

Self-Talk

Your Way to Success

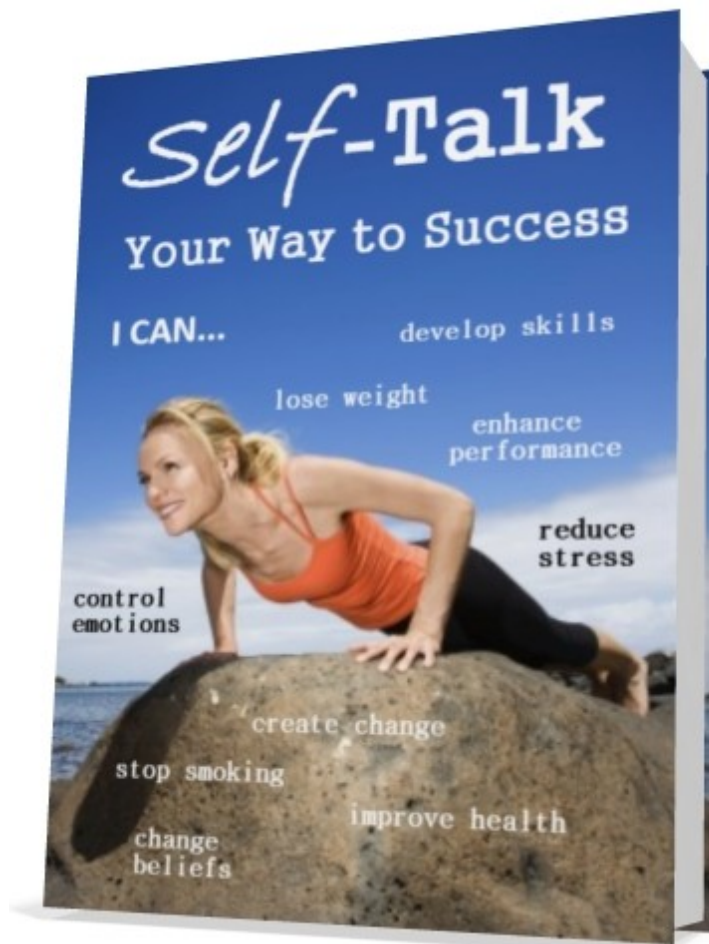


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INTRODUCTION

For me, words are a form of action, capable of influencing change – Ingrid Bengis

At any time in your life, you can achieve just about anything you want. If you feel the desire to learn music today, you can do that. If you want to learn to be a great cook, manager, writer or even an actor, it's all there within you. There is not a gene that is preventing you from creating success. All you need is the courage to dream, and the will to make the dream a reality. Of course, you need to take charge and find the right tools (the purpose of this book) to put your mind to the test. But the point is: you CAN do it, if you DESIRE it.

However, maybe you learned at an early age: you can't do *that*. Maybe you think that only a select few were *destined* to have the skills, success, and lifestyle the rest desire. Maybe you came to believe that painting the beauty of the human face or fashion photography was for the masters who *had the right stuff*. Or that athletic ability is something that could only be developed in people who were naturally gifted.

People who think in this way have a fixed mind set. With a fixed mindset, you think that skills and talents are set in stone and that you either have them or you don't. You know what you can and cannot do, and very little can be done to improve your abilities and success. Your mind is closed to all the possibilities and suggestions. You feel you have plumbed the depths of your mind and there's nothing more there.

Conversely, if you are like the millions of successful people who are living the life they dream, you think otherwise. You have a growth mindset. You realize that you can develop skills and habits at any stage in life, irrespective of previous experience. The path of growth, opportunity and success lie here.

The growth mindset that underlies this book states that you can develop your talents and improve the quality of your life to a far greater extent than most people think. The mind or brain is not hard wired to be good at any one thing or the other, like writing a play, drawing a picture, kicking a soccer ball, having social skills, or at being successful. Sure, some people seem to naturally exhibit these talents and habits, but the rest of us can develop them, if we so desire.

Although we have this amazing ability, our internal thoughts and beliefs get the best of us and get in the way of the success we so desire. Our conscious thoughts and subconscious beliefs are powerful. They have the power to control how we think, how we feel, how we act, and more importantly, how we perceive ourselves and our abilities.

The point is, if you want to change your body and life, you have to first change your thoughts and beliefs.

This is where self-talk comes in.

CHAPTER 1 – YOU AND YOUR SELF-TALK

Everyone talks to themselves; we all do it. More or less, whenever you think about something, you are talking to yourself.

Much of the time you are not even aware of this self-talk because it occurs automatically. Right now, as you read this book, conversations circulate in your head. The topic could be this book or what you plan to do this weekend. Maybe the dialogue is about work, school, or friends. Whatever the topic, you are always thinking (and thus self-talking) and these thoughts flow constantly, like sand through an hourglass.

Most of your self-talk, you are not consciously choosing. Although the conversations appear to be things you are deciding to say, they are simply coming into your awareness. You don't control it, it's just happening.

If you don't believe me, try to stop your self-talk. If you notice, it doesn't stop. All of a sudden you start thinking about not thinking and thinking about how to stop thinking, or even, why you can't stop thinking. But nonetheless, you are still thinking.

This might be a bit much to take in, but having your self-talk running like this is very useful to have.

For starters, your self-talk helps you to guide your decisions and actions. For example, when you step too close to the curb of a busy intersection, your inner voice will direct you to step back. When you don't want to get out of bed in the morning, your inner thoughts will nag you until you get up. I'm sure you've experienced this nagging, it'll say *Get up. You better get up now, it's getting late. You don't want to be late for work and have the boss yelling at you, now do you.* Next thing you know, you're getting up.

Your inner dialogue also helps you evaluate options. For example, you could be staring at the dinner menu at your favorite restaurant and

become aware of your inner voice saying things like this: *Oh the spaghetti looks good, but I had pasta for lunch. I am in the mood for something different. The surf and turf looks good to, but seems a bit pricey for my tastes. I know what I am going to get, chicken parmesan, that's it that's what I want.* When you come across various options, your self-talk helps you evaluate them so you can come to a sound decision.

More importantly, your self-talk will come up to remind you of things. If you are rushing home from work, you might hear a voice surface and say *I have to stop at the Laundromat to pick up the dry cleaning or don't forget about your son's baseball game this evening.*

As you can see, being able to tune into your self-talk in these ways can be helpful.

In other ways (as is the focus here) your self-talk is your 24 hours per day personal critic. It's always there assessing everything you're doing. It lets you know when you've done something wrong, when you have made a mistake or crossed the line in some way. In many cases, this is useful, as it acknowledges that you're off the mark in some way, and signals that you need to get back on track.

However, sometimes, and with some people, this critic has a way of getting out of control. It might constantly throw out all sorts of insults and negativity into your consciousness. It might say that you are not cut out for certain things, that you will make (too many) mistakes, or that you'll fail.

It might be harsher. When you make a mistake, your self-talk will berate you, put you down, and call you derogatory names. When you have a hard time making positive changes in your life, it may bemoan what a worthless person you are and conclude that you'll never do anything right.

Most often these messages begin as statements uttered by the adults in your life when you were a child. They may have said something negative about you when your actions displeased them, or perhaps they had a habit of saying unkind things even when you didn't deserve it. As painful as these experiences can be, your subconscious has a way of picking up where your

belittling parents left off and you continue to repeat the same negative messages to yourself over and over. If you listen carefully, you may hear their voice and hear the quote, something like, *you'll never amount to anything*. Other people's negative voice has a way of seeping in and becoming your inner voice

Although, your self-talk is a useful tool, having it running out of control like this can be detrimental – for several reasons.

First, you're thoughts affect your emotions, and if you have self-talk thoughts running out of control in a negative manner, you're going to frequently feel bad about yourself. Perhaps you can remember instances when your mood seemed to shift dramatically for no apparent reason. You were feeling fine, and then all of a sudden, you were angry, sad, or depressed. Most likely, unbeknownst to you, your self-talk began moving in an unproductive direction, triggering corresponding emotions.

Also, when you have these types of voices and feelings running in the background, it makes it hard to accomplish any task or goal you have. You are probably all too familiar with this. Think about a time in the past when you wanted to change your life in a positive way or when you wanted to try something new, but your self-talk came up and said things like, *Wait, I can't do that. Remember what happened last time, or What's the use, I always screw up anyways*. And as if by magic, your inner voice turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Lastly, when you allow these thoughts to run enough, they start to become beliefs. You actually start believing that you are a horrible person and that you are incapable, maybe even unworthy.

And as you will learn in the next chapter, when your self-defeating thoughts turn into self-defeating beliefs, it's over. These beliefs bind to you internally and make a lesser person out of you. Even if you consciously know these statements are false, it doesn't matter. When they become accepted within your subconscious, they guide all your decisions and actions as they were true.

What's even worse, the key beliefs you hold about yourself and your life continue to influence the general direction of all other self-talk you have. It's a cycle. Your beliefs influence your self-talk, and your self-talk reinforces your beliefs.

For many people, this cycle becomes a way of life. They get caught in a downward spiral of negative self-talk that damages many aspects of their being.

However, there is hope. You can break this cycle and guide your mind in a healthier, positive direction.

You can do this by interrupting your self-talk pattern. Although your self-talk is a habitual process that is running on its own, you can interrupt it. At anytime you want, you can stop the thought that berates you and puts you down, and replace it with something more encouraging.

If you have a habit of making mistakes and following the mistake with a statement like *I'm an idiot, I can't do anything right*, then the next time you make a mistake, interrupt the self-scolding with *I am smart, I do things right*, and notice the results that you get. If you have a tendency to say *I hate myself* a lot, disrupt the pattern with *I like myself*. Again notice the reaction.

Remember, you have a choice – the choice to choose your thoughts, or in this case, the choice to let the negative ones to keep running. By acting on this choice, not only do you reverse the cycle of reinforcing negative beliefs, but you tell your subconscious that you want to be guided in a different direction – a better direction. And you know what, it will follow suit. Your self-talk will trigger a way of thinking and feeling that will give you the results that you want – whether it's to avoid mistakes or to like yourself.

If you do it long enough, this interrupting and replacing will, in of itself, become a habit. The more you do it, the stronger it will get. Eventually, your self-talk messages will become self-sustaining beliefs, which will support the changes you want to make automatically.