

# How to Stop the Tween Confidence Drop By Helping Girls Take on Toxic Thinking



## [The Confidence Code for Girls](#)

### [Taking Risks, Messing Up, and](#)

### [Becoming Your Amazingly Imperfect, Totally Powerful Self](#)

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Many girls are consumed by self-doubt on the inside, especially during the tween and teen years — but if they can crack the confidence code, they can learn how to set worries aside and focus their energy on what's really important: confidently pursuing their dreams and embracing their authentic selves! In this book, Katty Kay and Claire Shipman, the authors of the best-selling [The Confidence Code](#) for adult women, draw on the latest research to help tweens understand how to short-circuit the thoughts that drain your confidence and hold you back. Illustrations throughout help draw girls into the book, while lists, quizzes, and stories from real-life girls help readers understand how to embrace risk (and failure), overcome anxieties, and be happy in their own skins.

To determine just how much of a confidence drop girls experience, Kay and Shipman, who are the authors of [The Confidence Code for Girls](#), worked with a polling firm to survey over 1,300 girls in the U.S. from ages 8 to 18. The study found that girls' confidence drops by 30% between the ages of 8 and 14. "We were surprised at how quickly, how deep that drop is," says Shipman. "And especially because right until age 8, there's really no difference [between girls and boys] in confidence levels." Based on their prior book, [The Confidence Code](#), focused on adult women, they also know that, once opened, this confidence gap often fails to close later in life.

One contributor to this drop in confidence is that fact that, as girls reach their tweens, they become more aware of others' emotions, making them more cautious and less risk-taking. "Combine these incredible attributes with some of the ways girls are socialized differently from boys, and you get a blueprint for startling intellectual prowess and emotional intelligence, or, on the flip side, you get the kind of overthinking that is crippling to tween and teen girls," observe the authors.

There are a variety of toxic thinking patterns that girls might fall into without realizing. "Some assume they know what everyone else is thinking, especially when it's about them," the authors write. "Anything bad happening is automatically their fault, or at least that's what they *think* other people think. For others, a set-in-stone attitude grabs a hold, so that anything that happens is immutable, fixed, permanent. A bad grade means they're stupid. An unanswered text means their friends hate them."

Another destructive habit — one common to many adults as well — is catastrophization: "they imagine disaster around every corner. For a catastrophist, one wrong answer indicates academic Armageddon." These thinking patterns hold girls back in a number of ways: aside from the energy lost to their worries, they discourage girls from trying new things and taking risks, whether it's a challenging course at school, a new activity, or expressing an opinion that doesn't fit in with the crowd. In other words, they are deterred from participating in the types of activities and experiences that could challenge them and help build their self-confidence.

Fortunately, the authors assert, there are simple cognitive solutions that can "combat these flawed thinking patterns" and help girls build confidence. One option is "changing the channel" when emotions start getting overwhelming: "something as simple as putting on music, taking a walk, or practicing an instrument calms the circuits experiencing emotional overload." Similarly, "looking at positive images and listing positive thoughts, even for a few minutes, [will] release the feel-good endorphins that will calm them down." Optimistic "maybe" thoughts can help with the set-in-stone attitude: "Maybe the unanswered text was because of a family dinner." Or they can ask themselves "What's the worst that can happen?... Usually, the answer is feeling momentarily uncomfortable [or] slightly embarrassed," they point out.

"Women often come to understand too belatedly that our thoughts aren't always our most accurate or helpful allies," the authors observe. "If girls can start to see that pattern at age 10 or 11, imagine how much less angst they would feel, how much more control they would have, and the confidence they could start building."