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My Internal Conversation – 24/7/365

The Constant Conversation I Have with Myself



OVERVIEW

Our thoughts accumulate to become beliefs, so it is vitally important to control our thoughts. We do this by controlling our self-talk, that constant conversation that goes on in our minds. This self-talk is essential in forming our self-image, and can either build us up or tear us down. In fact, understanding the power of self-talk may be the most important thing we can ever learn.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, I will understand:

- that my beliefs are formed by the way that I talk to myself.
- what others tell me won't become a part of me unless I give sanction or agree with it.
- groups of people, large or small, have their own self-talk, and it is reflected in outward performance.

We build our own reality with our own thoughts.

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KEY CONCEPTS

Sanction: To give approval to; to agree with

Self-Talk: An act whereby one evaluates or assesses one's behavior; how one talks or reaffirms to oneself when one reacts to one's own evaluation, or others' evaluations of one's performance. Self-talk may have an affirming influence in establishing self-image.

The next time . . .: A vow to better performance at the next opportunity.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

1. In what areas of my life has my self-talk been very negative? In what areas has it been much more positive?
2. When I speak to those I care about, do I spend most of my time pointing out the things they do wrong, or what they do right?
3. How might I create an environment with my family, friends, classmates, or colleagues, where we focus on the positive and spend less time focusing on the negative?

EXERCISE: Fact or Opinion

For the list of sources in the middle of the table below, check whether you think information coming from these sources is “Fact” or “Opinion.” Prepare to defend your choices.

FACT	SOURCES	OPINION
	Newspapers	
	Television News	
	Social Networking Websites	
	Weekly Newsmagazine	
	Dictionary	
	Your Instructor	
	Blogsphere	
	Tweets	
	Electric Service Invoice	
	History Text	
	Religious Text	
	Doctor’s Prognosis	
	Math Text	
	Astronomy Picture of the Day	
	Wikipedia	

EXERCISE: Self-Talk and My Moods

Read the story on this page then answer the questions below the story. Do the same with the story on the next page.

MISSING DOG REUNITED WITH OWNER

Three years is a long time to be gone, but Titan recognized his owner immediately with a lot of jumping and wiggling. “I always thought he was still alive [but] after all this time, I had given up,” said Titan’s owner.

As a two-year-old, Titan had somehow escaped from a fenced-in backyard, and despite his owner contacting the local animal shelters and veterinarian offices, was never found. The only conclusion was that someone had picked up Titan, and kept him.

Three years later, a family brought the dog into a local pet re-homing organization, hoping to find another home for the dog. It seems Titan had continued his escape-artist ways, and the family could not handle him anymore. The dog was scanned for a microchip implant. The chip was found, but it had migrated down into one of Titan’s legs, far from the original insertion point. A call was made to Titan’s original owner.

“I was so surprised by the call,” said Titan’s owner. “Nothing I expected after all this time.” Titan was picked up the next day, with a lot of happy wiggling and jumping around. A representative for the shelter relayed, “It is thrilling to be able to reunite lost pets with their owners. This is definitely one of our happiest stories and we were so happy to bring the pair back together.”

1. What’s your initial response to the story about Titan? What was your self-talk like as you read the story?
2. How long is too long to hold onto a hope/goal/dream?
3. Have you ever wanted to give up?
4. What encourages you to persist toward that hope/goal/dream?

EXERCISE: Self-Talk and My Moods, cont.

Read the story on this page then answer the questions below the story.

STORM POUNDS N. CALIFORNIA WITH RAIN AND HIGH WINDS

A powerful winter storm slammed into Northern California causing power outages to thousands of homes and businesses as well as traffic delays throughout the greater Bay area. Flights were delayed or cancelled at San Francisco International Airport, ferries were bound to their docks, and travel across the Golden Gate Bridge was a challenge as high winds caused cars to swerve out of lanes.

Although there were multiple accidents on flooded roads and highways, there were no initial reports of serious injuries. An elementary school student was trapped for about 15 minutes under a fallen tree until rescuers with chain saws cut the tree apart. He was taken to the hospital with a possible broken arm. "It's a two-pronged punch. It's wind and rain. Once the ground gets saturated and the winds are howling, there's a bigger chance of trees going down on power lines," said a National Weather Service spokesperson.

Forecasters warn the impact could get worse. Mudslides are possible, especially in areas affected by this year's wildfires, and with as much as 8 inches of rain falling, rivers and creeks were rising fast. Northern Californians were warned days in advance of the coming storm, and many got ready. By Wednesday night some stores announced they had run out of water, batteries and flashlights, and some cities tweeted that they had no sandbags or sand left.

1. How did this story make you feel?
2. What was your self-talk like as you read the story?
3. Have you ever been in an extreme situation such as this?
4. Typically, what is your first response to stressful situations that are beyond your control?

Ultimately, we must control our self-talk or our self-talk will control us. It is important to bring our self-talk to conscious awareness, especially when it is running us down.

EXERCISE: Moods: By Accident or Intent?

There is significant research on the power of our self-talk to affect our moods. So, rather than leave our moods to chance, or react to the world around us, we can be proactive. We can be deliberate and intentional.

Take 30 seconds to write down as many of your favorite things as you can think of – people, places, foods, music, activities, whatever makes you happy.

Place this list on your nightstand or bathroom mirror. Begin each day by reading through your list. Take a few moments to reflect and remember those good, positive feelings.

After a week, do you look forward to reading your list? Do the memories make you smile?

Observe your self-talk. Has it been more positive?

Have your attitudes and reactions to situations changed? Have they been more positive?

SUMMARY: Fundamentals

We have already learned that our thoughts accumulate to become our beliefs, and that our beliefs about ourselves and the world around us have come from a lot of different sources – parents, grandparents, teachers and coaches. And, we have also learned that because of our beliefs, we are not seeing everything there is to see, hearing everything there is to hear – in short, we know we build scotomas because of our beliefs.

One more reminder: We think in pictures, triggered by the words we use or hear or think. And, we add emotions to those pictures, based on what has happened to us in the past. All of this is stored in our subconscious to become our reality – our strongest pictures that define who we think we are, our self-image.

It has been estimated that we have over 50,000 thoughts per day. That’s roughly one thought every 1-3/4 seconds! And that’s with our RAS keeping out perceptions from our senses that aren’t important to us at the moment!

So in the world of psycholinguistics this constant conversation we are having with ourselves is called “meta cognition” – or an easier way to think of it is “self-talk.” We are talking with ourselves constantly and while you are listening to me, you are thinking 3 times as fast as I am talking. When I stop talking, you speed up to 6 times faster!

Now, having all these thoughts during the day would be great, if they were positive and reinforcing of a healthy self-image. Unfortunately, for those who haven’t learned what you are learning, those thoughts are probably negative, sarcastic and belittling – internally and externally.

We do and say so much without thinking about it, that unconsciously we are reinforcing negative pictures, which cause a lower self-image and leave us feeling “less than” about ourselves, our current situations, and the environment around us. What we want to do is become more aware of what we say to ourselves, and what we hear from others.

So, in the spirit of greater awareness, I am going to give you another test. Don’t worry, it is not difficult, but it will be enlightening if you participate with a little attention and enthusiasm. Here goes: For the next 24 hours, you will not speak negatively to yourself, about yourself, or about anyone else. This is the No Negative Self-Talk Test – no sarcasm, no belittling, and no devaluation of yourself or others for 24 hours.

I know what you are thinking: It’s going to be mighty quiet around here! It might be, but I’m willing to bet that when this 24 hours is over, you will finally understand how negative your world has become, and how that negativity has affected your level of satisfaction with school or work, your family, and your own happiness.

Now, it is not enough to just be aware of the negativity. If you are like most people, you want to get out of the negativity rut. No one really wants to be unhappy. This is where the flip-side of Self-Talk comes in. Remember Words, Pictures and Emotions? Change the words, which give you different pictures, causing more positive emotions!

Now, the changing of the words needs to be purposeful – it cannot be left to chance. Now that you are aware of the negative self-talk, and you think or say something that is belittling or devaluative, say to yourself, “Stop it! I’m better than that. The next time, I intend to...” and then you tell yourself what you want to do better at the next time. You stop the current behavior, and replace it with a positive picture of the change you want.

I’m going to give you a little formula that will help you create the replacement pictures for your subconscious to use. $I \times V = R$. Imagination times Vividness equals Reality. This works because your subconscious cannot tell the difference between something that actually happens and a vivid picture being created. All it cares about are the pictures. That’s why Michael Jordan did all those free throws in his head – his Subconscious didn’t know they weren’t real. That’s why the best golfers see how they want to play a hole before they T-up the ball. Why hockey and soccer players look to the gaps in order to score, and why batters look for where the outfielders aren’t so they can hit the ball in the gaps.

Controlling your self-talk is probably the most important lesson I could teach you. It affects every belief and every behavior we play out in our lives. We use self-talk to create new pictures about what we want, and our behaviors follow – as long as those new, replacement pictures are stronger than the way current reality is for us right now. Our subconscious doesn’t care which way we go – the old picture, or the new one – it only follows the strongest picture.

Researchers say it takes three weeks to three months to create a new habit. You can use your positive self-talk to move faster and stronger to get you to what you want.

SUMMARY: Application

Thoughts accumulate to form beliefs. Once you learn this discipline, it will change your life forever. The discipline is controlling your self-talk.

A teacher walks into a Kindergarten classroom and asks, who in here is an artist? How many kids raise their hands? Most likely, all of them. Why?

How did this happen? A child draws a picture, mom or dad says it’s beautiful, and we have a positive thought for the child. Then mom hangs the artwork on the refrigerator, another positive thought for the child. Mom or Dad doesn’t have to keep telling the child how wonderful it is. The child just has to recall it with his own self-talk. Every time he recalls the wonderful comments about his artwork with his own self-talk, it’s like it’s happening again. Then, the child walks past the refrigerator, looks at the artwork, there it is again. That’s mine, he affirms it again with his own self-talk. Thinks about mom making such a big deal about it, it happens again. Then Grandma comes over and looks at the artwork on the refrigerator. “Who did this? Can I have it? You didn’t sign it, every great artist signs his work. I’m going to put it in a frame and place it on my mantle.” Again, another positive affirmation from the outside. He internalizes it, sanctions it, repeats it with his own self-talk, again and again and again.

But before Grandma can take the picture to her house, older brother walks by and sees the artwork. “What is it? That’s stupid! You didn’t even stay in the lines! You can’t draw. You can’t color.”

Even out of the mouth of a three-year-old, he may size up older brother and say, “Oh yeah, well Grandma loves it!” In other words, I sanction Grandma more than I sanction you.

We cannot control what the world has to say, but we can control what we have to say to ourselves. Thoughts accumulate to form beliefs. In areas where I think well of myself, chances are my own thoughts have allowed me to release the talents inside of me because of how I have built myself up with my own self-talk. But in other areas, what have I sanctioned, then kept pulling myself down with my own negative self-talk? It’s time to reverse the process in those areas.

