

Self-Talk

All of us talk to ourselves. We might not realise it, but our brain is talking to us, and our **thinking** is affecting our **feelings** and our **behaviour**.

We talk to ourselves about what is happening to us, what we are doing, and how the day is going. Some of this talk is realistic: some is unrealistic. If we talk to ourselves rationally and realistically about how things really are, we can understand, accept and behave appropriately. However, if we talk unrealistically or irrationally about how things should or ought to be, we can feel uncomfortable or upset.

Irrational self-talk often has 2 parts:

- Unrealistic expectations eg. "I shouldHe must...."
- The terrible result we expect eg. "...because if I don't , then I am not worthwhile"

Example: "He should not boss me around (part 1)..... because if he does I am inferior(part 2).

Change to something more realistic:

"I would prefer him not to boss me around , but if he does, I am not inferior."

Irrational "shoulds" and their awful expected consequences are powerful ways in which people put themselves down.

Four Different Kinds of Negative Self-Talk:

Worrier:

Says "What if....(this or that bad thing happens)...."

Try: breathing, being here now, noticing.

Critic:

Says: "That was stupid!" or "That'd be right. I did it wrong again!"

Try: I made a mistake. It doesn't make me bad.

Victim:

Says: "I can't" or "I'll never be able to..."

Try: "Sometimes I..." , or "I will try again tomorrow" or "Perhaps I can"

Perfectionist:

Says: "I should...I must.....I have to...."

Try: It would be good if....

What to do with self-talk:

- **Notice:** Often the first thing you will notice is an uncomfortable feeling in your body.
- **Stop:** Ask, “What am I telling myself that is making me feel awful?”
- **Relax:** Breathe slowly. This can slow everything down so you can learn to change.
- **Track it down:** It can be tricky to track back to what led to the feeling. With practice, it will get easier.
- **Write down** what is going on in your head, **or notice** what the record is that is playing in your head
- **Challenge** the slippery sucker! Find a positive, supportive statement to keep it quiet (nagging little thought!!) You may need to keep telling it to shoosh. Rational, realistic thoughts are the best.