

## Types of Self-Defeating Communication

If there was a law against people verbally abusing themselves, it would be a safe bet that most Americans would now be in jail. The things we say to ourselves both silently and out loud are amazing! And we say these things to ourselves almost constantly. For example, how many times have you found yourself making derogatory remarks about how you reacted to a situation you have just experienced? We tend to judge and invalidate our actions when they are out of sync with our beliefs about what is right and wrong or good and bad.

If you are like the average person in our society, I suspect that you make such self-deprecating statements all too frequently. Likewise, I strongly suspect that the frequency with which you verbally abuse yourself about goals detracts significantly from your results.

I have good reason for both suspicions. First, it is common knowledge that people talk to themselves when involved with certain tasks. Salespeople talk to themselves before meeting a client, lawyers talk to themselves about judges and jurors and musicians talk to themselves about the requirements of a piece they will play. Butcher, baker, or candlestick maker - it makes no difference. All people talk to themselves.

There are two types of self-defeating statements that people are prone to make. First, there are negative self-statements; that is, statements that deprecate your own self-worth and abilities. Second, there are self-pressure statements; that is, statements that bring greater pressure on you than the situation demands.

When you make either self-pressuring statements or negative self-statements, several things can happen, most of which are bad. Negative self-statements frequently become what we call self-fulfilling prophecies. This simply means that because we expect negative reactions from ourselves, based on the negative things we've said about ourselves, we are likely to behave accordingly. This is because we begin to think obsessively about how bad we are rather than think about what we need to do in order to properly execute.

Fortunately, simply by being aware of these types of self-defeating statements, you can work to develop a positive approach to your self-talk, and overcome this negative cycle. One of the quickest ways is something my father taught me from his days of teaching the "Silva" method. When you catch yourself using self-defeating language you say the words, "Cancel, Cancel." This statement tells the brain to erase the last statement. I would suggest you then replace the thought with something positive.

Awareness is the first step and then retraining is next. With positive practice a new pattern of optimistic thinking will develop. You are now armed with this new information to rewrite the self-defeating statements with new positive affirmative statements that will train your brain to accomplish your loftiest goals.

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