



## Chapter One: We're All Criminals

I'm not exaggerating here. You're a criminal. I'm a criminal. We're all breaking laws. We just don't realize it.

The entire human race, its survival and success, are completely dependent on confidence and authenticity. I now believe this to be a certainty, which is why I'm writing this series of books (this book is the first of three). I have spent nearly a decade being faced with the serious issues triggered by low self-confidence and inauthenticity. My definitions of both of these terms will be explored throughout

this book. For now, just stick with what you believe these words to mean.

We can see it in the educational systems, where insecurity about financial independence leads us to funnel children into batches and categories designed to prepare them for “safe” employment rather than building on their individual strengths. We see it in the justice system, where we allow our petty desire for revenge to override proven and effective methods for reducing reoffending rates. We see it in terrorism, violence, hateful protests and online bullying. People with low self-confidence, lashing out in pain and confusion, are creating an extremely harmful world.

And there are the others, maybe you’re one of them, who may not be causing easily measurable harm but are behaving in a harmful way nonetheless. You may not be a terrorist or bully, but perhaps you’re fake with your work colleagues about how you really feel, which leads to them making incorrect assumptions about you.

Maybe you pretend to like people so they’ll like you, eat sugary treats to deal with loneliness, or feel stressed all the time because you’re focused on achieving outcomes instead of just enjoying life. The scary thing is you probably have no idea how much harm you’re causing, both to yourself and others. That’s one of the main issues we’ll try to tackle in this book — our lack of self-awareness.

Confident people are highly unlikely to harm others intentionally. Because they have no neediness, there is no desire in them to *take* from others, so they *give* instead. They do not hide who they are or allow others to believe mistruths about them. They live via a code of honor, willingly sacrificing popularity for integrity and doing what is right for them rather than what is easy or what will be approved of by others. They are centered, able to ride their emotions without shame, and make rational decisions based on their version of the truth.

But how the hell do you become “confident” and “authentic”? What do those words even mean? I hear you, I do, and that’s why I’m writing this book. Because I believe I have found the answers to

those questions, or more accurately, I believe I can show you how to find the answers for yourself. Through my work over the years, I have seen patterns emerge and consistent rewards being generated by switching to more confident and authentic behavior. I've seen this in my coaching clients, Brojo members, the offenders and staff I managed, and of course, in myself. You don't need to trust me on this. Instead, I invite you to *test* me. I don't want you to read this book and believe everything I say; instead I want you to actively experiment with my ideas to figure out for yourself whether they will help you.

Let's turn back the clock for a minute. I'd like to share with you where this all started — my search for the meaning of confidence — and explore why I like to talk about criminal offenders so much when it comes to discussing confidence.

For four years, in my early twenties, I spent almost every work day sitting in conversation with criminal offenders and their families, trying to help them rehabilitate and live in a more successful way. I searched high and low, as did every forensic psychologist and rehabilitation enthusiast in the world, trying to figure out what caused some people to commit crimes while others didn't. I was endlessly fascinated by trying to find the missing link — some behavioral or emotional trigger that, if treated, would turn someone's life around. Years passed before I realized the answer was right in front of me, so obvious as to be beyond doubt. *Low self-confidence*.

I didn't see it because I thought of these "offenders" as somehow different than me. Therefore, whatever their issue was that caused them to commit crimes, I incorrectly assumed it would not be something I would have, know about, or understand. I figured it would be something foreign to me because I had never committed serious criminal acts (by my own judgment, of course... ahem). And that's the fallacy; I saw their behavior as different to mine simply because *it was illegal*.

Do you do that? Do you separate criminal behavior — that deemed to be illegal by society — from other forms of harmful behavior? I'd like you to plant a seed in your mind right now. Let go of your ideas about right and wrong, legal and illegal, good and bad. Instead, allow yourself to consider all behavior as either *helpful* or *harmful*. Start allowing a question to form in your mind: "What do I do that harms my life or the lives of others?"

I remember having a conversation with an enlightened colleague at Corrections. At the time I was complaining about one of the offenders I was supervising, who had just finished having a massive temper tantrum at me for about an hour, effectively ruining my day. Exasperated, I turned to my colleague with despair. "Jesus, what a nightmare!" I exclaimed. "How the hell do you handle these guys?"

My colleague looked at me knowingly and simply said, "That's why he's here." Her words hit me like a bolt of electricity. I experienced that sudden, slightly pleasant shock that goes through your mind when you have an insight. I *thought* I knew what she meant; that I should accept his temper because it's part of the problems that require rehabilitation. Then, a few days later, a deeper meaning occurred to me. His underlying self-worth issues caused *all* of his harmful behavior — not just the crime, but his temper tantrums, inability to communicate clearly, and everything else he did to sabotage his success. I thought I had solved the puzzle. But there was even more to come.

Criminal offenders' tempers get them into trouble many times, and as a probation officer, I was simply another person on a long list of victims getting a taste of their problematic behavior. That much was easy enough to comprehend. But the deeper realization was something I could never have expected or prepared for, and it came to me from an unexpected source.

One day, I was assigned to manage a guy who was the same age as me and lived in the same area. We almost went to the same school. He was on Supervision for charges of drunk driving (something I had also done a few times) and threatening a policeman with a hammer.

There was something that disturbed me about working with him. It wasn't that he was difficult, quite the opposite; it felt like we could have been good mates had our paths crossed under different circumstances. I even remember seeing crumbs of cannabis on his bench one afternoon and thinking, "Shit, that's right. I left some on my bench too."

I think that's when it hit me. My mind reeled as it all fell into place. I was seeing a reflection of my own life right in front of me in that moment. This so-called criminal offender was a young guy, who enjoyed partying and getting high. He was a guy who wouldn't harm a fly except one day someone showed up at his house unexpectedly and he picked up a hammer in case there was trouble because he lived in a rough neighborhood. That someone turned out to be a police officer.

I can't remember exactly when the realization happened, but it was a rude awakening. Every time I spoke to this guy, I felt more and more uncomfortable. Finally, the dam broke and I saw the truth.

He *was* me.

I am not, and have almost never been, a violent person (except in self-defense and I still got my arse kicked on those occasions anyway). Yet I had an almost twin-like connection to this man because we were both suffering from our own behavior. His problem behavior led him to get reckless and make stupid decisions, like drunk driving, and he would end up in trouble with the law. *My* problem behavior led me to feel immense frustration, boredom and anxiety, and got me into trouble in my social life and career. He drove drunk to overcome social fears; I got wasted at parties to overcome social fears. He fought loudly with his partner due to fear of being abandoned; I avoided confrontation due to fear of being abandoned. He smoked weed due to get rid of his anxiety; I binged on sugar to get rid of my anxiety.

I was no "better" than this man. I'd simply tried to cope with my own confidence issues in a slightly different way. We were both dealing with pain poorly, and only our life circumstances separated us. If

being a manipulative and lying Nice Guy was a crime, I would have been his cellmate rather than his probation officer. We were no different, just like we are no different than you or anyone else. We *all* do stupid, harmful shit when we don't know how to manage our inner pain, and afterward we often feel guilty about it. This is essentially no different to criminal behavior.

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Some common examples of harmful behavior will appear in the lives of those who read this book. The one I see the most is *hiding emotion*. We will pretend we feel “fine” as often as possible to give people the impression we are strong, stable and independent. This becomes an automatic process, where you give the appearance of a “positive” mood as soon as unfamiliar people show up, even if you're feeling tired, grumpy or antisocial.

Or how about gossiping? You might join in a conversation about someone else behind their back, just to connect with the person who began the conversation, even though you'd hate for someone to do this to you.

You commit confidence crimes every day, and you lie to yourself about it so the guilt won't hurt so much.

There are, of course, some exceptions. Many psychopathic and antisocial personalities have inflated self-worth and feel nothing but pleasure during their crimes. However, these are a tiny percentage at best of the overall population, and it is arguable as to whether they experience genuinely recognizable satisfaction or fulfillment from their behavior. In my eyes, they are the outlying exceptions that

prove the rule. The rule being that most harmful behavior, legal or not, can be rationally linked to a painful view of oneself, a.k.a. low self-confidence.

One reason that society looks down on its criminal population is because we consider “them” to be somehow different to “us.” We think criminal behavior is more harmful than ours... but is it really? In some cases, it may appear to be obviously more harmful, such as murder and rape. But what about theft? If you’re fake with someone in a relationship, then aren’t you stealing their precious hours? If you mislead someone for years and cause them to miss out on better companionship in life, is that really less harmful than stealing a car?

After some years at Corrections, I became a more effective probation officer and was able to help some parolees completely transform their lives. Ultimately, this is what led me to become a coach. The reason I suddenly excelled with this particular group of people is because I discovered *genuine* empathy. Not the bullshit pretend empathy where you believe you know someone else’s pain and yet in reality you see yourself as better than they are.

I was humbled by the realization that I was *not* better than the serial criminal seated across from me because I also chose to deal with my confidence problems in an unhelpful way. The guys I worked with must have felt this come through and known that I wasn’t like the others who judged them. Instead, they knew I was aware that I was simply a noncriminal version of them, which is perhaps why I was able to get through to some of them.

The first thing I started doing was making sure I would be willing to do anything I asked from them. Any new tool or exercise we were told to use with them, I first used on myself, forcing myself to answer the probing questions and do the sometimes patronizing homework. I questioned my own behavior even more than I questioned theirs and then went a step further and started openly challenging my own beliefs.

Through this, a remarkable pattern started to emerge. In the areas of my life where I felt confident in my abilities, things went very well

and I was able to quickly adapt to unpredicted changes, upsets or opportunities, in ways that were often helpful. In areas of my life where I behaved with integrity and authenticity (there were only a small few to begin with), I felt most at peace and enjoyed my time effortlessly. The more I increased the number of things in my life that fit into one of these categories — confidence or authenticity — the more I enjoyed life overall and the more success I was able to measurably achieve. Finally, when I increased the amount of my life that allowed both confidence *and* authenticity to flourish in, I began to feel *powerful*.

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## **THE HARM CAUSED BY LOW CONFIDENCE**

Let's have a look at a few of society's most prevalent and harmful issues. See if you can identify your own tendencies as we go through the examples of lying, career dissatisfaction, violence and neediness.

Lying comes from an insecurity in your own beliefs. You are so afraid of the outcome of being honest that you'd prefer the safety of hiding the truth. An authentic person, on the other hand, will happily allow you to make your own decision about their truth and therefore sees no need to hide it. When you hide who you really are, you allow people to invest in your pretend-self, which is a deliberate act of self-serving deception on your part. These poor people may make decisions that change the course of their life based on who they think *you* are. You may think you don't really lie, but let me ask you:



Do you sometimes hide your emotional reactions? Do you ever allow someone to think you're better or worse than you are? Do you hold back to avoid confrontation? These are all lies.

How about career dissatisfaction, which comes from doing something you don't want to do or doing something you like but feeling pressured and unable to do it your own way? Authentic people do not settle for anything less than what they enjoy. When you stay in a job you hate, you're depriving someone else, who may love it, of the position. You're depriving the world of the productivity you're capable of when you're engaged in your calling. The wonders you could create are selfishly sacrificed for an insecurity about money. Everybody is missing out on what you are capable of, and most of all you're missing out on what you are capable of.

Violence comes generally from either wanting to control someone ("instrumental" violence) or an inability to express rage in a helpful way. A confident person does not give in to the needy compulsion to control others, and can manage the way they express their mood. I imagine it's obvious what harm violence does to society and individuals within it. I've seen it ruin the lives of entire extended families and even whole cultures.

Neediness comes from a belief system that sees only scarcity — a lack of resources — which usually drives people to sacrifice creativity in favor of acquisition. Confident people feel content just being alive and feel no strong urge to chase resources. Their behavior tends to invite an abundance of resources to come into their life, which they then utilize to increase quality of life. When you're needy, you automatically become manipulative. You will sacrifice your integrity in order to take something from someone else. Maybe it's money, maybe it's approval, or it might even be sex. You steal from others to fill the hole in yourself instead of realizing the truth that you are already complete.

Authenticity is about an understanding that anything undertaken without truth will lead to misery, particularly in the unforeseeable long-term future. It may appear now that lying will help you, yet how

often has it come back to bite you in the long run or hung over your head like a depressing storm cloud? Confidence is about being able to rely on yourself to behave in a way that will bring you satisfaction, regardless of outcomes. When you're confident, you wouldn't trade places with anyone else in the world, even if they have "more" than you.

As I started applying the concepts we'll discuss in this book, I noticed my problematic behavior start to change, and as weird as it sounds, I was able to watch myself get out of my own way. I saw there was not just one "Dan," there were *many*, and they all had different ideas about the right thing to do. I started to appreciate how difficult it is for a criminally-minded person — indeed, for anyone — to choose a "right" decision, because to each and every one of us our decisions *always* feel like the right decision *at the time*. Only later are we forced to face the sometimes painful inaccuracy of such assumptions.

Contrary to popular belief, very few offenders are genuinely without remorse. Most do feel badly about what they've done, and we can all learn from this. The reason criminal offenders are capable of breaking the law is twofold. First, their brains are able to prioritize their emotional needs over their belief in obeying the law. And second, they are able to use processes such as justification, minimization and avoidance, to reduce the pain of any guilt they feel afterward. This enables them to repeat the harmful behavior and form unconscious patterns.

Does this remind you of anyone? When's the last time you drove over the speed limit? By death-toll standards it's one of the most dangerous crimes you can commit. How about your noncriminal harmful behavior? Think of the stories you have to tell yourself to relieve the guilt of overeating, yelling at someone you love, pretending to be nice for your boss' approval, hiding sexual desire to avoid scaring your date away, and postponing that important task yet again. You commit your crimes and then you convince yourself

through lengthy justification that you had a “good” reason for doing it.

If you think this does not describe *you*, think again. Someone can overeat because the brain can override the body’s natural understanding of food intake in order to justify food as a source of comforting emotions, and that person will then avoid clear evidence that they are harming their bodies in order to repeat the overeating. The same is true for anyone who treats people badly within the confines of the law, such as deliberately lying, and people who do not take good care of themselves. *You* are capable of your own version of harmful behavior, even if you don’t break the law, and the harm you cause to yourself and others is only going to be repeated if you justify, minimize and avoid the truth like our criminal brothers and sisters do.

Right now, your behavior contributes directly to reduced enjoyment in your life. If you think this isn’t true for you, you’re either one hundred percent enlightened — and therefore probably not a real human being — or you are blinded by fear and unwilling to face it, so much so that you might as well send this book back where you got it.

The best thing I ever did was take responsibility for my life and everything in it, which is not the same as taking the blame. Thinking things are your “fault” is unhelpful and completely illogical, as it implies that you control the Universe. Alternatively, taking *responsibility* is about when you realize that life could get better for you, and ask yourself, “So what am I going to do about it?”

That is exactly the question I will be asking you in this book... and helping you answer.

This book is for you, for *all* of you. Everything from the messed up global education system, through to war, bigotry, hate and environmental destruction can, in my mind, be easily and clearly correlated to individuals suffering from confidence and authenticity issues. In a magical world where no person gave in to feelings of neediness, envy, or hatred, the problems would be few and small. But I’m not here to give a Miss World speech. I want to help *you*.

Every problem in your life is directly related to your level of self-confidence and your ability to behave in a way that is aligned to your core values. Why is it all on you? Because the only person who can cause you pain is you. Truly, the brain is what generates all sensations of pain, from the sickness of guilt through to the hot sharp sting of an actual knife in the belly. Your brain does that to you. No one else has that level of control. Therefore, if you want less suffering and more potential in your life, you'll need to step up and lead yourself.

This is the first of three books. In this one we will focus on the first phase of a revolutionary new principle called The 3X Model. In brief, the first phase — Exploring — is about increasing the accuracy of awareness about yourself and the outside world in an endless search for a higher level of truth. The first overarching principle of confidence and authenticity as described in the book is that you must get as close to the truth as humanly possible. By exploring carefully and with an open-mind, we allow ourselves greater understanding and higher humility so that we might learn to accept all that is.

I'm not saying that becoming confident will stop your pain completely, and in fact the process of trying to increase confidence and authenticity will require you to often choose to be more uncomfortable than you are now. You will come to see pain as something that does not have to be severe as well as being something you can accept and even grow to appreciate. This comes with the understanding that if you do not choose some small growth pain now, you will *suffer* later, and that type of pain is far worse.

To explain this more practically; you could choose the anxiety of applying for a new job or the regret of not having lived up to your career potential. You could choose the frustration of trying to learn something new or the guilt of a life not fully lived. You could choose the fear of being honest on a date or the loneliness of not being authentically connected to anyone. There is always pain, and you

always choose. This book is about figuring out the best choice and learning how to make that decision.

As the Buddha is quoted as saying, “Life is suffering.” Another way of looking at this is realizing that “life” is the constant growth experienced by an organism, and some of that growth will be painful. I believe that the action-based process of rediscovering your confidence while becoming more authentic will bring about that growth in a powerful, helpful manner.

Confidence is based on taking action to change your life. But before you take that action, you need to make a decision. That action will be entirely governed by your decision and your reasons for making it. If the decision is based in fear, insecurity and neediness, the action will often make your life less enjoyable in the long run. However, if you learn how to make a confident, authentic and helpful decision, your actions will transform your satisfaction with life. In this book we will focus on how you think before you act.

I hope you’re ready. It’s time to test what I’m saying and try a different approach to living.

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