to see your own good traits. Here’s how you can enlist the help of friends, family, and colleagues. Tell them that you’re making a collage about yourself. You can even do this with all your co-teachers as a faculty development project.

For this, they need to give you magazine cut-outs, sayings, cards, photos, drawings, and other material that show your best side: your strengths, abilities, virtues, knowledge, talent, and skills. The more items they can send, the better, but even just a couple will be fine. They can even give you an explanation of why they chose those particular things.

Paste all of the contributions on a sheet of paper to create a collage. Now you have a positive picture of yourself as painted by those who know you best!

Adapted from Coping.org



SECURITY JOURNAL

Do you feel insecure? Write it down! Journaling is a powerful exercise that will help you gain deeper insight about yourself. It captures your thoughts and feelings on paper, allowing you to see them in new ways. You can transform your life by journaling.

Here are some questions to help you get started, reprinted with permission from Coping.org, developed by Drs. James and Constance Messina:

ABOUT ME

1. What happened in my past to make me feel insecure today?
2. Do I have any beliefs that add to my insecurity?
3. What negative things have I experienced because of my insecurity?
4. How do I behave when I'm feeling insecure?
5. How does my behavior affect my life and that of others?

FINDING SOLUTIONS

1. What new traits should I develop to help me overcome my insecurity?
2. How can I behave to indicate security in myself?
3. What will be the positive effects of my new, secure behavior?
4. Most insecure thoughts are irrational. What rational thoughts and beliefs should I develop to help me feel more secure?
5. What action plan can I develop to help me feel more secure about myself?
6. Are there any obstacles that stand in the way of this action plan, and how do I overcome them?

Now that you have an action plan, you can get to work! But remember that it's okay to stumble along the way or fall back to old patterns. Just get up and keep going. Soon, you'll be looking at the mirror and facing a more confident you.

students may feel intimidated by the teacher, too scared to speak up or ask questions. The teacher's insecurity may actually affect the learning environment.

CAN I OVERCOME MY INSECURITY?

It's possible for people to let go of self-doubt and develop self confidence. Coni Tejada, a brand-new teacher fresh out of college, was certain that her students knew she was young, which made her completely uncomfortable. "When I met my first class, my hands were so cold and clammy and I was looking for the nearest exit. I said to myself, what can I possibly teach these students?"

To compensate for her nervousness, Coni turned exuberant and chatty. It worked in her favor as it became easier for her students to relate to her. Eventually, Coni was able to hurdle her insecurity. She accepted

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her youth "and instead of making this a hurdle, I made it an asset. Being close to their age made it easier for me to use examples they could relate to. It also made it easier for them to talk to me."

It's important to start as Coni did by knowing the cause of your insecurity. Look inside, probe yourself. This first step allows you to recognize your problem, accept it, and eventually find solutions that work.

Many teachers, like Brandy, feel that they should always be prepared, know the answers, and solve all their students' problems. But remember there is no clause in your contract that

asks you to be perfect for your students. I've often been challenged in class. In the beginning, I used the turning-the-tables trick. If a student asked me a question, I made it an assignment. Sometimes this is helpful because it allows the students to be in control of their learning. But I've also learned to simply say, "I don't know." And you know what, it doesn't diminish my standing in their eyes.

FROM I'M SCARED TO I'M EXCITED!

One of my co-teachers gets as nervous as I do before class. Once, when our insecurities were at an all-time high because we were being observed, she turned to me and said, "What if we changed our line from, *I'm scared* to *I'm excited*?" It was a brilliant idea—one that we were able to carry into our classrooms, and into everything else in our lives. We started to enter class—as well as any other situation that made us insecure—with this mantra: "I am excited."

Don't get me wrong. I continue to be in class insanely early. I still have butterflies in my stomach. I don't fight it anymore. I understand now that at the bottom of this fear is the belief that I respect my audience,

these young people in front of me. I know I owe them nothing but the best. Right before I enter, I say my power line. It is a powerful thing to hold on to, and something that makes the insecurity monster go away. ★

ABOUT THE WRITER:

Rica Bolipata-Santos holds an MA from the Ateneo de Manila University in English Literature. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Creative Writing at the University of the Philippines. She teaches at the English, Interdisciplinary Studies and Fine Arts departments of the Ateneo. She deems teaching her first true love.