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Flip Negative Self-Talk Around!

Are you 'too' connected to your inner critic, that voice in your head that judges you, doubts you, belittles you, and constantly tells you that you are not good enough?

That voice often says things to you that you could never imagine saying to anyone else. *I'm such an idiot; I'm useless; I am ugly; no one likes me.*

This inner voice is neither insignificant nor harmless. It may slow or stop you from doing things you want to achieve, encountering the people you want to meet, and visiting the places you want to go. It disrupts your peace of mind and your emotional well-being. Over time, if not addressed, that voice can result in serious mental health problems like depression or anxiety.

Negative self-talk is never helpful or healthy. There are kinder and better ways to treat yourself that do not include negative labels and self-destructive mindsets.

Would you rather listen than read? Check out this 20-minute podcast: [Stop being so mean to yourself. Here are 5 tips to help you break the cycle](#)

Where Does This Self-Critical Voice Come From?

Negative self-talk may come from messages we have heard from others – a hypercritical caregiver, a school bully – or in the media. Triggers of self-talk are often linked to early childhood experiences, and you may actually be hearing someone else's voice inside your head!

The belief set that feeds your inner voice can also come from many of the 'isms', including racism, sexism, and ableism. The voice can be based on the narratives of who we are that have been directed and told by others. Negative self-talk can arise when we internalize these messages.

How Do We Diminish Negative Self-Talk, and Enhance Positive Self-Talk?

Step 1. Be aware of the critic – notice and collect information

To gain control over our inner critic we must be aware of when it speaks and what it says! Much of our thinking is automatic and quick. It can be hard to notice the content before we have moved on to the next thought, but we usually feel the impact.

Make a conscious effort to slow down and pay more attention to your thoughts so that you can notice when the critic is present. Your emotions may also alert you to the presence of your critic when you find yourself experiencing negative emotions that can include doubt, guilt, shame, and worthlessness.

Keep a log for two to seven days. Make note of when you are being self-critical and write two or three words about both the situation—*got up late, meeting with boss, fight with mom*—and the self-criticism—*I'm lazy, I'm a bad employee, I'm not a good daughter*. This helps identify what can trigger negative self-talk, and what the voice is saying.

You can then document the evidence that contradicts these messages. If you noted that *I never accomplish anything*, write that down examples that contradict this internal criticism.

Step 2. Separate the critic

You were not born with a brain full of negative self-talk. The critic is a voice that has invited itself in and is now a squatter in your brain. Try separating yourself from the critic. Give it a funny name, for example *"The Grumpy One"*. By separating it from your own identity, you are on your way to freeing yourself from its influence.

Step 3. Talk back

Talking back to your inner critic is an important part of taking away its power. Tell your Mr. Grumpy that you do not want to hear what it has to say; this helps you feel you have a sense of choice. When you hear the inner critic start to speak, tell it to go away and that you refuse to listen. Tell it that you know it is a liar and that you choose to be kind to yourself.

Step 4. Replace the critic

The best way to defeat the critic is to have an even stronger ally on your side. You need to grow an inner voice that acts as your own best friend. To do this, you need to start noticing the *good* things about yourself. No matter what the inner critic has told you, you do have positive traits, and it just may take you some effort to retrain yourself to see them.

Talk to yourself as if you are talking to a best friend, using self-compassion and gentle language.

Make a deliberate effort to use affirmations of positive self talk to change your thinking patterns. If your critic is known to say: *I am an idiot*, then practice affirmations that contradict this voice, such as *I often do smart things*, or *I do well at solving problems*. Find the affirmations that fit for you. Since Mr. Grumpy doesn't like to be wrong, affirmations with an alternate view will result in the negative self-talk showing up less.

For further ideas on how to stop negative self-talk I recommend this [Forbes article](#).

Final Word

Be kind to yourself. As for any student in our schools who is trying to grow and thrive, continuous criticism has the opposite effect in being damaging and limiting. We are all worthy of being treated kindly and with compassion by others and – most of all – by ourselves.

Other Source:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/living-forward/201603/4-ways-stop-beating-yourself-once-and-all>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.