

Self-Talk, True Talk

Self-talk is the conscious or subconscious inner dialogue we say to ourselves, which affects how we feel and what we do. Sometimes, without meaning to, we may lie to ourselves and think things about ourselves that are untrue or exaggerated. Sometimes exaggerating the positives in a situation can feel good, but usually we can't fool ourselves for long. Even more often, these exaggerations are negative, which can lead us to feel even worse. When we pay attention to our self-talk and listen for words and phrases like the ones that follow, we can catch ourselves exaggerating and can work on using self-talk that is both positive and true, which helps us deal effectively with our feelings and the world.

Sometimes we think in absolutes. That can mean that our self-talk includes words such as:

- *always* or *never*
- *everyone* or *no one*
- *everything* or *nothing*
- *all* or *none*
- *can't* or *impossible*

Other times, our self-talk uses negative and exaggerated words such as:

- *worst*
- *horrible*
- *worthless*
- *gross*
- *disaster*

Sometimes we blame ourselves or put ourselves down in our self-talk with strong and hurtful words like:

- *stupid*
- *loser*
- *ugly*
- *disgusting*
- *hateful*
- *failure*
- *I deserve this*

Listen to your self-talk for these words and others like them. When you hear them, try to step back and look at what you're saying as honestly and objectively as you can. Ask yourself, "Is what I'm telling myself really true? Why am I so sure it's true? If it's not true, what is closer to the truth?"

You may find that you have certain words or ideas that you think repeatedly. Be careful, because even if you know something you're telling yourself isn't true, you might end up believing it if you say it often enough. Words are powerful and can be hurtful both to others and to you. So keep paying attention to what you say to yourself, especially when you are feeling discouraged or upset. If you're using negative self-talk, those negative thoughts are probably reinforcing your negative feelings. When you can change your thoughts for the better, you can work on breaking that cycle and begin feeling better.