

# REVOLUTIONIZE YOUR SELF-TALK



By Dr. Scott Hamilton

Whether we acknowledge it or not, most of us speak with ourselves constantly. There's always some sort of chatter happening in the background of our minds. The challenge is when that self-talk becomes overly critical or overbearing. This eBook highlights six steps to revolutionize your self-talk, making it more productive and empowering a better you.

### **What is Self-Talk?**

Simply stated, self-talk is the internal dialogue we have with ourselves. Some might say that self-talk is the act of speaking with yourself, aloud or not. Occasionally, our self-imposed conversations reveal the thoughts, beliefs, questions, and ideas we have about all the subjects we think about all the time. Self-talk also takes on two qualities. First, self-talk can be motivating and encouraging (positive self-talk); second, self-talk can be limiting or defeating (negative self-talk). It's one thing to identify what self-talk is; concern about self-talk is a different challenge.

### **Why Worry About It?**

Why would people concern themselves with self-talk at all? If we're honest with ourselves, most of us don't walk around speaking with others about the conversations we have with ourselves. After all, we don't want others thinking we're slipping.

Some research suggests that people who speak positively with themselves may actually be more efficient at solving problems and coping with hardships or challenges. Further, some elements of self-talk may empower greater cognitive flexibility while decreasing stress and anxiety.

Positive self-talk may also include other health benefits, such as: greater life satisfaction, improved immune functions, less pain, better physical well-being, and even a reduced risk of death.

## **How to Develop Great Self-Talk**

Positive self-talk may take some practice. Getting the hang of it may sound awkward, especially as you begin shifting your inner dialogues toward more positive perspectives. Most people need to learn to treat themselves better; try creating more inspiring and optimistic personal narratives. The following tips might help.

### **1. Identify and Listen to Your Inner Critic**

The *inner critic* is the formal language for that chastising voice we hear when we think we have misbehaved or been inappropriate. Once you identify that voice and what it sounds like, listening to what it says is critical because you are actually speaking to your inner self. When the *inner critic* begins to run amok, discouraging you at every step, pause the conversation for a moment and consider ways to change it.

### **2. Identify Negative Self-Talk Land Mines**

Different scenarios may well increase self-doubt, which usually leads toward more negative self-talk, creating an unhelpful thought loop from which escape is difficult. Pinpointing *when* you experience the most negative self-talk can help you anticipate and prepare to deal with it more appropriately. When such thoughts enter your mind, identifying them becomes easier; reframing or refocusing the poor self-talk then creates the space to reorient the mind of the task at hand.

### 3. Counteract Known Patterns of Self-Sabotage

Are you aware enough of your typical response patterns to identify the less helpful ones? When you discern which scripts provoke negative self-chat, you are better able to activate more appropriate and beneficial thought processes, which may reframe the negative thoughts toward forward growth. For example, instead of saying to yourself, “You’re an idiot; that was so stupid,” try something like, “Wow, that wasn’t my best decision. Let’s see what I can do that’s more helpful.”

### 4. Reframe, Reframe, Reframe

The notion of reframing is fairly easy for most people. You choose to see the situation through a different “frame,” a different lens. This technique helps you see a situation in more positive terms instead of focusing on poor experiences.

### 5. Create Some Distance

We all have friends from which we occasionally need a bit of space. The same is true of people; there are days when I need to get away from myself. If I start asking myself “Why am I stressed? Or “Why didn’t I do that better? I may increase my anxiety or shame, which is counterproductive.

Try using your own name, or a second – or third person pronoun when referring to your situation. Asking yourself, “Why are *you* so stressed?” is one way to create the psychological distance needed to allow you to regulate your emotional response while lessening the discomfort.

## 6. Fit the Conversation to Your Goal

What's the "end game?" Where are you trying to go? What is the goal you're having trouble attaining? You're talking to yourself; make it productive! Using more instructional self-talk like, "shoulders back" or "keep your left arm straight" can help a person improve technique. Motivational self-speak such as "you've got this," or "you can do it" will usually help with confidence, strength, or endurance.

## Conclusion

I certainly can't speak for you, but I can say that there days when my self-speak is truly awful. The ways I criticize or chastise myself are far more numerous than the ways I might motivate or empower myself. As I continue to mature, I am still learning to express myself inwardly in ways that propel me forward instead of hindering progress. I'd be lying if I said doing so wasn't a struggle.

Yes, there are days when my inner critic jumps on a table and screams at me, using language I wouldn't use with my worst enemy. In the heat of such moments, I intentionally slow down adjust my thought process and begin to speak with myself in more generous and honoring ways. I suspect that, with a bit of practice, you can get the hang of it, too!

## A personal note from Scott...

Since I have started using the affirmations, my life has really turned around. The biggest thing I've noticed is that I'm much more joyful, stress-free, and hopeful. My relationships and my finances have improved. I say my affirmations twice a day and it's really made a difference in my overall outlook! Also, I'm a therapist and in the majority of my work, I counsel patients who are truly at their wits' end. A lot of them

were skeptical about the affirmations at first, saying, “I can’t say that if it isn’t true!” But now some of THEM are saying the affirmations daily, and one patient even took a printout of various affirmations I had given the group and framed them. She took a picture of it and it’s gone viral among her Facebook friends! Another patient says that using her positive affirmations as a coping skill helps her get through really rough periods.

“Affirmations WORK! Thank you so much for sharing these!” -*Jayne Helmick*