



Monthly Well-Being Message

This month we explore Self Talk and silencing the inner critic.

How often do you stop and think about how you speak to yourself? The mental words we use as part of our inner dialogue with ourselves is known as 'self talk'. Self-talk may be a way that we make sense of our world and those around us, but it also heavily influences how we feel and behave.

Our brain's job is to protect us. It's looks out for danger and warns us to "watch out!" and to consider all the possibilities if something were to go wrong. This can be helpful when the chance of danger is likely but unhelpful when we misperceive a situation and find ourselves consumed by negative self-talk. How we frame situations to ourselves impacts on our feelings and on our behaviours. So, telling ourselves that we're stupid or not good enough is going to impact on how we feel and what we choose to do next.



When we have negative self-talk, often the content is not always accurate. We can notice that there can be 'thinking errors' or 'unhelpful thoughts' embedded in our self-talk. Just because our brain presents us with a thought, does not make it automatically true, based in fact, wise or important! Accepting our thoughts as is, without disputing or challenging them can lead us to develop and believe self-talk which is unhelpful. Worse still, it can lead to the unleashing of our inner critic.

How does it make you feel to hear someone tell you that you're not good enough? Or that you're worthless or stupid?

What comes to mind?

Likely negative feelings and emotions. Now how often would you tell someone you care about that they are incompetent? How about when they make a mistake or embarrass themselves - would you draw it to their and others' attention and ridicule them? Social etiquette, empathy and compassion for others often precludes this dialogue with others, however when it comes to ourselves, it appears different rules apply. We often beat ourselves up internally and are much harsher on ourselves than we would be on a friend.

This is known as our inner critic.

Our inner critic can be thought of as a little gremlin. A gremlin who is so unhappy with life that it likes to bring others down too. So, the gremlin basically represents your unhealthy self-talk. It criticises you when you make a mistake. It ridicules you when someone makes a suggestion you weren't aware of. It hounds you that others are judging you and that people think of you as less than you are. This creature is not only unhelpful to listen to, but can get us stuck in a negative headspace which ultimately affects our mood and impacts on our behaviour. In the end, being accustomed to listening to



and believing our inner critic, takes us away from leading a rich and meaningful life, in line with our values.



Your text caption goes here. You can change the position of the caption and set styles in the block's settings tab. Consider your self-talk- how often is your 'gremlin' coming out to play and making you feel less than you are? If you wouldn't say it aloud to a friend, don't say it to yourself. Be your own best friend. How is telling yourself you're not good enough helping the situation? It doesn't. If anything, it makes you feel worse, and likely affects your motivation to do things that are meaningful to you. Furthermore, it takes us away from living in the moment by living in our head with statements that may very well not be grounded in fact, but rather purely based on assumptions.

SO, WHAT CAN YOU DO TO ESCAPE THE GREMLIN?

Recognising whether your self-talk is healthy or unhealthy is the first step. Notice how you're feeling. Could your feeling be due to how you're thinking about a situation or talking to yourself? Questioning whether it is a fact or an assumption you're making, and clarifying with others if this is unclear. 'Is it in your control?' can be another important question to pose to your self-talk.

You don't have to always challenge the gremlin, sometimes it's as simple as focusing your attention to a more realistic, helpful thought that allows you to be your best and to choose to do what's important to you. Consider an alternative thought grounded in self-compassion.

Life is unpredictable, so when things we don't like or want to occur, we can sometimes find ourselves wanting to blame someone or ourselves. Self-compassion involves being

kind to yourself when you notice yourself suffering, becoming self-critical or when life forces you to face situations that are uncomfortable. Rather than encouraging the gremlin to bring you down, notice what's occurring for you in the moment and accept painful thoughts and feelings as they arise.

Choosing mindfulness and acceptance will of these feelings will ultimately help to process them quicker, rather than pushing them away to return later, creating more discomfort in the long run. Self compassion isn't about right or wrong but rather loving yourself and accepting that you're human and that it's okay to feel negative emotions. Negative emotions are not a reflection of who you as a person. Allowing things to be, and recognising that when we don't achieve what we intend, that we are still connected to others through being human, and are not alone.

Dr Kristin Neff is a leading researcher into the construct of self-compassion and purported that having self-compassion is different to self-esteem, self-indulgence and self-pity.

“With self-compassion the most important step, actually, is to notice your own suffering. We can learn to feel good about ourselves not because we're special and above average, but because we're human beings intrinsically worthy of respect.”

We're all human- the more we remind ourselves the quicker we can get on with living a life that is rich and meaningful. And that's our choice.

If you or someone close to you needs support, contact Acacia Connection for an appointment.

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