



SELF-TALK

"The mind can be one of the most powerful forces on earth. It can be your strongest ally or your worst enemy."
 Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

What we tell ourselves, the daily minute to minute mind chatter or inner voice, our self-talk is one of the most dramatic factors in determining how we feel about ourselves and what we do with our lives.

Our **WORDS** form our **THOUGHTS** which create our **FEELINGS** which foster our **BELIEFS** which produce our **BEHAVIORS** which ultimately establishes our **IDENTITY**.

The way we act and respond to the world comes from the way we feel and our present self-talk. Our words are the actors within our mind's scripts and dialogs. Using positive words and positive self-talk creates the potential for growth and the ability to ignite our power and realize our potential.

"They are able because they think they are able." Vergil

Negative Self-Talk - The words, "I'm not good enough," "I'm afraid they won't like it or me," "Terrible things always happen to me," manifests as worrying, low self-esteem, self-criticism, perfectionism, being a victim, panic attacks, anxiety, depression and hopelessness.

Positive Self-Talk - Positive words create, "I care about myself," "I am good enough," "I can accomplish my goals," provide the opportunity to be more effective in your choices and increases your potential to create, relate, communicate and flourish.

Recognizing that you created the old thoughts and that you can create new thoughts is empowering. Realizing that you are responsible for the words you hear and the thoughts you embrace is not only freeing but critical to growth and recovery.

Positive Self-Acknowledgment - Positive Self-Acknowledgments are a special form of positive self-talk. Many people with eating disorders and low self-esteem end their days counting their shortcomings or perceived failures. This can be very destructive and reinforces the negative self-talk. It is crucial in the recovery process and the battle against negative self-talk, self-loathing and the all too easy and familiar act of beating up on oneself that you develop the capacity for positive self-acknowledgment. This will bolster your self-esteem and act as a reinforcement for your positive self-talk. The goal is to shift from counting your shortcomings or lapses and the determination of your worth based on your perceived failures to validating your worth based on your growth, daily accomplishments and successes.

Positive Self-Acknowledgment Activities

- Take a minute to look through your day. Observe what you have been able to do to take care of yourself. Something you did or said, or a way in which you put yourself first. You may acknowledge progresses or changes that are related to food or eating disorder symptoms. Acknowledge a social success, emotional success or a personal success. Take a minute to remind yourself that you care about yourself. That you are learning how to take care of yourself and that each day you are succeeding at that. This is the time to acknowledge any successes toward your goals. Applaud yourself as you would praise a friend. Glance through your day and write it down. Today I was able to: listen to my hunger, ask the waiter to reheat my soup, wear a dress, go for a walk, tell my boss I couldn't work overtime, call back my sister, finish my book, decide not to exercise, tell the kids I needed private time, say no to my neighbor, stop myself from purging or restricting.
- End everyday, (right before you fall asleep), with a positive acknowledgment of something you have accomplished. It is likely to enter your subconscious while you sleep and be a helpful way to start off the next day in a positive frame of mind.



Changing of a belief or a behavior comes with changing of the message, changing the self-talk from negative self-talk to positive self-talk.

Positive Self-Talk Activities

- Create a **positive** message even if it feels unbelievable or untrue. Create positive thoughts about yourself and your body. You must first create it in your mind and your thoughts before it can be created in your life.
- Write your positive message creations on cards. Place them on your refrigerator, your nightstand or in your car. You need to overpower the negative talk and reinforce the positive messages and dialog.
- Learn the lyrics and rhythm to songs with positive messages. Listen to them and sing them regularly. (Ex. Everything Is Beautiful In Its Own Way, I Am Woman, Everything's Going My Way.)
- Repeat your positive thoughts and messages several times, before bed, when you wake up in the morning, while you're exercising, before you go to sleep at night, in the shower and as many times during the day as you can remember.
- Use concise sentences and only positive words. Do not use negative words.

<p>Ex. I care about myself. (I am learning to care and take care of myself). I am capable of creating wellness. I am powerful. I am beautiful. I am good enough. I have enough. I am loved enough.</p>	<p>My life is filled with love and happiness. I have the power to be happy and complete. I am successful. I am capable of completing this job, task, day. I can learn from everything that happens. I can have more.</p>
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- Create a positive version of what you are or want. Keep it in the present tense or future tense.

<p>Ex. I am good enough, I am smart enough, I am productive enough, I AM ENOUGH. I take care of myself when I am alone at home. I am working diligently on my school paper and I will receive an honorable grade. My body is healthy and strong and is the vehicle through which I can experience a fulfilling life.</p>
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- Become aware of how you use disempowering words. Work to **eliminate** DISEMPOWERING WORDS and practice **incorporating** EMPOWERING WORDS into your thoughts and dialogs about yourself.

Changing Words leads to

Changing Identity

- Add any words that are empowering TO YOU. Make an effort to write them, think them and say them to and about yourself.
- Become aware of how you use disempowering words. Work towards eliminating them from your vocabulary, thoughts and dialogs about yourself.

Empowering Words

Confident
Courageous
Brave
Independent
Secure
Self-reliant
Firm
Certain
Bold
Determined
Exhilarated
Reassured
Powerful
Loving
Proud
Capable
Intelligent

Disempowering Words

Indecisive
Hesitant
Scared
Distrustful
Powerless
Worried
Threatened
Petrified
Embarrassed
Afraid
Resentful
Insignificant
Weak
Abused
Dependent
Intimidated
Stupid

Developing Positive Self-Talk is critical to recovery:

- Practice these tools and be patient.
- Treat yourself with the consideration and understanding you offer others. Be kind to yourself.
- Change and healing comes out of compassion not judgment.
- Remind yourself that it is important that you look for the successes in each day, and to relinquish yourself from the onslaught of constant negative self-talk, punitive evaluation and rigid unforgiving judgments.
- The more you praise and accept yourself the more likely you will move in a positive direction.
- Negative dialog and beating up on oneself serves only to reinforce the negative behaviors.

