

Positive Self-Talk

What is positive self-talk?

We mentally talk to ourselves all the time. We give ourselves more feedback than anyone else ever could. Self-talk can be negative or positive, and it can affect all parts of life, such as health, finances, and relationships.

Negative self-talk is discouraging. Some examples of negative self-talk:

- "I'm dumb."
- "I can't do it."
- "I'm no good at this."

Positive self-talk is encouraging. This kind of self-talk helps us achieve our goals. Some examples of positive self-talk:

- "I can do it."
- "I'm good enough."
- "If I want to, I can."

Why is self-talk important?

Self-talk is very powerful. It sends the same chemical messages to your brain as actual experiences do. Your body believes your self-talk. When you say to yourself "I am no good at meeting new people. I always freeze up and look stupid..." your heart beats faster, you breathe more shallowly, your stomach tightens, and adrenalin clouds your thinking. This negative self-talk creates stress in your body and your mind.

Studies show that being positive and optimistic can affect how well you live and even how long you live. The health benefits of positive self-talk may include:

- a sense of well-being and being able to deal with things
- breathing easier if you have chronic obstructive lung disease, such as emphysema
- less chance of catching a cold
- less stress
- living longer
- reduced risk of coronary artery disease.

How do I make my self-talk positive?

We can talk ourselves into or out of many things. You may not be aware of the things you say to yourself. The first step is to notice the things that you say to yourself. To change your self-talk from negative to positive:

- Carefully choose the words you use. Generally it is best to phrase things in the present, even if you don't completely believe it yet. For example, instead of saying "I will be a better parent", say "I am a terrific parent." Talk about things the way you want them to be.
- Accept occasional setbacks and mistakes as normal and natural. Tell yourself that you can rise above them and carry on.
- Focus on the solution rather than the problem. Rather than complaining about what you can't do, tell yourself "What I CAN do is..."

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- Watch out for words like "always" and "never". Very often we make things sound worse than they are. Instead of saying "I never stick to a diet," say "I can lose one pound, and that's a start."
- Replace criticism with praise. Learn to be your own best fan.

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