

SHAD HELMSTETTER, PH.D.

Best-Selling Author of
What to Say When You Talk to Your Self



NEGATIVE SELF-TALK & HOW TO CHANGE IT

Includes
The official "Guide to Changing Your Self-Talk"
from The Self-Talk Institute

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and How to Change It

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A 60-Minute Book™

More Information — Less Time

This book is designed to give you the maximum amount of information in the shortest effective reading time. The quality of the information is the same as you receive in a full-length book, but the key information is presented in a concise, condensed format.

About the Author

Shad Helmstetter, Ph.D., is the pioneering dean in the field of self-talk and personal growth. He has devoted more than thirty-five years to research and writing in this field. He is the author of more than twenty books, including the international best-seller *What to Say When You Talk to Your Self* and the recent *The Power of Neuroplasticity*. His books are published in more than 74 countries worldwide.

Dr. Helmstetter has appeared on over 1200 television and radio programs, including repeat appearances on Oprah Winfrey, ABC, NBC, CBS, and CNN News, and is a featured guest on top Internet blogs and YouTube programs.

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A Personal Note From The Author:

In these pages, I have brought together the most important discoveries on the subject of negative self-talk and how to change it, and its profound effect on our individual lives.

This book was written for people who are busy. (That means most of us.) We take less time today to relax and read and enjoy; we want to get right to the point, learn something useful, and move on. We want information we can use.

In the following pages, that's what you'll find—information that is up to date, highly useful, perhaps even life-changing—with a minimum of words to get the message across.

As you will read in the following pages, because of how the brain gets wired, the key to retention is repetition. Please feel free to reread more than once any information you want to keep forever.

Chapter One

The Message of this Book

*There is no greater path you can walk,
no greater goal you can achieve,
and no greater purpose you can find,
than to live up to the promise
you were born to fulfill.*

The purpose of this book is to give you all of the basics you should know about negative self-talk and how to change it.

I will begin with twelve key points that summarize this book:

1. All of us were ‘programmed’ from birth on—and we end up living out the programs we received.

2. From the moment you were born, everything you heard, everything you thought, and everything you said out loud or to yourself was temporarily recorded in your brain.

3. The messages you received that were repeated frequently were physically and chemically *wired* into your brain. We refer to those repeated messages as ‘programs.’ The more often those programs were repeated, the stronger they were wired into your brain.

4. It is estimated that during the first 18 years of your life—if you grew up in a reasonably positive home—as much as 77% of the programs you received were negative. Whatever those programs were, many of them are still with you today.

5. The part of the brain that stores the programs you received doesn’t know the difference between something that is true and something that is false. The brain is designed to act on the strongest programs it receives as though they are *true*—whether they’re true or not.

6. As much as 90% or more of your programs are unconscious, and are completely hidden from you.

7. Along with your genes and your experiences, *you are the result of the programs you received.*

8. Everything you believe, everything you think, everything you say, and everything you do is the result of the programs you received—both from others and from yourself.

9. Your self-talk, right now, is a replay of the programs you have that are the strongest.

10. Negative self-talk is the combined result of the negative programs you received from others, and those you gave to yourself. Most of them are unconscious.

11. Because of its neuroplasticity, your brain is designed to continually rewire itself throughout your lifetime.

12. If you have programs that are negative and working against you, you can change them. You can *rewire* them—replace them—with different, more positive, and more successful programs.

That is the message of this book.

Chapter Two

Negative Self-Talk

Negative self-talk is everywhere. We are in the middle of an epidemic of it, and it is getting worse. Negative self-talk is so widespread that I have even given it a name: *Negative Self-Talk Disorder* (which I will cover in Chapter Four).

Negative self-talk is:

- Anything you think or say that looks at something from a perspective of what *won't* work—instead of what *can* work.
- Anything you think or say that over-focuses on your *fears* instead of on your *strengths*.
- Anything you think or say about yourself that repeatedly focuses on faults or flaws instead of positive qualities.
- Anything you think or say that causes you to see your world as filled with problems instead of opportunities and positive choices.
- Anything you think or say that limits you from being or achieving anything that is real and possible.
- Anything you think or say that limits your belief in yourself or your future.

What Does Negative Self-Talk Sound Like?

Whether you say it out loud, or think it silently to yourself, it's easy to spot negative self-talk. Here are a few examples of what negative self-talk sounds like:

"Nothing ever goes right for me."

"I just know it won't work."

"It's going to be one of those days."

"Why even try?"

"The only luck I ever have is bad luck."

"I just can't do this."

"I'm so clumsy."

"I'm so stupid."

"I can never remember names."

"This just isn't one of my days."

"Everything I eat goes right to my waist."

"I can never get ahead."

"I'm no good at math."

"Life sucks!"

"I never know what to do."

"I'm at my wits' end."

"That's easy for you to say."

"My kids are driving me crazy."

"If only I were (smarter/taller/richer, etc., etc.)."

"I can't handle this."

"It's just no use."

"I don't have the talent."

“I’m just not creative.”

“I just wasn’t cut out for that.”

“I never have enough money left over at the end of the month.”

“I can never seem to get organized.”

“I already know I won’t like it.”

“I never have enough time.”

“I just don’t have the patience for that.”

“I’m too shy.”

“I never know what to say.”

“I don’t have the energy I used to.”

“I never win anything.”

“Nobody likes me.”

“Everything I touch turns to (bleep)!”

“I just can’t seem to get anything done.”

“That’s impossible.”

“There’s just no way.”

“I never get a break.”

“Today just isn’t my day.”

And on, and on, and on . . .

Each time you repeat phrases like those, you are literally wiring your brain to believe that what you're saying is true about you.

Negative Self-Talk Sets You Up to Fail

Notice that in the examples of negative self-talk above, in each case, the self-talk predicts *failure*.

Negative self-talk is almost always self-defeating. It sets you up for failure; it anticipates failure; it *expects* failure, like it's a sure thing. So when you practice negative self-talk—even when you don't know you're doing it—you're literally wiring your brain to fail. And your brain will do just what it is wired to do.

Negative Self-Talk is Harmful

Talking or thinking in a negative way might sound harmless, but it isn't. When you say it or think it, your self-talk is literally being recorded in your brain.

That's not good, because whether you meant it or not, if you repeat something in the negative often enough, your brain wires it in—and thinks it's *true*. And when your brain thinks it's true, it *becomes* true for you—even though it wasn't true in the first place.

Imagine what negative self-talk (which your brain will accept as truth) can do to your health, your family, your job, your finances, your goals, your peace of mind, your future, and every important area of your life.

Negative Self-Talk is a Habit

Occasional negative thinking can be a general 'down' attitude that is brought on by bad news, depression, or anxiety. But negative self-talk itself becomes a *habit*. Unless you do something about it, it grows, and, in time, stays with you. And the more you practice the habit, the stronger the habit becomes.

In time, with practice, occasional negative thinking turns into full-time negative self-talk. It becomes an accepted, 'normal' way to think. And that

ends up affecting everything else about you—from how well you get through a day, to the direction of your life.

The important key here is, we're not born to think negatively—we *learn* to think that way.

Chapter Three

Where Negative Self-Talk Begins

Most of us have had the opportunity to visit the newborn nursery in a hospital. It's that wonderful place where we first visit precious little infants just after they are born.

In the newborn nursery, we usually observe the infants through a viewing window. There, on the other side of the window, snuggled in their little bassinets, we see those remarkable miracles of life.

Imagine looking in on a couple of those infants right now. They are amazing! If they're awake, and their eyes are open, we can see them looking out into the world for the first time, as though they are searching for that incredible life they were born to live.

When we look into the eyes of those infants, what we see is *unlimited opportunity and possibility*. They have their entire lives in front of them. Their potential is infinite. It is clear that each of those infants was born to succeed. *No one* is born to fail. In fact, everything about those little infants is designed to help each of them reach their highest potential.

Then, even as they leave the warm, comfortable safety and security of their birthing bassinet, and then a short stay in a hospital room, the first moments of the infant's programming begins. From the mother's first words, to the television screen in the corner of the room, the messages begin to come in.

During the next eighteen years of their lives, each of those children, if they grow up in a reasonably positive home, will be told 'No,' or what he or she *cannot* do, or what will *not* work for them, an estimated *148,000 times!* Along with that, there will be thousands more messages that tell the child who they are, and what to believe about the world around them.

To the child's brain, whatever they experience, or are told often enough, begins to form the picture of who that child believes himself or herself to be, and what is 'true' about anything. Almost everything they think will be governed by the repeated programs they receive.

It doesn't make any difference if the programs they receive are actually true or not. With enough repetition, those programs become *true* in the child's brain.

Here's an example. Let's say that, instead of being born, brought home, and raised as you were, you had been kidnapped as a small infant and taken to a different home somewhere and raised by different parents in a different part of the world and brought up in a country that was an enemy of your birth country.

Instead of being 'you,' with the name, and the family and the friends and the education and the experience and the beliefs you have now, you would be the product of an entirely different environment. You would still be 'you,' genetically, but everything else about 'you' would be different. Your beliefs about almost everything—your faith, your ideology, your habits, the way you dress, your attitudes, your work, your relationships, your goals, your future—virtually everything about you would be different.

In fact, if that had actually happened, you could even view the person you are in your real life today as an enemy—and you could think and believe the *opposite* of almost everything you think and believe today.

How could that be? It is simply the result of the fact that while we are all born to excel, and reach our full potential, with our whole lives in front of us, something happens to interrupt that process. What happens next is that *the programs we receive* end up forming what we believe, and what we think about everything. Our programs tell us who we are, and even what we will—or will *not* do—with our lives.

An Experiment About Success and Failure

To make this clear, we're going to do an experiment. It works like this:

First, think of someone you know, or know of, whom you would consider to be a truly 'successful' person. I don't mean just financially successful, but successful in their *life*. This would be someone whose life is

working. Someone who is living a life that is fulfilled, and always moving upwards. It would probably be someone you would like to spend time with, or emulate and learn from.

Take a moment and think of a person you would choose who best fits the description of “*My most successful person.*” It could be someone who is living, or someone who isn’t. But whoever it is, get a picture of that person in your mind now, so you can see them clearly.

With the picture of that wonderfully ‘successful’ person in your mind, imagine that she or he is actually there with you now and is standing off to the right of you. For the moment, we’ll just ask that person to stand there—while we add someone else to our experiment.

To do that, I would like you to now think of someone you would call the *least* successful person you know. This would be someone you know, or know of, who is ‘failing’ at life.

When I think of the least successful person I know, I see the picture of a young kid who left home because of drug use when he was seventeen years old, and his parents have never seen him since. If they did find him, now, years later, they would probably find him in an alley somewhere, and he probably wouldn’t even recognize his own parents because of the amount of drugs or chemicals in his system.

That’s the person who comes to my mind when I think of someone who is ‘failing’ in every way. But in your own mind, think of an example of someone you know, or know of, who fits your picture of failure. Whoever it is, get a clear image of that person in your mind.

Then, imagine that person is also there with you right now, and is standing off to the left of you.

Now, in this experiment, you should have two people standing near you. On your right, there is the person who is succeeding in life. On your left is the person who is failing in life.

Take a moment, and examine each of them.