



04/01/2008

## Coach's Corner: Thoughts Rule

By: Sharon Pahlka , Journal Newspapers

Top of Page

Each of us has a committee in our heads that loves to tear us down. It tells us, "You'll never fall in love and get married" (if you're single), "You'll never be happy again" (after a divorce), "You will never be able to eat what you like" (if you're on a restricted diet), or "Life is so depressing." The list is endless. Most people carry on a silent conversation with themselves throughout the day. So, what is your committee telling you?

These internal conversations can direct our behaviors in many ways. Just being aware of this can help us rewrite our thoughts to work for us rather than against us and reduce our stress.

Try turning the negative chatter into positive self-talk: "This will work out," "I know I can do the job," or "My house looks fine for company." Visualize what you want to have happen or how you want to feel. Then, give yourself permission to make it happen and to feel that way. When I tell myself, "This is too hard," "I will never get this done," or "They won't hire me," I tend to give up before I try. Often those negative things come true. It is amazing how that works. Negative self-talk can even encourage destructive behavior - "I am already 20 pounds overweight, what's the difference if I eat this pie?" Or "No one cares so why not have another drink?"

Our self-talk often reflects behaviors and values we learned as children, reflecting self-esteem issues we had at age 12. You have the choice as an adult to make better choices.

Negative chatter does not usually help you do better. More often, it just leads you down the negative path. So, first, listen to it and then, deliberately change it. Here is how:

Draw three columns on a sheet of paper.

In the first column write several things you would like to happen. ("I'd like to lose 10 pounds." "I'd like to get the job.") Then close your eyes and listen to how you respond to each item.

In the second column write your self- talk. ("I have done this before and can do it." "They didn't like me.")

In the third column write down a thought that is the opposite of the one in column two.

Look over your list. If column two is more positive than column three, then you are on your way to thinking positively. If column two is more negative, look at column three for a healthier response. Practice choosing the positive and healthy response to help your life go better. You will feel happier, more confident and less stressed.

**Coaching Question:** Is negative self-talk adding stress to your life?

**Coaching Tip:** Lower stress by changing negative chatter to positive self-talk.

**Quotes:** "They can because they think they can." Virgil "No one can defeat us unless we first defeat ourselves." Dwight D. Eisenhower

*Sharon Pahlka is a life coach and speaker. In her coaching, she helps her clients live well and meaningfully, especially those with chronic health challenges. Sharon's column, Coach's Corner, offers helpful tips from her work.*

Contact Sharon Pahlka via her Web site, [www.lifeisagift.com](http://www.lifeisagift.com).

Return to [Top of Page](#)