

The C&A Express

How to Create Positive Self-Talk, Even When You're Feeling Stressed

Self-talk is the inner monologue (and sometimes dialogue!) we engage in when confronted with a stressful situation. **What we silently say to ourselves about the events we experience influences us in many profound ways.** Self-talk changes what we see and hear around us, what we feel within us, and what we remember when we look back on the experience.

Positive self-talk can be particularly helpful in mastering a stressful situation. The idea is to erase the mental "tapes" you normally play for yourself when confronted with stress, and replace them with new ones.

There are four basic stages in managing a stressful situation:

- *Preparing for the stressful situation;*
- *Coping with feelings as they start to build;*
- *Coping with the impact of the stressor;*
- *Reflecting after the stress has passed.*

Below is an example of how to use positive self-talk to help you manage a stressful situation:

Preparing for the Provocation:

- This could be a rough situation, but I know how to deal with it.
- I can work out a plan to handle this.
- Easy does it.
- Remember, stick to the issues and don't take it personally.
- There won't be any need for an argument.
- I know what to do.

Coping with Emotions:

- As long as I keep my cool, I'm in control of the situation.
- You don't need to prove yourself. Don't make more out of this than you have to.
- There is no point in getting mad. Think of what you have to do.
- Look for the positives and don't jump to conclusions.

Impact and Confrontation:

- Muscles are getting tight. Relax; slow things down.
- Time to take a deep breath.
- Let's take the issue point by point.
- My anger is a signal of what I need to do. Time for problem solving.
- This person probably wants me to get angry, but I'm going to deal with this constructively.

Subsequent Reflection:

If the conflict was resolved -

- I handled that one pretty well. Good job! I could have gotten more upset than it was worth.
- My pride can get me into trouble, but I'm doing better at this all the time. I actually got through that without getting mad.

If the conflict was not resolved -

- Forget about the aggravation.
- Thinking about it only makes you upset.
- Try to shake it off. Don't let it interfere with what you need to do.
- Remember relaxation.
- It's a lot better than anger.
- Don't take it personally. There may be more to this situation than meets the eye.

When you make a mistake, are you harder on yourself for a longer period of time than you would ever dream of being with another person? If someone were to talk to a friend of yours the way you talk to yourself, you would quickly rise to your friend's defense and demand that the verbal abuse stop immediately!

Creating positive self-talk is a skill, which means you must find some phrases that work for you and practice using them on yourself regularly. And if you want to work on your "internal monologue" but are feeling stuck, remember that counselors are always available to help you through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

EAP: (800) 742-2858

It's free, confidential, and available to employees and their family members 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Help the Child in Your Life Build Self-Esteem

Encouraging self-esteem in children requires more than the "unconditional love" we often hear about. Aunts, uncles, and other adults in a child's life can help parents in this task.

Here are some ideas to practice with the child in your life:

- **Be accepting and empathic:** When a child of any age shares his/her feelings, adults need to accept them as legitimate. Try to empathize even when a child is upset about things that seem like "small stuff" to you.
- **Show respect as well as love:** It's easy to become impatient or critical when a child is sharing his or her ideas. Listen carefully, and maintain eye contact while the child is speaking. Respect his or her personal space. We often treat children as though they are people in training instead of whole persons in their own right. Common courtesy should prevail.

**"All children wear the sign,
'I want to be important NOW.'
Many of our juvenile delinquency problems arise because
nobody reads the sign."**

~ Dan Pursuit

- **Make sure each child gets 20 minutes of focused attention per day:** Doesn't seem like a lot to ask, does it? But most parents when pressed will admit that their children often don't get twenty minutes per week. It's never too late to change! And spending "quality time" upon occasion with a trusted aunt, uncle, or grandparent can be a safe way to show children that adults other than their parents enjoy their company as well.

- **Compliment and encourage your child:** Many adults make the mistake of ignoring children's predominantly good behavior but regularly blasting them for occasional misbehavior. Why not accentuate the positive? Verbally is great, but a note in a lunch box, a message on her pillow, or a post-it note on his computer will do, too.

"Have a heart that never hardens, a temper that never tires, a touch that never hurts."

~ Charles Dickens (1812-70)

English novelist, fiction writer

- **Set firm but realistic limits:** Whether they're two or fourteen, children feel more confident and secure when they know you're in charge. Consistently enforced limits tell a child that he is safe and loved, and that his environment is ordered and predictable. Older children will feel more respected if you involve them in negotiating these boundaries.
- **Do things with your child and not just for your child:** You may donate money to several worthy causes, but you roll up your sleeves to volunteer only when you care very deeply. It's the same with kids. Making them feel worthy of your time is even better than making them feel worthy of your money and the belongings that it brings. Don't forget, kids like to spend quality time with their aunts and uncles, too!
- **Admit when you're wrong and be willing to apologize:** Apologizing after losing your temper or failing to keep a promise tells your child that you value her feelings enough to ask forgiveness. Saying "I'm sorry" is one of the most humbling and honest things a parent can do. If your child hears you apologize, she'll learn forgiveness as well, which will make it easier to forgive herself and others, too.

For More Information...Please Contact Your EAP at 800/742-2858