

Talk to Yourself to Reduce Anxiety

Chances are if you are living and breathing you are likely to have at least one conversation with someone today. But the most important conversation is the one you will have with yourself. No, I don't mean literally talking to yourself out loud, although you may do that too, I am referring to the concept of self-talk.

These messages you send to yourself about situations, people and yourself are mostly comprised of automatic thoughts. Thoughts that are based on past experiences, things said by others, or by self that we just accept and do not question. These thoughts become so engrained and habitual that they repeat themselves like a skipping CD. BUT just because the thoughts are there does not mean they are true! Learning to talk to yourself, changing your self-talk, can reduce anxiety, lead to greater happiness, and success in addition to contribute to overall wellness.

Learn to talk to yourself in a healthy way by following these steps:

1. **Evaluate.** Become aware of your self-talk. Think about what you are thinking, what messages are you sending yourself? Look for those repeating messages and write them down. Examples: "He/she was so rude to me today. I know they don't like me, they think I am an idiot, in fact No one likes me."
2. **Investigate.** Become a thought detective! Ask things like: Where is the evidence for or against these thoughts? Am I assuming what someone is thinking or am I jumping to a conclusion? Using the example above, is it possible said person was having a bad day and their mood had nothing to do with you? Do you **really know** what he or she is thinking about you?
3. **Compensate.** Make a new balanced thought. Our self-talk is often unbalanced which tends to make it untrue. The goal is to replace these untrue thoughts with a balanced thought nested in truth. The above example becomes "I don't know what they think about me. Their rudeness says more about them than it does about me. I may not be liked by everyone but I am liked and loved by those that matter most to me."
4. **Reiterate.** Repeat the new thought either mentally or aloud if you want each time the old thought enters your mind.

Be patient restructuring your thoughts takes time but it is well worth it. Don't get caught in the trap of beating yourself up for beating yourself up!

*These steps are intended to give you a start to changing and restructuring your thoughts and can/should be used in conjunction with counseling.