



# SAY SOMETHING POSITIVE

## *How Self-Talk Affects Your Attitude*

**M**ost people carry on a silent conversation with themselves during much of the day. This “self-talk” has a direct effect on your thoughts and behaviors. Understanding self-talk, and its effects on you, can help you learn to rewrite your own self-talk “script” and maintain a positive mental attitude.

### **Positive or Negative?**

You’ve probably heard the term “self-fulfilling prophecy.” Self-talk is very much like a self-fulfilling prophecy—something you think about so much you can actually make it happen. When your self-talk is positive—“Things will work out,” “I know I can do the job”—you’re giving yourself permission to succeed and chances are you will. When your self-talk is negative—“I know I’ll have a terrible time,” “I’m not good enough to be a supervisor”—you’re giving up on yourself and chances are you won’t even try to succeed. Often your self-talk reflects the values and behaviors you learned as a child, and the self-esteem you now have as an adult.

### **Thoughts and Behaviors**

Self-talk can direct your thoughts and behaviors. If you think, “I know I can do the job,” you’ll be more willing to apply. During the interview, you’ll be more likely to exhibit confidence in yourself and your abilities, and have a better chance at success. But if you say to yourself, “I’ll never get hired for that position,”

you may not even apply, guaranteeing that you won’t get the job.

### **Physical and Mental Effects**

Negative self-talk can increase your distress and create new stress. It can also encourage you to behave in self-destructive ways which further distress your body. (“No one cares, so why shouldn’t I have another drink?”) Fortunately, positive self-talk can have the opposite effect, leading to a confident, positive attitude.

### **Rewrite Your Script**

Learn to listen to your own self-talk. One good way is to use pencil and paper to note your automatic responses to an idea. Draw three columns on the sheet. In the first column, write several things you would like to happen. “I’d like to try for a promotion.” “I’d like a new car.” Then, close your eyes and listen to how you react to each item. Write your self-talk in the second column. (Example: “Me, a manager? Forget it.” “I shouldn’t have any trouble getting a loan.”) In the third column, write down a thought which is the opposite of the one in column two.

Now look at your list. If column two is more positive than column three, you’re already on your way to thinking positively. If column two is more negative, look at column three for a more helpful, healthier response. Practice choosing positive self-talk. You’ll feel happier and more confident.

