

Confidence heuristic: Why humans are biologically programmed to follow self-assured, poised people

Humans trusting confident people over unconfident ones is an established phenomenon. The [‘Confidence heuristic’](#) states that when two (or more) people are involved in a decision making process where they know different things, confidently expressed arguments are perceived as conveying better information, which determines the decision.

Why would this tendency come about? Well, humans are [ultrasocial](#), and during our evolutionary development, most of our information about the world came from our tribe, i.e. other people.

So, If ancient humans heard someone confidently declare “There’s a predator coming!”, instinctively believing them was a valuable survival trait.

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There are caveats, like [credibility](#); a megaphone-wielding street preacher, bellowing that the world’s about to end, may seem more confident than a friend recommending a restaurant is, but the latter will carry *much* more weight.

Similarly, [the manner of communication affects confidence assessments](#). Someone may be very confident in their claims/ideas, but if they deliver them hurriedly, or quietly, we’re less likely to recognise this confidence. Slow, clear speech is associated with confidence.

So, there are many reasons why we trust confident people. Now, here are some why we shouldn’t.

Confidently delivered information may be more persuasive, but that doesn’t mean it’s *correct*, even if the confident person genuinely believes it is.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the full article here**](#)