

Self-Talk: changing the mind chatter

Many moods, emotions and feelings are sustained or even caused by mind chatter. If we alter this mind chatter, we can actually change the way we feel inside.

- Self-talk can accompany both positive and negative emotions.
 - ☺ Positive self-talk: optimists
 - ☹ Negative self-talk: pessimists
- Address negative self-talk.

You already feel badly enough, ongoing negative emotions take away the joy of living and contribute to negative feelings – hopelessness and helplessness.

Self-talk = automatic, happens very quickly, not phrased in complete sentences. Example: get up in the morning, move and feel pain and numbness.

You might say:

Oh, Gosh, it is still here, I could not sleep again, another sleepless night, I am so groggy from the pills, my mouth is dry, I can't stand it anymore. How long is this going to go on? Will it ever go away? I have suffered enough already. What have I done to deserve this? Another day in pain. What am I going to do? I am so miserable. I wish nobody calls me today. No one care anyway.

How do you feel?

- These statements about your sleep are depressing or anxiety-provoking because they intertwine both realistic and unrealistic descriptions of what is going on.
- Do not confuse your efforts to work on negative thinking with judging yourself and your thoughts as good or bad. The question is not whether they are good or bad, but when they are effective or ineffective.
- We all engage in negative thinking from time to time. We create an inaccurate reality by doing so.
- Distort, magnify, all-or-nothing → defeated and helpless. Victims of the idea that the outside world or external events are responsible for our misery.

True: Pain is still here and you are miserable.

- However, other statements are exaggerated, black and white assumptions whose accuracy can and should be challenged.
 - You are not necessarily useless because you have pain. And you really don't know if you will feel miserable the whole day. And what does this have to do with people caring?
 - Power of cognitive (mind) work lies in the opportunity it provides you to challenge what you say to yourself. You can reflect on why you feel the way you feel, and on how you might change that.
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Scenario: traffic jam (alternatives)

Thoughts:

Feelings:

Physical responses:

Right to be frustrated, aggravated and agitated when bad things happen. You certainly do! But here, we are talking about choices. If getting aggravated and agitated is your preferred mode of operation, go right ahead.

But if your negative emotional state increases your emotional distress, and your physical pain, then time to reconsider and make a choice.

- Where do irrational and distorted thoughts come from?
- Cultural beliefs and vocabulary influence how we see the world around us.
- Our predisposition of short-term planning leaves us vulnerable to long-term consequence.
- Gender and culture influences interpersonal communication.
- Identify content of assumptions and beliefs that lie behind self-talk.

Reference: Rational emotive therapy (A. Ellis).

Much suffering comes from the irrational ways we perceive the world. Exaggerated, self-defeating thoughts that we engage in → pessimism and ineffectual behaviours and limit our possibilities.

9 irrational beliefs that get us into trouble:

1. It is an absolute necessity for an adult to have love and approval from peers, family and friends.
2. You must be unfailingly competent and almost perfect in all you undertake.
3. Certain people are evil, wicked and villainous, and should be punished.
4. It is horrible when people and things are not the way you would like them to be.
5. External events cause human misery – people simply react as events trigger their emotions.
6. You should feel fear or anxiety about anything that is unknown, uncertain, or potentially dangerous.
7. It is easier to avoid than to face life's difficulties and responsibilities.
8. The past has a lot to do with determining the present.
9. Happiness can be achieved by inaction, passivity, and endless leisure.

Beliefs not necessarily irrational or crazy. Not absolutely untrue under all circumstances. But they are certainly irrational if you believe in them unwaveringly – if you believe that they are absolutely true under all circumstances. You allow them to govern your thoughts and behaviours accordingly.

For example, making mistakes does feel horrible, but it is also human!