

What is Negative Self-Talk?

We're taught not to let others put us down, but sometimes the person eroding our sense of self-worth and limiting our potential is *us*! That's right, our self talk, or the words our inner dialogue uses when we think, can increase our stress levels and limit our potential.

When your self talk is negative, you may perceive things as more stressful. For example, when you tell yourself something is 'difficult' or 'unfair', it becomes more stressful to deal with than if you tell yourself it's a 'challenge', or even a 'test'.

If you say "I can't handle this", you more likely can't. This is because your subconscious mind tends to believe the thoughts it hears. You can limit your abilities by telling yourself you "can't", that "this is too hard" or that you "shouldn't even try".

When you tell yourself you can't handle something (or some other self-limiting thought), you tend to stop looking for solutions. For example, notice the difference between telling yourself you can't handle something and asking yourself *how you will* handle something. Doesn't the second thought feel more hopeful and produce more creativity?

Negative self talk tends to be a self-fulfilling prophecy!



Identify & Stop the Negative Talk

The first step toward change is to become more aware of the problem. You probably don't realize how often you say negative things in your head, or how much it affects your experience. The following strategies can help you become more conscious of your internal dialogue and its content.

Journal Writing: Whether you carry a journal around with you and jot down negative comments when you think them, write a general summary of your thoughts at the end of the day, or just start writing about your feelings on a certain topic and later go back to analyze it for content, journaling can be an effective tool for examining your inner process.



Rubber-Band Snap: Another therapeutic trick is to walk around with a rubber band around your wrist; as you notice negative self-talk, pull the band away from your skin and let it snap back. It'll hurt a little, and serve as a slightly negative consequence that will both make you more aware of your thoughts, and help to stop them! (Or, if you don't want to subject yourself to walking around with a rubber band on your wrist, you'll be even more careful to limit the negative thoughts!)

Thought-Stopping: As you notice yourself saying something negative in your mind, you can stop your thought mid-stream by saying to yourself "Stop". Saying this aloud will be more powerful, and having to say it aloud will make you more aware of how many times you are stopping negative thoughts, and where.



Tapping Technique: Thought Field Therapy, or TFT, is an alternative treatment developed by an American psychologist, Roger Callahan, Ph.D. This technique is designed to stop the cycle of negative thoughts, food cravings and other myriad of ailments. The theory behind TFT is that negative emotions cause energy blockage and if the energy is unblocked then the fears will disappear. Tapping acupressure points is thought to be the means of unblocking the energy. (See back of this page for technique steps.)



Making a Positive Change

Use the Tools: By keeping a journal and using these other tools to become more aware of your inner voice, using positive affirmations and surrounding yourself with positive energy, you can turn things around for the better, and experience much less mental and emotional stress in your daily life.

12 Positive Affirmations

Write down your own affirmations. Here are some examples...

- I deserve to feel good.
- I am healthy and strong.
- I have unique abilities and talents.
- I take care of myself.
- I feel safe and confident.
- I deserve to enjoy time to myself.
- I can make a difference.
- I am a good friend.
- I am willing to take risks to grow and change.
- When something goes wrong, I'll handle it.
- I am a good person, mistakes and all.
- I am worthy and capable

Be Sure They're Positive: When making positive affirmations, be sure they're *positive*! This means saying what you *want* to see and experience, not what you *don't want* to see and experience. For example, instead of saying, "I don't want to feel stress," or even, "I've stopped feeling stress," use, "I'm feeling peace". Sometimes your mind doesn't register the negative, and it just hears the concept, "stress", which is what you're trying to avoid.

The Tapping Technique

1. I want you get the biggest desire for a food that you can right now. If you don't have a big enough craving, put this technique to one side and come back to it when you're really feeling it.

2. Focus on this craving for a moment, and when you've thought of that I'd like you to rate your desire for a food on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest. This is important, because in a moment we want to know how much you've reduced it.

3. On a scale of 1- 10, how strong is your craving? Remember, if you're not really craving a bite (i.e. your craving is not at least a 7), come back to this technique later.

4. Now take two fingers of either hand and tap about ten times under your collarbone while you continue to think about eating.

5. Now tap under your eye ten times.

6. Now tap under your collarbone again.

7. Place your other hand in front of you and tap on the back of it between your ring finger and your little finger. Continue to think about your desire for food as you do this and each of the steps which follow:

- Close your eyes and open them.
- Keep your head still, keep tapping and look down to the right then down to the left.

Keep tapping and rotate your eyes round 360 degrees clockwise, and now 360 degrees anti-clockwise.

Remember to keep thinking about the food you were craving as you do this!

- Now hum the first few lines of 'Happy Birthday' out loud.
 - Count out loud from 1 to 5.
- Once again hum the first few lines of 'Happy Birthday' out loud.

8. Stop and check - on a scale from 1 to 10, what number is your craving at now?

If it hasn't completely gone yet, just repeat this sequence again until it does.