



# Right words, right thoughts. That's the power of... SELF TALK

## *How self talk can keep you A-OK*

Self talk is a life skill you can use wherever you are, whenever you need it. There are several kinds of self talk. In the last nine issues of *What's Up*, we looked at some of these ways of using self talk. Here they are again. You can use self talk for any or all of these purposes:

### **To focus completely**

The most well-known type of self talk is what athletes do: say a few words to themselves just before a race to keep their thoughts totally on winning. Self talk is used a lot in this way by speakers, actors and other performers to get set for performing and, then, to remain completely focussed on what they are doing.

### **To stay positive**

"I can do this! I have what it takes! I am a winner!" Positive *I-can*, *I-have* and *I-am* statements like these can calm you down and, at the same time, fill you with good energy when you are nervous or unsure while doing something.

### **To reframe put downs**

Reframing means looking at something in a different way from before. When you find that your own words are put downs, then it is time to reframe them. Put downs attack your confidence and make you feel small. The opposite of put downs are words that affirm. You need to reframe your put downs into affirmations that you give yourself.

However, reframing is not magic. If you already did very badly in an exam, you will not change your marks by simply telling yourself that you are going to get an A. That is not what self talk is for. Rather, changing a negative thought about exams into a positive thought can change your attitude to studying.

### **To heal hurt feelings**

Self talk may be used to soothe and heal your hurt feelings. Many of you write letters to *What's Up*, saying how sorry or sad you feel for people in faraway places who are suffering. This shows that you have the vocabulary and the skills to communicate

your feelings for others when they are hurting. Use the same know-how when having a conversation with yourself.

Ask, “What am I feeling? Why?” Answer honestly. Simply accept your hurt feelings as a natural part of life. Listen hard to your answers, ask more questions, respond and put into words what you think you should do. This back and forth conversation can be a healthy way to allow healing to take place. It enables you to take care of yourself.

### **To clear a cluttered mind**

At this time of the year, kids have all sorts of thoughts racing through their heads: exams, year-end goodbyes, holiday plans and **whatnot**. Use self talk to clear your mind. Focus on what is important and let go of the others for now. You can revisit them another day. If this is too hard to do, try using pencils or chopsticks as puppets while talking to yourself. Not only is that more fun, it also adds a new dimension to your self talk.

### **To grow confidence**

Another special way to use self-talk is to grow genuine confidence. Real confidence comes from knowing that you are able to deal with all kinds of outcomes, including failure. Remind yourself that when you get up after falling down, you become surer of being able to do it the next time.

### **To discover the real you**

Talking to yourself is a great way to do some soul searching. To soul search means to take an honest look at your thoughts and feelings. And, one way to do that is to quiz yourself by asking questions about what you say, do and feel.

When you are sad, anxious, angry, frightened or just about at any other time, ask why you feel the way you do. It is good to also ask what is making you feel happy, peaceful, contented or excited. To get a more balanced view of yourself, you need to examine the good times as well as the lousy moments.

A student’s life can get pretty hectic. At school, there are classes, co-curricular activities, projects, fun stuff with friends and all kinds of other activities going on. At home, being with your family, hobbies and doing homework take up time as well. You may feel you have no time to think a few hurried thoughts, let alone have deep conversations with yourself.

This is why you should not leave it to chance. Instead, why don’t you to set aside about fifteen minutes a day for soul searching? Ask questions about the good times and the not-so-good times, the highs and the lows, of your day. When you get used to soul searching, it becomes a natural part of you. Then, your reflections keep you in tune with your real self every day.

– By MARY GEORGE

### **VOCABULARY**

**whatnot** (say “wat-not” ; noun) = all sorts of things; informal way to say et cetera.

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