

UNDERSTANDING &  
BUILDING YOUR CONFIDENCE  
CONFIDENCE SERIES PART (PART 1)

# ARE YOU CHOOSING CONFIDENCE?

By John Haime

IN THE 2ND OF OUR THREE-PART SERIES ON BUILDING CONFIDENCE, WORLD-CLASS HUMAN PERFORMANCE COACH, SPORT PSYCHOLOGY CONSULTANT AND AUTHOR OF THE NEW, ACCLAIMED EQUESTRIAN BOOK "RIDE BIG", JOHN HAIME, EXPLAINS WHY SOME RIDERS SUDDENLY LOSE CONFIDENCE AND WHY CHOOSING CONFIDENCE IS IMPORTANT IN YOUR RIDING EXPERIENCE.



“BUILDING  
CONFIDENCE”

ARE YOU CHOOSING  
CONFIDENCE?

## Welcome to Part 2 of our series to help you understand and build your equestrian confidence.

Let's begin with a concept that might be unfamiliar to you.

Many riders believe that confidence is an exclusive idea reserved only for great riders with lots of talent and experience.

But, from my experience, that's not quite the truth.

I regularly have trainers saying to me *"it's easy to have confidence when you are a great rider, but, if you aren't a great rider, it's difficult to have confidence."*

There might be some degree of truth to this – but I emphatically express to you that every rider, at any level, can be confident. I work with riders at all levels and each one develops a level of confidence to find enjoyment in their equestrian experience.

Simply, finding and maintaining confidence is within your control and is more of a choice than you know. Accepting this reality helps you take responsibility for your own confidence and can change your riding experience.

## Be proactive

Consistent riders are proactive with their confidence. Meaning, when they're riding well, you can be sure they remind themselves that they've done it before and have built the fundamental foundation at each level of their development to handle any situation at their current level. They have built an ability to develop their riding in steps - and each step forward (*big or small*) is another little notch on their confidence belt.

This kind of proactive confidence is a decision that you choose to be confident from all of the great, positive experiences you've had in the sport (*and I'm sure YOU have had many in both training and showing*). It includes all the work you've done on your riding skills, the work to connect with your horse and the positive coaching and support you receive. This is the foundation of your belief in yourself as a rider. Proactive confidence is a choice to rely on a solid, fundamental foundation (*all of the work you've done on your riding*) and connecting



# POSITIVE THINGS

with all the positive experience you've had in the sport. It means your confidence won't be shaken by small, unavoidable downward cycles when you're not riding or feeling your best.

## Be careful of reactive confidence

It has been my experience that many riders don't give enough weight to all of their training and great experiences in the sport and unfortunately sabotage their belief in their abilities. Reactive confidence is a decision that one small collection of challenging circumstances or difficulties will prevail over your many successes and support. The rider allows this small down cycle to crack their long-term riding foundation of confidence. In this scenario, the rider personally declares that his confidence is shaken by small downturns in performance.

## Who's in control?

### Does this sound familiar to you?

**Do you forget about all the positive things you have done in the sport and allow little challenges to penetrate the foundation of your confidence?**

I see it every day, even among the top riders in the world. For some reason, they aren't performing well on a certain day, a week or even a few weeks - and the foundation of confidence they've built over many years seems to suddenly disappear. A few mistakes become the basis for a crack in their foundation of confidence. They declare that their confidence has mysteriously disappeared. The public declaration

that they have *"lost their confidence"* creates doubt and uncertainty.

The good news for these riders is that after being gently reminded that their confidence is about everything they've achieved, the skills they've developed, the obstacles they've overcome and all the work they've done over time, there's a realization that they really haven't lost their confidence. A small downward cycle in performance has initiated some doubt that they may be losing their confidence. But, after a reminder that they have a thick foundation of confidence from training and successes in riding, they recognize they haven't lost it.

This is important for you to know. If you are creating the doubt and can feel your confidence slipping away, you have the choice to reel it in and not declare to yourself that you're losing it. Realize you are responsible for your confidence and have control over it. This is what the top riders do to ensure consistent, sustainable performance.

## Confidence is your choice

Allow yourself to build confidence slowly over time. Each time you train or show you are developing your skills, growing a partnership and learning about the sport. These small developmental steps forward become the foundation of your confidence (all the little pieces that grow on top of each other) and must be your main focus. From experience, we all know that there will be difficult times. Riding goes in cycles – some days work well and others may not. But also remember that through these little down periods you haven't lost your confidence – you are still the same rider developing and growing. The only way you can truly lose it is if you choose to lose it and give it away.

So, when you do feel like you may want to give it away, sit a little taller in the saddle, tell yourself

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Haime is President of John Haime Performance and a renowned global human performance coach who is trusted by some of the world's leading riders and coaches. His world-class approach to elevate equestrians is a winning formula from performance psychology, emotional intelligence, neuroscience, sport psychology, business planning, communication and executive coaching. He is the author of the acclaimed new book *Ride Big - The Ultimate Guide to Building Equestrian Confidence* published by Trafalgar Square Books (May 2021). John is based in Ottawa, Canada. See

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you have what you need to meet the current challenges of your riding and ride bigger.

## NEXT IN PART 3

Now that you have an understanding of confidence from Part 1 and know that confidence is within your control (Part 2), the next steps are to continually build your foundation so that it becomes a thick wall that can be sustained. John will explain the critical components of confidence and shares how elite riders build them up.



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