



Self-Talk

Self-talk is the way we communicate with ourselves. Our self-talk can help cheer us on, motivate us, and make us feel great both about ourselves and the world. However, it can also be negative and self-defeating.

Often with people with low self-esteem, their inner critic constantly tells them negative things like, "You're no good!" "Why do you think you'd be able to do that?" Instead of saying, "If you study, you'll do well in your exam!"

The banner features the Explorable logo at the top center. Below it are three quiz cards, each with a different image and title. The first card shows roller skates on a wooden floor, the second shows a fan of colored pencils, and the third shows a Ferris wheel at sunset. A link to 'See all quizzes' is located at the bottom right of the banner.

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The Impact of Self-Talk

The way that we talk to ourselves can determine what happens in our future, like a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you are constantly telling yourself that you are a failure and can't do anything right, there's a high chance that you are not even going to try, and even if you do, you're going to give a half-hearted effort.

Negative self-talk is counterproductive. In contrast, if you tell yourself that you can do something, you're more likely to try and keep focused on a positive outcome.

Self-Talk and Self-Esteem

Self-esteem evolves over many years, experiences, and talking to ourselves in a certain way. We cannot expect to change it overnight. That said, learning to talk more positively to ourselves is a skill that can be learned and implemented quite quickly.

The first step here is to pay attention to what you are saying to yourself. Write down the times when you catch your inner critic beating yourself up. For example:

Situation	What you say to yourself
Going out with friends	I don't know what to wear, they are all much more fashionable than me, they must laugh at me behind my back.
Preparing for a presentation at work	I'm hopeless, I'm going to fail.
Going to the gym	I'm so unfit, why am I even trying.

Once you've identified times when you are often beating yourself up, you have to train yourself to say 'STOP' and interrupt the negative thought. Then you need to replace the negative thoughts with more realistic, positive thoughts. To revisit the situations above, here are some suggestions:

Situation	Positive things to say to yourself
Going out with friends	I have my own unique style and I'm proud of my appearance
Preparing for a presentation at work.	I've done my research and rehearsed, so I've got this!
Going to the gym	I am getting healthier!

Write down situations that are specific to you and practice saying the positive statements. Try to make your statements constructive, specific, and in the present tense.

What Language Do You Use?

How often do you use the phrases: could have, should have, must, not? What's the evidence, if any, for your thoughts? Then, consider the changing statements to questions. For example if you think, "I can't concentrate", asking yourself, "How can I help myself to concentrate?"

Practice Makes Perfect

With the list of strengths that you have identified earlier, practice repeating them in your daily life. Everyday repeat at least one of these strengths and consider its evidence. If you like, write the statements down and keep them visible. Keep repeating these statements and over time you will be surprised at how much more confident you feel.

When you catch yourself talking harshly to yourself, ask yourself: Would you talk to a friend like that? If not, think about how you would say it differently. Here are some phrases you can use as substitutes for negative phrases:

Negative Phrases	Positive Phrases
I'm no good	I'm okay; I'm enough
I can't	I can
I'm a loser	I'm a winner
I'm a failure	I'm successful
I'm repulsive	I'm attractive
I'm scared	I'm going to try
I can't do anything	I can always do my best
I'm useless	I am worthy
I'm hopeless	I have hope

Key Points

- Self-talk is how we communicate with ourselves.
- Talking negatively to ourselves is counterproductive, as it increases anxiety and decreases motivation.
- We can learn to talk more positively to ourselves by substituting negative phrases with positive ones.

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