

SELF-TALK

How Self-Talk Affects Stress

Most people carry on a silent conversation with themselves during much of the day. These internal dialogues can actually direct your thoughts and behaviors. Understanding what self-talk is and how it affects you is the first step in learning how to rewrite your own self-talk "script" and talk your way to a less stressful way of life.

Positive Or Negative?

Self-talk is very much like a self-fulfilling prophecy—something you think about so much you actually make it come true. When your self-talk is positive—"Everything will work out;" "I know I can do the job;"—you are giving yourself permission to succeed, and chances are, you will. When your self-talk is negative—"I know I'll have a lousy time;" "I'm not smart enough to be supervisor;"—you're giving up on yourself and chances are you won't even try to succeed. Often your self-talk reflects the values and behaviors you learned as a child, and the self-esteem you now have as an adult.

Thoughts And Behaviors


Self-talk can direct your thoughts and behaviors. If you think, "I know I can do the job," you'll be more willing to apply and have a much better chance of success. If you say to yourself, "I'll never get hired for that position," you probably won't even apply, guaranteeing that you won't get the job.

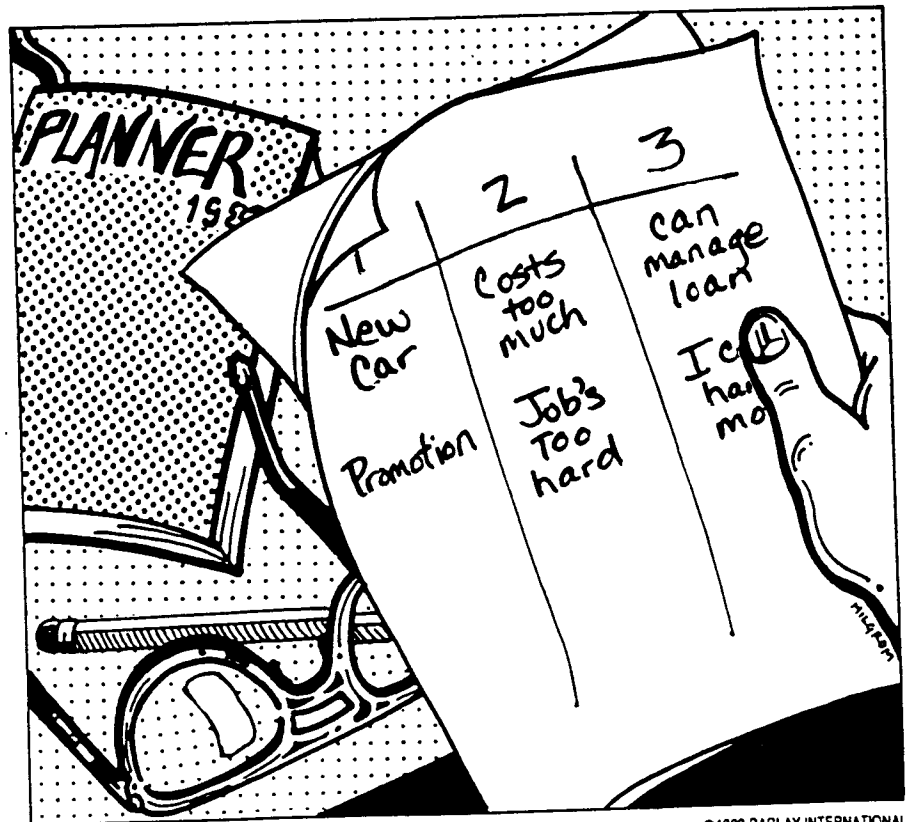
Stress Response

Negative self-talk can cause or increase your distress, and can make effects such as headaches or stomach pain much worse. Self-talk can also encourage you to behave in destructive ways which further stress your body. ("No one cares, so why shouldn't I have another drink?") Fortunately, positive self-

talk can have the opposite effect, leading to lower stress levels.

How To Rewrite Your Script

Learn to listen to your own self-talk. Draw three columns on a sheet of paper. In the first column, write several things you would like to happen. "I'd like a new car." "I'd like to lose 10 pounds." Then, close your eyes and listen to how you respond to each item. Write your self-talk in the second column: (Example: "We can't afford it." "I can do it. I've done it before.") In the third column, write down a thought which is the *opposite* of the one in column two. Look over your list. If column two is more positive than column three, you're already on your way to thinking positively. If column two is more negative, look at column three for a more helpful, healthier response. Practice choosing positive self-talk. You'll feel happier, more confident, and less stressed. 



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