



## Internal affairs

*Your inner monologue can affect your mood and mindset. Does yours have your best interests at heart, or is it time to give yourself a good talking to?*

When you don't want to do something, do you ever find yourself using exaggerated negative phrases like: 'I'm sick and tired of this!' or 'This is killing me!'? Sometimes it's for comedic effect, occasionally it's deliberately melodramatic, often it's because the phrases are bandied about so much that they become a knee-jerk reaction. But the words you choose to say to yourself are important, which is why it's helpful to be mindful about them. When self-talk is kinder and soothing phrases employed more frequently, it can have a positive effect on how you feel about yourself and even help everyday tasks to go more smoothly.

Particularly harsh self-talk often comes into play when a task is being avoided. That inner voice screams: 'I hate doing this' or 'I'm going to die before I see this through'. Think about phrases you hear inside your head as though you can see them written in front of you. Do you really want to think those things about a task or project that is unavoidable? Consider the adverse affect these brutal and bitter words might have on your brain and body. Of course, you know you won't literally die if you have to clean the bathroom or revise for a professional qualification, but the idea sends a signal to the brain that this task is painful, uncomfortable or undesirable. It's going to make cleaning the bathroom so much harder because this association might trigger mental resistance to doing the task.

So, how can you change a super-harsh internal voice to a positive one? And how can you start to listen to yourself effectively and make sure your best interests are looked after?

Here are three tips:

- *Catch the thought after you say it. Let it hang in the air like a speech bubble above your head. Mentally read the words back to yourself.*
- *You don't have to change the thoughts right away, just becoming aware of them and how often you say them is a good start.*
- *Add an additional thought such as: 'That was pretty harsh' or 'This task isn't as bad as I'm making it sound'. This will help you to pull back and gain perspective, and it might alter your emotional state faster. Then you can add more positive thoughts, including: 'I'm sure I will finish doing this soon and I can move on to something else.'*

It can be easy to exaggerate feelings in a negative way. It's also difficult to accept sometimes that, while you might not like a particular task, the feeling will pass. However, being aware of where you're at and what you're feeling, is often the best way to change it. You can start by listening to your own words more often and making sure they're helping you to finish what you need to do instead of slowing you down.

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