How to Quiet Negative Self-Talk and Silence Your Inner Critic

by JANE BRASIL

Bipolar and Negative Self-Talk: What Is Negative Self-Talk?

When we are talking negatively to ourselves, we are focusing on distortive and unkind views of ourselves and those around us. We put ourselves and others down. We concentrate on our defects, many of which are either unfounded or exaggerated. We look at ourselves in an unsavory, and unflattering way.

We feel helpless, hopeless, and destined for failure.

We are emotionally abusive to ourselves. This type of talk can hurt us in so many ways. It does not help. It does not heal. It has the opposite effect.

For those of us suffering from bipolar or depression, these thoughts bring us to the depths of despair. We sink lower into depression and find that it becomes harder to dig ourselves out.

We become our own worst enemies. Not uncommon at all. It is part of our disease.

What Causes Negative Self-Talk?

One of the contributing factors of viewing ourselves in an unsavory manner is the illness itself. We are simply unable to see ourselves in a positive light. We are not intentionally doing this. It is what the illness tells us.

Many of us who are living with bipolar may have perhaps experienced unpleasant childhood memories that did not enhance or nurture our self-esteem. Thinking that we are less than becomes part of our nature.

Rising above all of this will be the biggest and most important challenge of our lives.

A List of Negative Self-Talk Statements

Now that you have an understanding of what causes negative self-talk, I have included some examples of some very common negative self-talk statements:

- I am going to end up in a mental institution.
- I am doomed.
- My friends and family will be horrified by my diagnosis.
- They will be embarrassed that mental illness runs in the family.
- I am a disgrace to the people I love.
- I am stupid.
- There is nothing to look forward to.
- People will label me mentally disturbed.
- I am damaged.

- I am lazy and worthless.
- I am of low mentality and will never amount to anything.
- No one will understand.
- I will never recover from this.
- I will never be normal like everyone else.
- I cannot bear this pain any longer.
- I might as well check out.

Tips for Overcoming Negative Self-Talk

Overcoming negative self-talk is no easy task. It can seem downright impossible. You need to be determined to get well. What other choice do we have? None

Changing the way we talk to ourselves becomes our biggest challenge. It is necessary to our ongoing recovery. We need to keep trying. We need to ask for support from our therapist and our family members that are empathetic towards our struggle.

There are so many ways that we can cultivate our positive outlook. For me, learning everything I could about my illness became my primary goal.

Knowledge and information can provide us with an understanding our illness. It is a huge part of our self-preservation. The need to educate ourselves is becoming imperative.

There are so many ways to accomplish this. During my first episode of major clinical depression and hospitalization, the fear was incomprehensible.

I read any and all information that I could find describing my illness. The fact that I cried while I was reading through every bit of literature did not deter me. What is wrong with me? I need to get better! Please, someone, help me! I soon realized that I had to find ways to help myself.

How to Stop Negative Self Talk

Find a person in your life that knows you and understands you. Someone who is not judgmental and has a forgiving nature.

If that person is also open and honest about their issues and problems, then they are the people to confide in. In most cases, it is not a family member. It is not their fault. It may be hard for them. Talk to your therapist about what you are thinking and feeling.

A simple example: I told my friend that I had not made my bed for a few days and I had no motivation for a week. I was amazed when she said to me that since she retired, she did not always make her bed. Then she mentioned that she had not put on makeup for a week and stayed in the house hibernating.

What an eye-opener! Really? You too? Imagine that.

I, of course, thought that I was the only one I knew that did that. I hid my negative thoughts about myself. Somehow if they were hidden, then they didn’t exist. Denial at a cost.

Turning Negative Self Talk into Positive Talk

Try thinking differently and change the monologue.

Examples of negative self-talk turned into positive self-talk can include comments like *"I am lazy*," can be changed to "*I am not a lazy person in general, but today I am feeling lazy. It is my mood. It is not who I am*. *I remember last week that I cleaned my whole house from top to bottom*."

Another example, saying *"I have never accomplished much."* Really? Are you sure? Did you graduate from grade school, high school, or maybe even college? Didn't you make curtains for every window in your house? Did you raise children that you are proud of also if they are not perfect? All of these little things are accomplishments!

Then there are simple answers to negative statements like *I am such a klutz! And who cares!*

Learn to love yourself just as you are with all your defects. Guess what? We all have them. You are not perfect, and no one else is perfect either. I guess that is what makes us perfectly alike.