

Say something positive to yourself

If you're like most people, you carry on a silent conversation with yourself during much of the day. This self-talk directly affects your thoughts, motivations and behaviors. What are you saying to yourself? Do you give yourself a pep talk or do you undermine your own efforts?

Understanding self-talk and the powerful effect it has on you can help you develop or maintain a positive attitude.

What you say is what you get

You've probably heard the term "self-fulfilling prophecy." Self-talk is very much like a self-fulfilling prophecy. You think about something enough that it actually happens. When your self-talk is positive, e.g., "I know I can do this," or "I can lose five pounds," you are giving yourself permission to succeed, and chances are you will. When your self-talk is negative, e.g., "I'm going to have a terrible time tonight," or "I'll never be a manager," chances are you won't even try.

Thoughts are linked to behaviors

Self-talk shapes your thoughts and behaviors. If you say to yourself, "This job is perfect for me," you'll be more willing to apply. During the interview, you'll have more confidence in yourself. But if you think, "I'll never get this job," you may not even bother applying, which will guarantee that you won't be hired.

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Physical and mental effects of self-talk

Negative self-talk increases stress and can make physical symptoms such as headaches and stomachaches worse. Negative self-talk can also encourage you to behave in self-destructive ways. Thoughts like, "What difference will it make if I don't go to work today, no one will miss me," or "Nobody cares about what happens to me, so why shouldn't I have another drink?" can lead you to make damaging life choices. On the other hand, positive self-talk is one of the best things you can do for yourself. Thinking and acting in a positive, upbeat manner will lead to higher self-esteem, confidence and a happy, healthier you.

Changing your self-talk script

If you are trying to change your self-talk from negative to positive, you may find resistance from within yourself. You may tell yourself, "There's no use trying" or "I can't do this." Be patient; it will soon fade. You've probably been using negative self-talk for years, and it takes at least 30 days to break an old habit or establish a new one.