

Hello, What Did You Say? Am I Talking To Me?

Would you like to be as successful as you are capable of being?

Yes... then give yourself the gift of a mental toughness advantage... it will last you a lifetime. There are numerous tools and techniques one can learn to achieve superior mental toughness and take one more step to your ultimate success.

The 5 cornerstones of Mental Training are Visualization, Concentration, Rituals, Relaxation, and Self-Talk. Each component is a separate and unique piece of an intricate puzzle. Of all the Mental Training components, self-talk can be the most challenging and self-defeating to an individual. But also the most powerful and life changing. Nothing steals the joy, drive, and success from an athlete like negativity.

In an attempt to create consistent success and excellence, special attention must be paid to your inner voice. Is your inner voice critical or supportive? Friend or foe? Each individual has a dominant voice, either positive or negative. Learning to distinguish between the supportive voice and the critical voice and then learning to maximize the use of the positive voice can often mean the difference between reaching excellence through your individual goals and dreams or falling short. (This is true for career, relationships, education, athletics, play and all other aspects of life.)

It is crucial that each individual have a strong belief in him/herself in order to achieve success in all areas of life. In order to have a strong belief in one's self, the dominant voice in your head

~ If you want peak performance and athletic success, you must consider: What am I saying when I talk to myself ...?

must to be a powerfully positive and encouraging one. Humans think approximately 60,000 thoughts per day and because 2 out of 3 Americans report having low self-esteem, nearly two thirds of these 60,000 thoughts tend to be negative. The other third is mainly comprised of observations or neutral thoughts such as, "I need to feed the dog", or "I am hungry". Then of course there are the occasional positive thoughts!

A belief is a conviction that certain things are true, whether or not there is evidence to support this belief. A limiting belief that is a negative belief about yourself that limits your potential and your ability to strive for excellence. Self-limiting beliefs are often the cause of depression, burnout, plateaus, anxiety and many other life problems. Limiting beliefs are usually born out of childhood but frequently are not truths. Rarely does an individual rise above his/her own self-imposed limitations, and rarer still is the individual who recognizes these limitations in the first place! I challenge you to become aware!

5 Steps to More Powerful Results!

The following 5 points will help you bring awareness to the way you talk to yourself and assist you in changing your critical voice into a more positive and encouraging one.

1. What Are Your Limiting Beliefs?

Take out a sheet of paper and begin listing all the things you believe are not possible for you to achieve, as well as all the negative concepts you hold about yourself. The easiest way to do this exercise is to divide your life in to

sections (marriage / relationship, friends, work, play, education, etc.) and address each area separately. There is likely to be a good amount of overlap. It may take a week or two to be aware of this question to come up with all of the possible answers. **Hint:** Look back and notice patterns of results. Negative results and patterns that show up in life usually stem directly from limiting beliefs. Once you become aware of these limiting beliefs, you can begin creating an action plan to create new, positive beliefs!

2. STOP “Should-ing” On Yourself!

Our internal critical voice uses “shoulds” daily as a lethal injection to our confidence and self-esteem! Subjecting ourselves to our impossible “shoulds” can only hinder performance and lower confidence. Each person’s “shoulds” are comprised of unreasonable rules to live by. This is true in relationships, career, athletics, and all other aspects of life.

Examples: (1) “I should be the best tennis player here, I have played much longer than these other people”; (2) “I work hard at my job and I should be the top sales person by now”; (3) “I should have the best and happiest marriage.”

Self-imposed “shoulds” will weaken the mind, confidence, and ultimately your ability to be your best. The seemingly harmless “should” will always leave you feeling less confident, less empowered, less in all areas of your life.

Knocking Out The “Shoulds”:

A number of my clients have had great success with the following method: Try keeping a notebook with you at all times for a week or two. Each time you

recognize a “should” statement, write it down. Do not review the notebook until the allotted time is up. Upon completion of the two weeks review the multitude of “shoulds”. Notice what area of life you are the most critical of yourself (school, work, family, spouse, recreation, workout/sport, friends). You will be surprised at just how critical you are of yourself; humans are unfortunately naturally self-critical! Next, rephrase each should into a positive or neutral statement. Example: Change “I should have won that race, it was very important to the team” to, “I did my best, there will be another race next week, I’ll do better then!” What is done, is done and by “shoulding” on yourself, you will actually weaken your chances of succeeding the next time.

Inevitably you will find 1 or 2 “shoulds” that do have merit and are reasonable behaviors to change. However, rather than further abusing yourself verbally, simply create and implement an action plan at once!

Upon completion of this exercise you will find yourself much more aware of your critical voice and more in control of it. You will be that much closer to achieving your goals and dreams!

Out of control thinking leads to out of control performance. Disciplined thinking leads to consistent peak performance and success in all areas of life!

3. “Watch Your Language!”

The way in which an individual forms sentences can often mean the difference between feeling less and lowering your self-esteem or feeling confident. Here are a few examples:

Permanent vs. Temporary-- The confident person thinks in temporary terms: “I didn’t do well *this time*”. The

defeated person thinks in permanent terms: "I will *never* sell enough product well".

Global vs. Specific-- The confident person is specific: "I meet my quota *today*". The defeated person is global: "I can't *ever* meet my quota."

Personal vs. External-- The confident person looks outside of him/herself: "The *competition* was difficult today". The defeated person takes the blame: "I am terrible in competition".

Occasional poor mistakes, failures and disappointments are to be expected; be accepting of yourself! When life situations are difficult and challenging, look for the lessons and move on. Even when you make mistakes and fail there are still always things you have done well, look for those things and praise yourself for them! It is impossible to actually do everything wrong or poorly, but very possible to do everything wrong in your mind!

4. Affirmations

The power of positive affirmations is often overlooked. Affirmations are basically simple, short, positive and easy-to-repeat statements that you say to yourself in a systematic way. Frequent repetition of these statements or thoughts will in time turn into a new, positive and powerful belief.

Steps to creating powerful affirmations:

- State your affirmations in the present tense. Avoid word like "can't", "should", "must", "have to" and "try". Say "I am", "I will", as if it is already true.
- Include only positive words. Instead of "I won't do well", say "I am doing great".
- Some of your affirmations will be specific and some general, depending upon the belief you are re-creating.
- Make your affirmations believable!

- Write your affirmations down for reinforcement. A goal is 100 times more likely to be achieved if it is written down.
- Repeat them to yourself systematically, say 10 repetitions in the morning before you get out of bed, 10 at lunch time and 10 before you fall asleep.
- Say them out loud when you have the opportunity. This lets you download thoughts to your brain's speech center, which activates two more parts of your brain: the auditory and kinesthetic.
- Trust that this method will raise your confidence and ultimately your level of success!

Sample affirmations:

- I am always in control of my emotions
- I am achieving my goals
- I view mistakes as stepping-stones to success
- I am capable and confident
- I am totally prepared
- I am in control of my habits and behaviors
- I am strong, confident, and skilled
- I am improving every day

5. Thoughts VS. Emotions

Many thoughts are uncontrollable, thoughts may be fleeting or they may reside there indefinitely. Emotions are within your control. In order for there to be an emotion, there must first be a thought. When a thought comes to mind we can learn to choose to either agree or disagree with this thought, let it go or take it in and turn it into an emotion. A parent, co-worker, teammate, spouse, friend or you, yourself can inspire thoughts.

If a friend tells me that I have green hair when in fact it is blond I will not be affected by this comment and thus will not have any negative emotions. I will deem this statement as simply untrue. I will let this thought be a fleeting one. If my same friend tells me that I am mean

or thoughtless, I can agree with this thought and become angry or hurt, saying to myself, "see, I knew it, everyone thinks I am a bad person". Or I could say to myself, "this is untrue, my friend is just really down in the dumps this week and isn't paying attention to what she is saying!", *I then let it go.*

You see, a person can only feel bad and experience negative or painful emotions if he or she goes inside and agrees with the negative thoughts, whether the

thoughts originated in your own mind or some one else's!

Transforming your thought process into positive and encouraging thinking is one step to having a successful and joyful life! After all, a joyful and successful life begins with a powerfully positive and encouraging mind!

"The one thing over which you have absolute control is your own feelings. It is this which puts you in a position to control your own destiny." Paul G. Thomas

Shawn Byler, Ph.D.

Performance Coach, Consultant and Licensed Therapist

Momentum Performance Development

Phone: 770.739.1598 Fax: 770.739.1893

Email: sbyler@create-momentum.com

Website: create-momentum.com

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