



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

*Use self talk as first aid for hurt feelings.*

When you get a cut on your finger, your parents or teachers may put some ointment on it. The ointment is to make the pain go away and also to help the wound to heal. Words can do as much for hurt feelings. Parents, teachers and other adults often use their words to soothe children and make pain go away.

Now that you are a little older, you can do a lot of things by yourself. When you get that small cut on your finger, you know what to do, don't you? Clean it first and then decide whether you need to use any ointment or simply leave it alone to heal. If the cut bleeds badly, you know you should get help. You can do the same when your feelings are wounded – decide whether you want to take care of yourself by using your own words or whether you need help from someone else.

## **Can be hard to do**

Soothing, healing self talk is not easy. A lot of kids have no idea how to do it. Even your most talkative classmate may be stumped when it comes to speaking to himself about his deep-down emotions. That is partly because adults spend more energy teaching kids how to talk to other people in kind and caring ways. Not enough time is spent on how children (and adults) can speak to themselves kindly and caringly.

So much so, you probably know what to say to a friend whose pet has died, a neighbour who has broken a leg or a classmate failing an exam.

Many of you are **eloquent** in your emails 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 with others when they are hurting. Use the same know-how to have conversations with yourself.

## **Time alone for thinking**

The next time your feelings get hurt, find a place where you can be alone for a little while. Otherwise, go to bed earlier than usual and use that time. First, allow yourself to feel your feelings, whatever they may be.

Sometimes, we avoid feelings that are painful. Pretending they are not there will not make them go away. Pushing them down – or suppressing them – is not good either because when you keep pushing down your feelings, your body sometimes reacts in other ways such as getting a skin rash, headache or tummy upset.

Simply accept your feelings as a natural part of life. Ask, “What am I feeling? Why?” Answer honestly. Listen hard to your answers, ask more questions, respond and put into words what you think you should do about the situation.

This back and forth with yourself is meant to be a healthy way to allow healing to take place. For that to happen, you have to be kind and caring to yourself.

### **Identify your feelings**

Very often, there will be a mix of emotions and not just one feeling all by itself. These feelings are inside you and so, only you really know what they are. Delve deep within you but do it gently.

Imagine your feelings are fragile, breakable gifts all wrapped up and placed in your heart. Unwrap every gift carefully and then examine it. Try to label each one with words such as “sad”, “hurt”, “scared”, “helpless” and so on.

If you are not able to find the right words, just make up your own! It is also okay to use sounds like “grrr” (anger), “ouch” (sharp pain), “ugh” (disgust) and, in fact, whatever allows you to express what you feel. The actual word (or sound) you use to label a feeling is not as important as the struggle to identify what is going on in you.

### **Natural ways of healing**

Most of the time, when you have allowed yourself to feel your feelings and you have had a conversation with yourself about them, that is enough. Your body has natural ways of healing. Just as a tiny cut on your finger can disappear quickly, slight emotional hurts can go away, too.

Chatting with close friends may also help. At times, though, you may realise that talking to yourself and your friends is not enough. In which case, you should ask an adult – a parent, teacher, counsellor – to advise you about what to do next.

All of the above is about focussing on your own hurts. This may sound like a selfish thing to do. It is not meant to be. Rather, each of us helps society by taking care of ourselves. When you choose to be a healthy person by healing your hurts, you are being socially responsible. That is because, to be good to others, you first have to be good to yourself.

– By MARY GEORGE

**VOCABULARY** **eloquent** (say “el-luh-kwent” ; adjective) = fluent and expressive.

**SELF TALK** is about how talking to yourself can be used as a life skill. The series is brought to you by What’s Up in partnership with the Speak Good English Movement of Singapore.

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