

Self-Talk: Moving from unhealthy inner-monologues to constructive inner-dialogue (iii)



Words are powerful. Yet as powerful as they are, words cannot and will not have an effect on us unless we believed them. Try saying "I can fly" repeatedly, open your windows and make your leap. You won't because you don't believe it.

In this wrap-up article of the 2+1 Self-Talk strategy, we look at the final phase of the practice of constructive inner-dialogue. Specifically, we will learn to harness the power of words and the power of our mind to make them work for us.

We learnt from the previous articles about brain-wiring. The more a message is repeated in different ways, the stronger the brain wires it in. You believe that you are 'not good enough' because you heard and

experienced it in different ways and from different sources. Your mother said, "I can't believe you cannot do something so simple." Your teacher did not include you for a class outing. You failed in several job applications. When it got hammered into you repeatedly, you begin to believe 'I am just not up to the mark.' You accepted and identified with those beliefs. They became what you said to and of yourself - resulting in an auto-programming.

We have learnt that we no longer need to be at the mercy of our old/auto programming. We can now decide to take control moment by moment the programming process by applying our new understanding of brain re-wiring and neuroplasticity (previous article). We can commit to a new habit of increasing our self-awareness and changing our self-talk.

Knowing how our brain wires us puts us in an advantageous position. The brain will re-wire us to who we want to be in the same way that it wired us to who we have become. The difference is;- whilst it was others' thoughts, words, demands and influences that have controlled and directed us in the past, we now take personal control of our mind and thoughts and steer them towards where we want them to go. We are the source of the words, thoughts and influences. For these to have power, they must come from a place of conviction. We must believe in them. Hence the importance of the 'Platform' mentioned in the last article; a Platform that premises on 'Principle', 'Position' and 'Posture'. Convincingly and forcefully we present to our control command of the brain "This is what I choose... (about this thought, belief, etc) This is the principle that guides me. This is the position I take. This is the posture I adopt. This is me - the 'Me' I want to become.

Connect-Point

The objective of changing our unhealthy inner-monologue into constructive inner-dialogue is to override the old and create the new simultaneously. Just as the old programming got wired into us from diverse sources and got imprinted deep into our being, we have to be deep, diverse and detailed when doing this 'practise phase'. We involve as much of ourselves as is possible. We deploy methods as varied as we can think of. We engage as many of our senses as is practical.

Let's say you have caught yourself engaging in self-talk along the lines of 'I am not good enough'. You begin an inner-dialogue, an honest conversation with yourself. What emotions do the messages trigger? You note accompanying bodily sensations. How do they make you feel? What do they drive you to do? Do you like what they do to you? This process of self-probing and asking deep penetrating questions requires us to involve as much of ourselves as is possible. If you do not like what the old self-talk messages do to you, you can work on replacing them. You do this by moving from an inner-monologue of passive acceptance to a constructive inner-dialogue. It can look something like this:-

'This thought/belief/old self-talk that 'I am not good enough' is no longer true. It is not helpful to us. We (young you and adult you) need to update it. (Why?) (What is the new governing principle?)

Principle: We are not perfect. No one is. That does not mean that we are not good enough. Depending on the direction this inner-dialogue takes, issues of worth, identity and self-acceptance may surface. You should lead yourself to take new positions on these issues. **Position:** There are things we are strong at. We shall discover what we are good at and accept those we are weak at. We can work to strengthen our weak areas. **Posture:** (What has this false belief driven us to do?) We shall not let the thought that we are not good enough make us run away from people and tasks. We have been doing that. (Why?) We are afraid of how people look at us. (why?) We are afraid that when they discover that we are really not good enough, they will not accept us? (Why is their acceptance so important to us?)*

Asking ourselves questions in the whole inner-dialogue process is crucial. Asking 'why' in self-

probing is extremely useful. The deeper we dig, the harder we query, the bigger will be our self-discovery, the greater our self-awareness.

These sessions, when we start, are best done with an objective and safe person. The challenge in doing it alone is that we can get caught up in cobwebs we have spun for ourselves when we deep probe. *At this point for instance, other related unhelpful beliefs may surface. We need a certain degree of mindfulness and mental discipline to track our thoughts, recognise secondary issues and know when a new cycle of declaring from the platform of PPP is needed. Wherever this inner-dialogue may take us, we must always ensure that we end each session on a constructive, positive and self-affirming note.

It is important to also deploy diverse methods in this strategy. Speaking out loud our new thoughts/principles/beliefs/position/posture is just one method. We can get creative. We can record what we speak aloud and revisit. We can draw. We can journal. We can create mental pictures along with our verbal declarations by involving our imagination. Words assume great power when coupled with imagination. In our mind's eyes, we imagine erasing something as we declare a belief as false and unhelpful. We imagine a wall crumbling as the battering ram hit at it repeatedly. The resources available within each of us are limitless.

The key to re-wiring is repetition. What we want to do is to build up a whole body of consistent messages to augment and reinforce the decision to replace and change the old programming to new ones. The more of our senses are engaged, the more specific our direction, the more diverse the methods, the more detailed or complete the mental picture, the quicker our brain gets it and works for us.

The potential power to initiate transformation is within us. If we choose to live our life with active intent rather than passive acceptance, this new habit of self-talk will bring what is in the dark, into the light. Soon, we will find that we are not as enslaved by our default way of thinking, emoting and behaving as before. We become more and more the person we want and are meant to be.