

Self talk – having good thoughts

Self talk can have a really great impact on your self-esteem and confidence. There is positive and negative self talk and they both have an impact on how you feel. Positive self talk tends to make you feel good, whereas negative self talk often makes you feel pretty crap. There are a few ways you can develop better self talk including just listening to what you're saying to yourself each day. It's worth practicing self talk as feeling good about yourself is worth the effort.

Even though you might not know it, you're already practicing self-talk.

Self-talk is basically your inner voice, the voice in your mind which says things that you don't necessarily say out loud. Often self-talk happens without you even realising it and can be a subtle running commentary going on in the background of your mind. But what you say in your mind can determine a lot of how you feel about who you are.

So what is positive and negative self-talk?

Positive self-talk is the stuff that makes you feel good about yourself and the things that are going on in your life. It is like having an optimistic voice in your head that always looks on the bright side.

Example – “These clothes look pretty awesome on me”, “I can totally make it through this exam”, “I don't feel great right now but things could be worse!”

Negative self-talk is the stuff that makes you feel pretty crappy about yourself and things that are going on. It can put a downer on anything, whether it is good or bad.

Example – “I look stupid in these clothes”, “everyone thinks I'm an idiot”, “everything is crap and nothing is going to get better”

Negative self-talk is particularly bad as it brings you down all the time. It can impact on recovery from mental health difficulties and tends to make people pretty miserable. But being positive all the time isn't achievable either, and isn't helpful all the time. So how can you make your self-talk work for you?

Better self-talk

There are 3 things you can do that can help with changing the direction of your self-talk.

This can help with...

- > *Feeling better about yourself*
- > *Boosting your confidence*
- > *Building your self-esteem*
- > *Making friends*
- > *Feeling in control*

Take action...

- > *Start tracking your inner thoughts to see if they are reasonable*
- > *Read first-hand self-talk stories*
- > *Get an expert perspective*

1. Listen to what you're saying to yourself – we don't always consciously take note of that we're saying in our minds. The first step in improving your self-talk is to actually notice what your inner voice is saying. Take some time each day to listen, and even write down, what you're thinking.

2. Monitor your self-talk– Is your self-talk more positive or negative? Start questioning your self-talk asking things like:

- > *Is there actual evidence for what I'm thinking?*
- > *What would I say if a friend were in a similar situation?*
- > *Is there a more positive way of looking at this?*
- > *Am I keeping everything in perspective?*
- > *Can I do anything to change what I'm feeling bad about?*

3. Change your self-talk – Easier said than done, but definitely worth working on. Try by countering your negative thoughts with positive ones. For example, if you think “I'll never be able to do this”, ask yourself “is there anything I can do that will help me be able to do this?” Avoid speaking in finite language and try and look for things that might add a better spin to a tough situation.

Why should I practice?

The more you work on improving your self-talk the better you will get. It's kind of like practicing an instrument or going to sports training, it won't be easy to start with but will get better with time.

It might not seem like much but self-talk is a really important part of our self-esteem and confidence. By working on getting more positive self-talk, you're more likely to get things done and feel more in control of stuff that's going on in your life.