

Bodo Schäfer

I Can Do It!

A Tale of Four Words That Can
Change Your Life

256 Pages

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Sample Translation by Sarah Pybus

Foreword

Is there a voice inside your head telling you that you're destined for great things?

And is there another voice constantly telling you that you're inadequate, not "enough" – not smart enough, not disciplined enough, not talented enough, not experienced enough, not good

enough...?

The question is, which voice do you listen to?

We've all found that the words of others can make our spirits soar or hurt us terribly. Other people may praise us or bully us, but what about the things we say to ourselves?

They have more impact than all external voices combined.

We know what we're not supposed to say to others – "You're a loser. You're fat and ugly. You're so lazy. You can't do it. You're not good enough. You're average at best." – But is it OK to say these things to ourselves?

What if, instead, you whispered to yourself: "You can do it. You're lovable. You're beautiful. You're special. You're great just the way you are."

You may have realised that if you were to tell yourself these things and believe them... then you would know that you can achieve anything you set your mind to.

How would it feel to know, with absolute certainty, that you will be successful? That you're unstoppable?

That you will secure a genuinely good and fulfilling life for you and your family?

And to feel this great inner peace, to know that you are doing the right thing. Not always. But often enough to be content.

We all dream of feeling this great inner certainty: I can do it. And I can do it well. We dream of having unshakable confidence.

After over thirty years of coaching and mentoring, I know that confidence is incredibly important for every one of us. And that a happy and successful life is not possible without it.

What sets successful people apart from others? Life doesn't always go smoothly, even for successful people. It's not as though every day is one long party. And they don't have more luck than anyone else.

But they have learned the most important thing of all: to continuously build their confidence.

Where confidence is lacking, other emotions will spread. Worry. Uncertainty. Doubt. Fear. Even the smallest problem seems disastrous. We feel overwhelmed and unable to cope.

But if you're confident, you can conquer your fear. You can live your dreams.

And this is the focus of this book: boosting your confidence. It will provide you with a model that works. I know it works because thousands of people are using it to live happy, successful lives.

This model will teach you to speak differently to yourself. You will learn how to rewrite your own story. The story of how you see yourself.

Your story of yourself determines how you answer three important questions: can I do it? Am I lovable? Who am I?

Your answers to these three questions determine every aspect of your life: how you feel, how you see yourself, what decisions you make, and what you do. Every day, every moment of your life.

This book is the story of Karl, a young man with little confidence. He doesn't even really know what confidence is, or why it might be important.

Karl learns to increase his confidence enormously, and thus to live his dream. I believe that Karl's story is the

story of every happy and successful person. It is the route out of fear and into a fulfilling, confident life. From the bottom of my heart, I hope that this becomes your story too. And that you can realise your potential!

All the best,
Bodo Schäfer

PS: If you really want to benefit from this book, then start by taking the test on the following page:
How confident am I?

Part I Recognition

1 The Accident

“So, this is what a special day looks like”, Karl thought. Over breakfast that morning, he had read that “today will be your special day”. And now this. A few seconds ago, Karl had caused an accident. One moment of inattention and he drove straight into the car in front.

“Maybe I should stop reading those things”, he thought. “Truly a special day. What a load of rubbish.” The car in front looked expensive. Karl slumped in his seat. This was the last thing he needed. He felt numb. A man got out of the fancy car. Instead of looking at the damage, he walked straight over to Karl’s door and bent down to look at him. “Are you OK?” he asked, loud enough that Karl could hear him through the glass. Karl lowered the window. “Yes, I’m fine. I’m sorry. I was daydreaming.”

The man didn’t appear remotely annoyed. He looked at Karl with a smile. “I like to daydream too. And I’m glad you’re OK. It’s nice to meet you, even if I would have preferred different circumstances. I believe that a new acquaintance is a new opportunity.”

“What a weirdo”, Karl thought, also relieved that the man wasn’t angry. His eyes searched the stranger’s face. Was he a sandwich short of a picnic? No, he actually seemed both friendly and intelligent. And he really seemed to mean what he said. There was no anger to be seen.

Carefully, Karl got out of his car. The man held out his hand. “I’m Marc.” Karl shook his hand and introduced himself. “I’m Karl.”

“OK”, said the man, “let’s have a look at the damage.” Only then did Karl realise that the man had come straight over without even glancing at his car.

“That’s not normal”, Karl thought. “If I had a car as nice as that, my first priority would have been to check for damage. And I definitely wouldn’t be smiling kindly.” But somehow, this reaction impressed him. He joined the man in examining the damage.

It didn’t look good. At least not for Karl’s car. The whole of the front was bashed in. It was probably a write-off; it wasn’t worth much. But the other vehicle only had a few little dents on the bumper; otherwise you wouldn’t have known there’d even been an accident.

The man called the police, and the accident was recorded. Karl’s car was no longer roadworthy and had to be towed. Karl felt himself going to pieces. He’d saved hard to buy that car. And, of course, he didn’t have comprehensive insurance. This was a disaster.

Karl remained silent as the man sorted everything. He cursed his bad fortune. Why hadn’t he paid better attention? Why did this have to happen now, when he was in the middle of his exams?

He realised that the man was watching him closely. Karl immediately felt attacked. “I said I’m sorry. I can’t undo what happened.”

With slight amazement, the man replied: "It's fine! Surely this hasn't thrown your life off track?"

With some effort, Karl swallowed his anger. "I didn't realise we were getting so personal", he said, his voice strained. Feeling the urge to justify himself, he hissed: "I only bought this heap of junk three weeks ago. I've worked a long time to pay for it. My job's horrible. No fun. Lousy, actually. But I need the money. And now you're going to act all dismissive?"

"That's not what I meant", the man replied. "And yes, I would like it if we could talk on a personal level."

"Yes, that's fine. I'm just annoyed at myself."

"Thanks Karl." Marc looked at him with both scrutiny and gentleness. Like he had looked at him through the car window. As though he were worried about Karl's wellbeing. Then he asked: "You don't like yourself all that much, do you?"

"Rubbish", Karl replied hotly, "and what has whether I like myself got to do with our current situation?"

"Our attitude to our possessions and the way we treat them says a lot about whether we like ourselves", Marc explained patiently.

Karl didn't quite understand what Marc was trying to tell him. But he was impressed by his calmness. He didn't seem to feel attacked, and Karl's response hadn't exactly been friendly. Marc interrupted Karl's thoughts. "I'd like to invite you for a meal."

"But I just drove into your car", Karl replied in confusion. "I mean, your car's basically fine, but... it's still going to take up a lot of your time."

"I don't believe in coincidences", Marc said. "There's a reason why we met here today. And I want to know what it is. Plus, I'm hungry and I don't like eating alone." Then he added with a smile: "We can take my car, it's still working. I know a really good restaurant nearby – how about it?"

Karl was no longer angry, just bewildered. He looked at Marc closely. "He has an inexplicable presence", he thought. And then another thought popped into his head. "I want to be like that too!" Marc exuded a power that he had never encountered before. And, he now realised, he was ravenous too. "Agreed", Karl said.

They drove to a simple restaurant that only served one dish; there was no menu to choose from. But Karl had rarely eaten so well. They didn't talk much.

After an espresso, Marc looked Karl in the eyes. "I'd like to go back to my question: do you like yourself? And then I have another: are you proud of yourself?"

Now that his stomach was full, Karl was less easily irritated. But these were uncomfortable questions, so he replied: "Why should I tell you?"

"I sense that these questions and how you might respond could be the reason why fate brought us together today", Marc explained. "If you want, start by telling me something about yourself."

Karl nodded and said that he was studying law. His parents were both lawyers and they wanted him to follow in their footsteps. He was supposed to become a lawyer too. In fact, he wasn't enjoying his studies and couldn't see himself as a lawyer. But he didn't want to disappoint his parents.

Karl didn't know why he suddenly started opening up. But he just couldn't stop talking. He told Marc that he really wanted to be an actor. That cinema was his greatest passion. That he was thrilled to find a job in the industry. First he had worked as a lighting assistant in a big film studio, then he got a better job. As a stand-in.

"As a what?" Marc asked.

"I work as a stand-in", Karl repeated.

"What does a stand-in do?"



“They stand exactly how the star of the film is going to stand. It takes quite a long time to set up all the lighting. Obviously, the star doesn’t want to do that themselves. They want to relax. So I stand there instead. I’m about the same size as the leading man, so they use me for the lighting.”

“Do you enjoy it?” Marc asked.

Karl felt uncomfortable again. Was Marc making fun of him? He looked at him carefully, but couldn’t see any hint of mockery in Marc’s eyes. He seemed genuinely interested. Karl responded.

“It can be really tedious. And I often have to stand completely still for up to 15 minutes. That’s tough.”

“I know the feeling”, Marc said seriously. “Your life perhaps isn’t what it should be at the moment. Something’s going wrong but you don’t know what.”

“I have no choice”, Karl replied. “I’m afraid to disappoint my parents.”

“The older I get, the clearer it becomes that it’s alright to lead a life that others don’t understand”, Marc said.

“But my parents have put a lot of effort into building their law firm. And they desperately want me to take over some day.”

“The crucial thing is how you answer my two questions. Do you like yourself? Are you proud of yourself?”

Marc insisted.

Karl had hoped that Marc would forget about these questions. Instead, he repeated them. Karl tried to listen to his inner voice. “Do I like myself?” Various answers came to mind. But nothing clear. “Am I proud of myself? Not really...” he thought.

“Kinda”, he said. He thought a while longer before adding: “Who can say that about themselves? They might come across as arrogant.”

“That’s what I used to think”, Marc replied. “But after many years, I know that we will never have good lives if we can’t answer these questions with a clear ‘yes’.”

He smiled before continuing. “At first I couldn’t do it either. And just like you, I didn’t think it was good to say I like myself! Or I’m proud of myself! But then I learned that there is nothing more important in life than being able to say them.”

Karl looked at him sceptically. “The most important thing in life? There’s nothing more important?”

Marc remained calm. “These questions show how you think about yourself. But there’s more to it than that. These questions reveal three incredibly important factors: 1. Whether you know who you are; 2. Whether you pay attention to and value yourself; and 3. Whether you trust yourself.”

“Aren’t they all more or less the same thing?” Karl asked.

“Yes and no”, Marc explained. “On the one hand, they’re all totally different. On the other hand, when you combine them, they form a person’s most important trait: confidence.”

“Who’s going to understand that?” Karl replied. “I mean, I can’t get it straight in my mind. It all blurs together. I need to write it down. Also... somehow I’m not convinced that confidence is a person’s most important trait.”

Marc nodded. “I’m pleased that you want to understand it. And writing it down is a good idea. If I had realised as quickly as you that writing it down would help, then I would probably have made much faster progress. I had to take a detour. I studied some challenging subjects to understand the whole thing better. And I read a lot on those subjects. But I failed to write down the most important questions and answers.”

Karl suddenly realised that he didn’t know a thing about Marc; he had only talked about himself. Somewhat embarrassed, he said: “I don’t actually know what you do.”

“Now that’s easy to explain”, Marc answered. “I am the world’s leading expert on confidence. The very best companies around the world hire me to help their top people become more confident.”

Karl looked at him in shock, and Marc couldn't help but laugh. "That doesn't exactly sound modest, does it?"

"No, it doesn't", said Karl. "It sounds..."

"... confident?!" Marc suggested.

Karl smiled wryly. "I know lots of people who would call you a show-off. Or arrogant. I mean that you don't have to be so direct about it. You could put lots of people's noses out of joint."

"If you see something beautiful, would you say, 'that's beautiful'? For example, a stunning landscape or a lovely flower?" Marc asked.

"Yes, of course."

"Well, I think I can stand by the beauty I see in myself. So, I say that I know who I am and that I like myself. I know what I'm capable of and I'm proud of myself."

Karl was torn. He found it arrogant to speak like that, but also yearned to think about himself that way – to truly like and be proud of himself.

"But I still don't know if that's good. And I also don't think that confidence is the most important thing in our lives. There are other important things."

"Like what?"

Karl gave his reply some thought. "Love, for example. And friendship. Professional success. A good income."

"You can't love", Marc said, "if you don't like yourself. You can't have friendships if you don't trust yourself.

And you won't be a professional success if you don't know what you're good at. What I'm trying to say is that everything, and I mean everything, begins with confidence. You can only live a fulfilling, successful and happy life if you are confident. But most people don't realise this. And they don't know what confidence actually is."

Karl wasn't convinced. "But you don't have to be a show-off to love or have friends."

"I understand your doubts. This is unlike anything we learn from our parents – or from society. I have an appointment now. But I have a proposal for you. Let's meet again tomorrow and discuss this in more detail."

Karl recalled how Marc had reacted to the accident. He looked at him carefully and decided that he would like to meet again. "OK", he said.

The pair said their goodbyes and Karl returned home.

That night, Karl had a strange dream. An old woman with snow-white hair and a garish red jumper was desperate to speak to him. But he couldn't hear her voice. He simply couldn't. She talked and talked, but he didn't know what she was saying.

It was awful because he sensed that the woman was saying something really important that he needed to understand. Her mouth may have been moving, but her voice didn't reach his ears.

The old woman took a purple book out of her bag and laid it on his kitchen table. Then she disappeared.

When Karl woke, the dream remained vivid. But something about it wasn't quite right. At first he didn't know what it was. Then he remembered that the woman had lacked a shadow. It gave him the creeps. He realised that he was soaked in sweat. "What a stupid dream", he thought.

Karl got up to make himself a coffee. He looked at the kitchen table... and saw a book. The book from his dream. The purple book. He almost dropped his cup. It was clearly the same book.

His first reaction was that someone must have broken in and put it there. Maybe he hadn't locked up? Karl went to his apartment door. It was locked and the chain was on. There was no way anyone could have got in.

Karl thought hard. "I live on the fifth floor. All the windows are closed. How did this happen? Am I going mad?" He started to panic. "I'd better throw the book away." He wanted to run straight out to the street and throw the book away. But then curiosity got the better of him. He picked up the book, opened it and read the

first page:

How would it feel to know for certain that you like and are proud of yourself? Then you would know that:
YOU CAN ACHIEVE ANYTHING YOU SET YOUR MIND TO.

If you knew with absolute certainty that you will be successful. That nothing can throw you off balance. That you are unstoppable.

What decisions would you make? What would you do then?

Many people believe that they would feel a great sense of inner peace. That they would know they were doing the right thing. Not always. But often enough to be content.

Consciously or unconsciously, we all dream of feeling this great inner certainty. This sense that **I CAN DO IT!** And I can do it well.

We dream of having unshakable confidence. But for most of us, the reality is very different.

Many people often think “I can’t do it, but I must”. Or “I have to do it, but I can’t”.

That was it. Karl turned to the next page: blank. He looked through the whole journal: nothing but blank pages. He would have liked to read more.

Karl was unsettled. He didn’t know why. Was it the words he had read? The dream? The purple journal whose existence he couldn’t explain? It was all pretty spooky.

He went through the text again in his head: I like myself. I am proud of myself ... achieve anything I set my mind to ... if I knew with absolute certainty that I will be successful ... I can do it ... He couldn’t stop thinking about it, and it comforted him somehow, although he couldn’t quite put his finger on the reason. The final words touched his heart: I can’t do it, but I must. I have to do it, but I can’t.

This was precisely his dilemma. He knew that he would never be a good lawyer. But he had to become one. His parents expected it. And they had done so much for him. He had performed poorly in school and struggled with his spelling. His parents had always supported him, practised dictation with him, paid for extra tuition. He couldn’t disappoint them. I have to, but I can’t.

He didn’t enjoy his studies and often found them overwhelming. Up to now, he hadn’t had the courage to ask himself what he wanted. He had to study law. But did he want to? He tried to bury the question. He had to do it. He couldn’t do it, but he had to...

His phone rang. It was Marc, asking whether he still wanted to meet for lunch. 1pm, in the same restaurant as before. Karl agreed, although he had no idea what to make of it all.

As arranged, they met in front of the restaurant. Marc greeted Karl like a close friend. He always seemed to be in a good mood. He praised Karl: “Thanks for being on time, I really appreciate it. Punctuality shows that you respect other people.”

“Yeah, well, I can’t exactly leave the world’s leading expert on confidence waiting, can I?”, Karl replied, a little flippantly.

“Confidence is the most important trait of all”, Marc replied seriously.

Karl remembered Marc saying this when they first met. He had even claimed that we will never have good lives if we can’t answer two questions with a clear “yes”: Do I like myself? Am I proud of myself? But he still struggled to believe it. There were other, far more important aspects to a good life. He just didn’t know exactly what they were.

As before, the restaurant only served one dish. Something different this time. Again, the food was delicious.

And again, the two men ate in almost total silence.

Once they were finished, Marc gave his younger companion a friendly look. “Have you thought about our conversation?”

“Yes”, Karl admitted. “But I don’t understand why you’re making so much effort with me. I involved you in an accident. I wasn’t particularly friendly. So... why are you doing this?”

“Because you deserve it”, Marc said.

“What did I do to deserve it?”

“I have a feeling. And I’ve learned to trust my feelings. I just know that you have great potential and I can help you to see it.”

Karl was sceptical. “What does an expert in confidence do?” he asked.

“I help my clients to become more successful”, Marc explained. “Big companies always think years in advance. They plan the products of the future. But they have a dilemma: their employees are good enough for the products of today, but...”

Marc paused and Karl urged him on: “But?”

“But not good enough for the products of tomorrow. So they have to develop both their new products and their longstanding employees. Otherwise their products won’t get any better. And this is where I come in: I help their top employees to become good enough to do their job tomorrow as well. And confidence is the key.”

“I understand what you’re saying about the products of tomorrow and needing to improve ourselves”, Karl said. “What I don’t understand is why confidence is crucial to improvement. And I don’t actually know exactly what confidence is.”

“Essentially, I help my clients to answer three crucial questions: Can I do it? Am I lovable? Who am I?” Marc explained.

“I don’t understand what these three questions have to do with success”, Karl said doubtfully. “A company has revolutionary products because of its employees’ skills, not because they’re lovable and know who they are?!”

Marc smiled. Once again, he seemed not to be laughing at Karl, but to be pleased to have the opportunity to explain. “It becomes clearer when we consider what lies behind these questions. But let’s write it down, like you suggested last time. Do you have something to write with?”

“Yes”, Karl said, reaching into his bag. It was the purple journal. He felt hot and cold shivers run down his spine. He didn’t know why he had brought it. He hesitated, then pulled himself together and placed it on the table as though it were the most normal book in the world.

Marc stared at the book. “I used to have one of those”, he said quietly. “Where did you get it?”

“Well, I picked it up off my kitchen table this morning and put it in my bag”, Karl said, trying to evade the question.

Marc simply gave him a friendly look and nodded slightly, as though encouraging him to continue. So Karl told him about the dream. Once again, he couldn’t actually explain why he was doing it. But it felt right. Marc didn’t seem at all surprised, saying: “Yes, when we grapple with life’s important questions, things happen that at first we can’t explain. Many seem to be miracles. But everything’s fine, you’ll see.”

Karl recalled Marc saying “everything’s fine” once before.

“Write down these three questions”, Marc suggested, “but leave some space between them. Then you can make a few notes to make the questions more significant to you:

Can I do it?

Am I lovable?

Who am I?"

Karl didn't write anything. He didn't really know what this was all about. Marc seemed to read his thoughts. "I have a suggestion for you. Today I'll briefly explain what confidence means. And then, if you like, I'll coach you to develop a healthy level of confidence."

"Who says I don't have a healthy level of confidence?" Karl replied defiantly.

Marc looked deep into his eyes. "Are you lovable?"

"What's that got to do with it?" Karl said evasively. "At least I'm not a show-off."

"Let's go for a little walk", Marc suggested. "I know a café that does great espresso. The best in the city. On the way I'll tell you a little about my life philosophy. Then you can decide whether you want to learn from me."

Karl agreed and they set off. Marc began talking. "Deep down inside, everyone I've ever worked with believes one thing in particular", he said, pointing to his heart. "That they're not good enough. This belief is fuelled by thoughts like 'I'm not doing enough.' 'I don't deserve it.' 'I can't do it.' 'I don't really like myself.' As long as we carry these thoughts around with us, we will never be able to access our true potential. We don't have the courage to speak to our dream partner. We don't look for our dream job. We don't think about how we would most like to live. And for one simple reason: because we think we're not good enough. And if we're not good enough, then we don't really deserve anything good. But if we think well of ourselves, then we believe we deserve only the best."

Karl listened without really understanding. But he could tell that Marc was saying something truly important and wise.

Marc continued. "Life is very simple. We get back what we put in. What we think of ourselves becomes true. Our subconscious accepts what we choose to think about ourselves. Many of our thoughts about ourselves come from our parents, our childhood and our youth. But they are just thoughts, and thoughts can change. If you change the way you think about yourself, you also change how you feel about yourself.

If we think badly of ourselves, then life will confirm these negative opinions. If we think well of ourselves, we draw the best and most beautiful things into our lives. This isn't just about material success, but also our friendships, our family, our partnerships, our health... if you have a good opinion of yourself, you will draw only the best into your life."

Marc and Karl reached the café. Karl was pensive. He wasn't sure if he had understood everything correctly. And he definitely wasn't sure if he agreed with Marc. But he felt that Marc knew what he was talking about. Without a word, he took the purple journal out of his bag.

"What were the three questions?" he asked. He couldn't explain why he wanted to hear them again.

Can I do it?

Am I lovable?

Who am I?

Karl noted them down. And he was relieved that he could write in the journal just like normal.

Marc made a suggestion. "Take some time to think about what these three questions mean to you. We'll meet again in a few days and discuss them. OK?"

"OK", said Karl.

"Do you have a girlfriend?" Marc asked abruptly.

"No", Karl replied with surprise. Why was he asking that? Well, he had nothing to hide. "There's someone I like who's working on the film, but she hasn't noticed me. I think she only has eyes for superstars."



“Never pursue anyone. Be yourself, do your thing and work hard. The right people will come to you. And they’ll stay”, Marc said, adding: “But you need to believe that you are lovable.”

They arranged to meet for lunch in three days and said their goodbyes. After a few steps, Marc called to him.

“One more thing. If it’s OK with you, I’ll send you occasional thoughts on this subject via WhatsApp.”

“OK”, Karl agreed. “But why?”

“We are exposed to so many negative impressions each day. It drags us down”, Marc explained. “It’s good to read something positive occasionally. You’ll see.”