



Change your Self-Talk

6 January 2025

don't take things personally - what people say and do is about who they are....

I spend a lot of time teaching people to try and not be upset and hurt by what others say about them or to them. Which is hard, because we are wired to need social connection and support from people, and when someone says cruel things about us it is natural to be hurt and angry. The challenge is to not take things personally. What people say and do is a reflection of who they are. It is not about us, it is about what is going on in their head. It is always possible to say something in a decent and respectful way. It is always possible to treat people decently (unless they are committing a crime or doing something really awful to you). So, if someone speaks to you in a belittling and demeaning way, it is about who they are. Rather than get very upset, realise you have learned something about them as a person. You know a bit more about their character.

people don't see the world as it is, they see it as they are.....

Much as we all operate as though we see the world in the same way, we don't. Information hits our senses (eyes, ears, nose, mouth, skin) and moves from the sensor nerve cells into the brain where it is interpreted. Our brain interprets the information coming in according to our life experiences, our attitudes, our values, and our beliefs. And these life experiences, attitudes, values, and beliefs differ amongst people, thus our interpretations are subjective. What someone says to you and about you, is a reflection of how they think. How someone speaks and how they act tells you about who they are. So, it cannot be about you. When someone is cruel,

dictatorial, and mean to you or about you, they are telling you who they are.

Unfortunately for most of us, during our lives a lot of people will take in what is said about them, especially young children, and just accept what they are being told by others (often authority figures or people who would like to think they are authority figures) and make it part of their self-talk. The recipients of these words or actions take in the words and actions of cruel, unkind people, and speak to themselves and judge themselves in the same way. Those words spoken to them by others become their inner voice and the way they talk to themselves. And then they go through life constantly thinking and speaking negatively about themselves. They in turn use the cruel, mean words to belittle and criticise themselves mercilessly. If you are the recipient of the cruel words and actions, and you take them in and make this part of how you think of yourself, then all that happens is your self-esteem drops and you become angry and hurt and bitter. And it becomes even harder to be the best version of yourself.

In his book the “Success Principles”, author Jack Canfield talks about changing the inner critic into an inner coach. And if that is all you do this year, then that is enough. So, how do you do this?

- Consider the following examples. You lose your keys or lock yourself out of the house. Is your self-talk along the lines of, “you fool, why can’t you do things properly”. That is the inner critic. It is negative, puts you down, and shames you. And it doesn’t tell you what to do differently next time. The inner coach will ask questions focusing on understanding why you did what you did. For instance, “what made me do that”? And then the inner coach will look at solutions and how to ensure the occurrence is not repeated. “Is there something I can do differently in the future to stop it from happening?” Or perhaps, “this is a rare occurrence, I am human and humans are not perfect, so let me just let it go and focus on the next task.”
- Your inner critic diminishes you. It focuses on telling you what is wrong with you and how useless and stupid you are. Your inner coach gets you to understand why something happened. To look at if there are ways to stop it from happening again. And to come up with solutions.

what people say about you is not necessarily who you are.....

Some of us had teachers and caregivers who felt that criticism was the best way to teach us about life. It is not. And that is true in all aspects of life. People who feel shame and guilt generally are less likely to be able to deal with constructive feedback. When you have been shamed your self-esteem drops, and any form of feedback is frightening and usually produces a defensive response. When you feel worthwhile as a human being it is easier to accept feedback, to feel appropriately guilty when you have done something wrong, and to correct it. No one ever became a better person by being made to feel bad or stupid.

So, as we go into the New Year, I want you to keep this in mind. Your self-talk has such a big impact on your life that we could mention hundreds of ways in which you can better it. For now, because it is better to take small steps and get them to succeed, just focus on being your inner coach. Catch yourself when you are talking down to yourself or criticising yourself. Catch yourself and stop yourself. Understand why you did what you did. Then focus on solutions. Changing any habit is not easy and it takes time and patience and conscious effort to do so. But this habit, encouraging your inner coach, will reap big rewards for you.

Wishing you all a wonderful 2025, full of success, love, good health, and prosperity.