



# How to Manage Your Inner Monologue for Peace of Mind & Success!

By Pat Hammond, The Business Guild

## Your inner critic does not like curiosity...

### What is self-talk?

For those of us who live with a constant stream of words and thoughts, it's strange to learn that many people say they don't experience self-talk.

My informal sampling of friends and family found that about half have a regular inner monologue and the other half live in blissful silence. Based on some responses, it's possible that people may not understand what self-talk is and how it presents itself. — Not everyone hears actual words and some people may confuse self-talk with thinking.

[Psychologist Alex Anderson-Kahl](#), defines self-talk as "the internal dialogue we maintain with ourselves."

This could be an actual conversation, encouraging words, or images.

Some people literally talk to themselves in their head. They may repeat a mantra or debate pros and cons before making a decision. Others hear a specific voice, such as a parent or teacher who offered

encouragement or was hyper-critical.

However you process it, Anderson-Kahl says self-talk "plays a pivotal role in shaping our perceptions, influencing our emotions, and guiding our actions."

### Self-talk is not good or bad, it just is...

As much as we all like to hear that upbeat voice cheering us on, it's important to listen to the other voice – the one that urges caution and reminds us of our limits.

[Rachel Fleischman, LCSW from Bliss Counseling](#), says that negative self-talk is a survival mechanism. "As human animals, we are wired for fear." Most of us don't live in a world where we have to worry about imminent physical threats, so our brains replace that physical fear with an

**"The words you speak within have the power to destroy or elevate you. Be careful how you speak within." -- Jock Brocas**

**"When we nurture a positive inner narrative, we bolster our self-confidence, resilience, and motivation." -- Alexander Anderson-Kahl**

emotional one based on ego. "We don't like to fail, we don't like to fall down. We're so afraid of embarrassment and shame that we become perfectionists."

She adds that some negative talk is helpful. — Be on time, wear deodorant, be ready. But when it becomes an obsession, it can become a problem.

### **Why do we accept negative self-talk from ourselves when we know it's skewed?**

Have you ever met someone who struggles with impostor syndrome? They could have amazing credentials — the right education, skills, and

experience — but they don't feel it's enough. It's a head scratcher for people who aspire to achieve their level of success; for that person, the negative self-talk holds them back from achieving greater goals.

[Dr. Daniel Boscaljon, Director of Research and co-founder of the Institute for Trauma Informed Relationships](#), explains, "Your identity is the foundation that limits your sense of what you can do. We tend to reinforce our sense of identity based on what's familiar."

For some people, that negativity is a safe and familiar place. [New York-based therapist Mollie Spiesman, LCSW](#), says this is especially true for women. "We're trained

to think the worst of ourselves. If we think too highly of ourselves, we can get hurt if we don't get the promotion, or job offer."

While thoughts are automatic, Spiesman points out that we can control how we react and communicate with those thoughts.

### **Challenge your inner monologue to gain perspective.**

The easiest way to do that is to question the message.

- Where does it come from?
- Is it based on experience or someone else's opinion?
- Is it a manifestation of fear?

Spiesman offers the

example of someone looking for a new job. "Say you have a thought that says you are not successful, you're not going to get a new job. Ask yourself where this is coming from.

Challenge the thought by asking yourself, 'have I ever gotten a new job in my entire life?'"

Before you accept a thought, make sure it's based on evidence.

Anderson-Kahl says we need to learn to recognize negative patterns. "The first step is to develop awareness by actively listening to your inner voice and pinpointing instances where doubt or criticism emerges."

Affirmations and kind self-talk are also valuable tools for reframing your inner narrative.

He suggests creating

affirmations that align with your goals and values and repeating them regularly. It may sound silly to some, but this simple action can go a long way to overwriting outdated



beliefs that are holding you back.

It's all about making a choice.

[Dr. Avigail Lev, founder and director of the Bay Area CBT Center](#), says "We must differentiate between automatic thoughts and trained self-talk." She says that training ourselves to

develop self-talk offers us the flexibility to choose our behaviors, take effective actions, engage in risk-taking, conduct cost-benefit analysis, and even face scary situations to achieve what we need.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a proven technique for changing our thought patterns, but it takes time and mindful effort.

Fleischman states, "The most important thing to remember is just

because you think it, doesn't make it so." Sometimes, we confuse our thoughts with actual facts. That's really important to understand. A thought is just a thought and we can change it.

Habits that took 30, 40, or 50 years to develop can't be changed overnight.

**Your thoughts are always there.  
Learn how to make them work for  
you.**

The good news is that they don't have to.

It's a process. Any change, even something as simple as questioning a thought's validity, can give us a reprieve from our inner critic.

As Spiesman says, "We're always going to have thoughts, but with practice you can consciously learn to reframe the negative and nurture positive self compassion."

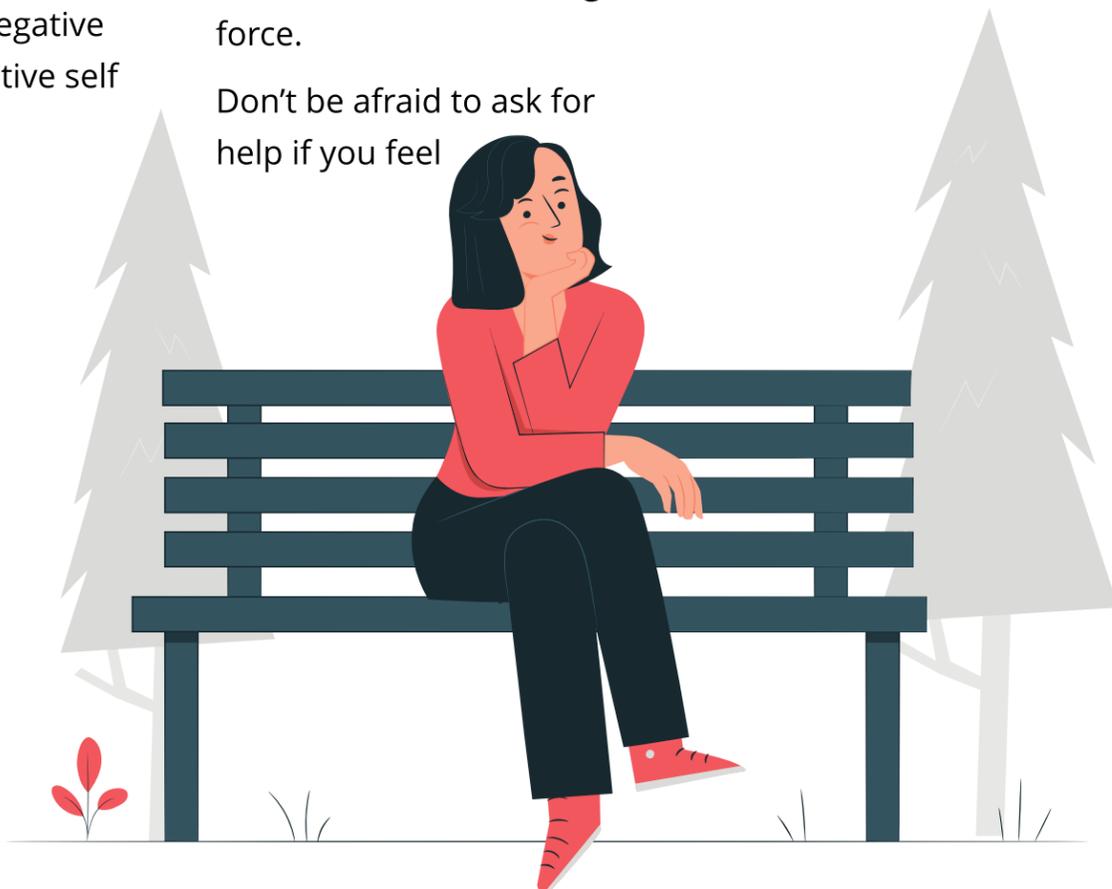
Words have power. Even more so when they are part of your own inner monologue.

**Final thoughts**

While it's not uncommon to have moments when negative self-talk seems a little louder than your compassionate words, it should not be the driving force.

Don't be afraid to ask for help if you feel

overwhelmed or would like guidance on how to challenge or change your inner narrative. All the experts I spoke with have websites with useful tips and information. Several, including [Mollie Spiesman](#) and [Rachel Fleischman](#), offer virtual as well as in-person counseling. ✓



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