

The background features a complex network of thin, light grey lines connecting numerous circles of varying sizes. The circles are primarily green, with some transitioning into yellow and orange towards the bottom left. A large, semi-transparent teal shape covers the right side of the image, serving as a backdrop for the text.

ECPS3003: Introducing
University Life

Week 3: Building Confidence

Introduction

Starting university is one of the most important transitions in a person's life. It is exciting, full of opportunities, and often the beginning of greater independence. However, it can also feel intimidating. Many new students worry about fitting in, making friends, managing workloads, speaking in class, or succeeding academically.

These feelings are completely normal. Confidence is not something people are born with; it is something that develops through experience, effort, and self-belief. This lecture explores how students can build confidence, overcome self-doubt, and thrive during their university journey.

Some questions:



Understanding confidence

- Confidence is the belief in your ability to handle challenges, learn new skills, and achieve goals.
- Confidence does not mean:
 - Being perfect
 - Never feeling nervous
 - Knowing everything
- Instead, confidence means:
 - Trusting yourself to learn
 - Being willing to try
 - Accepting mistakes as part of growth
- Many students believe others are more confident than they are. In reality, most new students experience uncertainty at the beginning of university.

Common challenges students face:

Starting university often involves major changes.

- **Academic Challenges**

- More independent learning
- Increased workload
- New teaching styles
- Time management difficulties

- **Social Challenges**

- Making new friends
- Living away from home
- Meeting people from different backgrounds

- **Personal Challenges**

- Financial pressure
- Homesickness
- Balancing study and personal life



Recognising these challenges helps students understand that struggling occasionally is part of the adjustment process.

Self-belief:

Self-belief plays a major role in academic success and personal development.

Students with strong self-belief are more likely to:

- Participate in class
- Ask questions
- Try new opportunities
- Recover from setbacks
- Stay motivated

Negative self-talk can damage confidence.

- **Examples of Negative Self-Talk:**

- *“I’m not smart enough.”*
- *“Everyone else understands this except me.”*
- *“I will probably fail.”*

These thoughts are often inaccurate and harmful.

- **Replacing Negative Thoughts:**

- Instead of saying: “I can’t do this,”
 - Try: *“I’m still learning.”*
 - *“This is difficult now, but I can improve.”*
 - *“It’s okay not to know everything immediately.”*

Positive thinking does not ignore challenges; it helps people face them more effectively.

Small steps to confidence:

Confidence grows gradually through achievement and experience.

Practical Ways to Build Confidence:

A. Set Small Goals

Large goals can feel overwhelming.

Instead:

Complete one assignment section at a time

Attend one social event

Speak once during a seminar

Each small success strengthens confidence.

B. Celebrate Progress

Students often focus only on mistakes and overlook achievements.

Celebrate:

Completing coursework

Improving grades

Managing time better

Trying something new

Progress matters more than perfection.

Small steps to confidence:

C. Learn From Mistakes

Mistakes are part of education.

Failure does not mean a student is incapable. It often provides valuable lessons about:

Study habits

Preparation

Time management

Persistence

Many successful people experienced failure before achieving success.

Academic confidence:

Academic confidence is built through preparation and active learning.

Effective Strategies:

Attend Classes Regularly

Students who attend lectures and seminars consistently usually feel more prepared and engaged.

Ask Questions

Asking questions shows curiosity and willingness to learn, not weakness.

Use University Support Services

The university provides:

Academic writing support

Study skills workshops

Counselling services

Career advice

Seeking help is a strength, not a failure.

Stay Organised

Using calendars, planners, or study schedules can reduce stress and improve confidence.

Social confidence:

University is also about personal growth and relationships.

Tips for Social Confidence:

Join Clubs and Societies

Shared interests make it easier to meet people and form friendships.

Start Small Conversations

Simple questions can begin friendships:

“What course are you studying?”

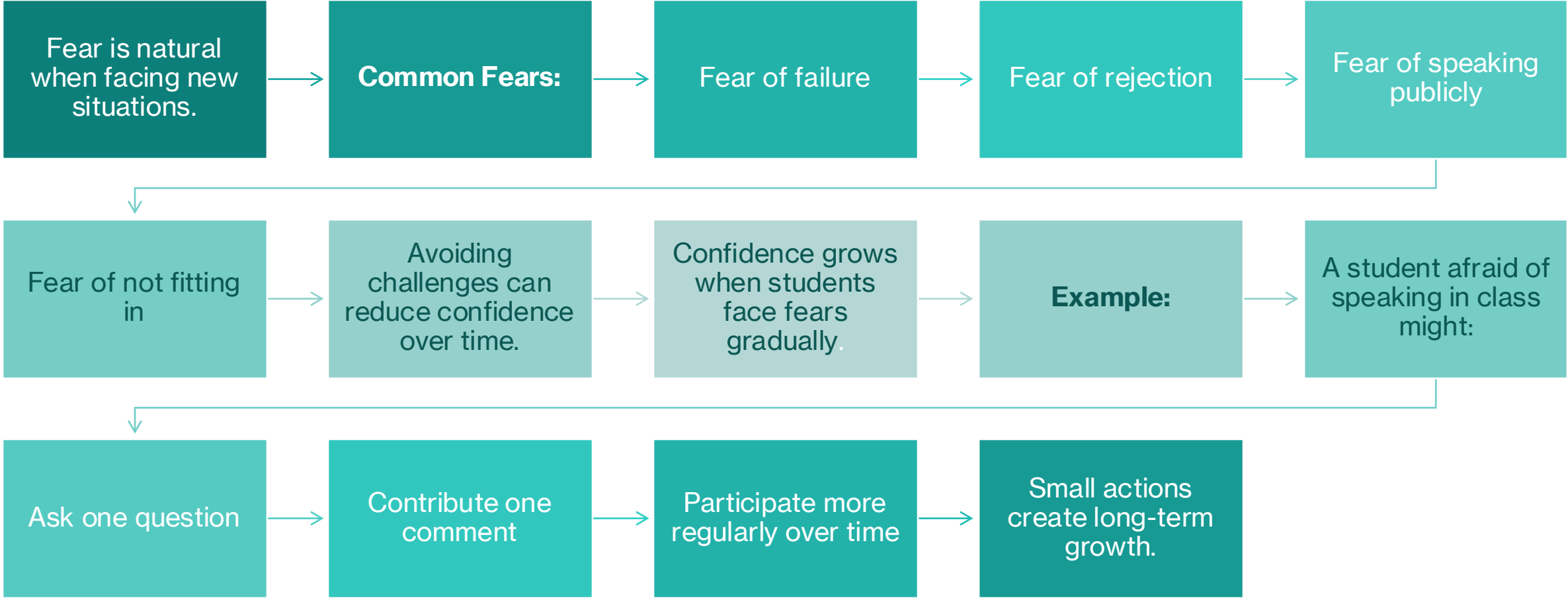
“How did you find the lecture?”

Understand That Others Feel Nervous Too

Many students appear confident while secretly feeling uncertain.

Most people are more focused on their own worries than judging others.

Managing fear or anxiety:



Making comparisons:

One of the biggest confidence killers is constant comparison.

At university, students meet talented and ambitious people. Social media can also create unrealistic expectations.

However:

Everyone progresses at different speeds

People rarely show their struggles publicly

Success is not a competition

The goal should be personal improvement rather than comparison with others.

Adopting a growth mindset:

A growth mindset is the belief that abilities improve through effort and learning.

Students with a growth mindset:

View challenges as opportunities

Accept feedback positively

Continue improving after setbacks

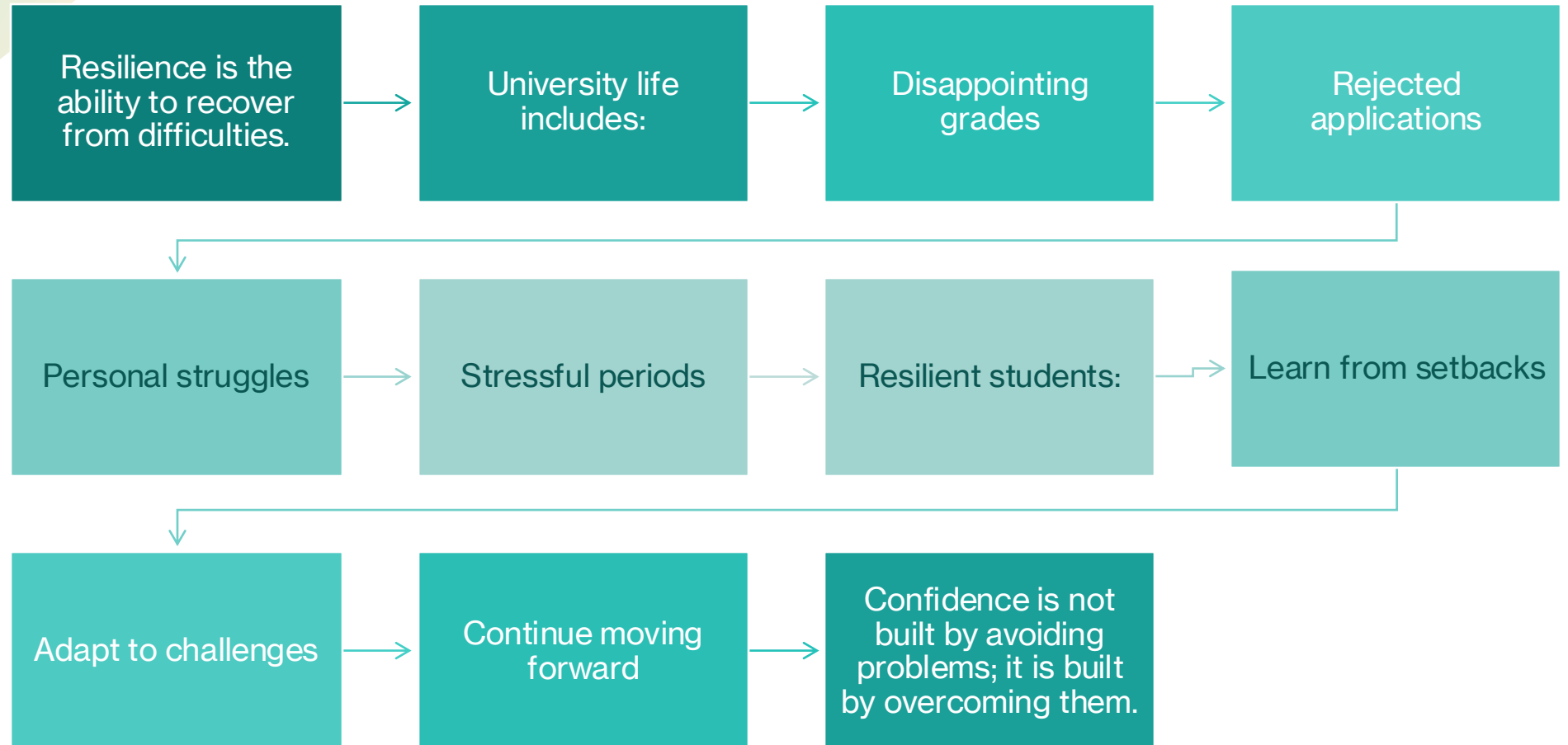
Students with a fixed mindset may believe:

Intelligence cannot change

Failure defines ability

Confidence becomes stronger when students believe improvement is possible.

The role of resilience:



Supporting others:

Confidence also grows through community and encouragement.

Students should:

- Support classmates
- Encourage friends
- Share experiences honestly
- Avoid unnecessary competition
- Positive environments help everyone succeed.



Conclusions:

Beginning university is both exciting and challenging. Feeling nervous or uncertain does not mean a student lacks ability or potential. Confidence develops over time through learning, persistence, and experience.

Every student starts somewhere. Growth happens step by step:

- By trying
- By learning
- By making mistakes
- By continuing despite difficulties

University is not only about earning a degree. It is also about discovering strengths, building resilience, and developing the confidence to face future challenges.

Students should remember:

- They do not need to be perfect to succeed. They only need the willingness to keep learning and growing.



Your task for this week:

01

Write down three personal strengths and three goals for university life.

02

Reflect on a challenge that you have overcome and what it taught you.

03

Reflect on your own perception of your confidence and how you will approach this in the future.



Read these articles from the BPS Digest:

- [Self-belief boosts problem solving success | BPS](#)
- [Study of 8000 workers finds that gender differences in “achievement motivation” may explain part of the gender pay gap | BPS](#)
- And for study tips:
- [9 evidence-based study tips | BPS](#)
- [How to succeed in your degree, with psychology... | BPS](#)