

THE LOGIC & POWER OF SELF-TALK CUES
DURING PERFORMANCE

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We're always talking to ourselves

- 96% of adults
- 25% of our waking hours



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Enhances sports performance

- Motivational
 - “I can do this”
 - “Give it your all”
- Instructional
 - “Follow-through”
 - “Focus on the target”



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Video clips of Mary & Bob courtesy of
Psychotherapy.net
Strategic Treatment of Anxiety Disorders
(6 video set)



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Successful protocols

- ◆ students with emotional & behavioral disorders
- ◆ individuals coping with pain
- ◆ both anxiety & depression in children

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We ALL talk to ourselves in such a way that we...

- **Detach** from negative self-talk
- **Challenge** dysfunctional beliefs
- **Reappraise** the situation
- **Change** our focus of attention
- **Increase** our motivation
- **Improve** our performance

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Dr. Les Greenberg 10

Transform your fear reaction: Let yourself become afraid, then call up a competing emotion

- NOT by thinking or reasoning, or allowing the feeling, or letting go of the feeling, or facing the feeling. NOT by exposure or extinction or habituation

But by activating a competing emotion that expresses a competing point of view

- How? Elevate your willingness to embrace doubt and discomfort while you're feeling afraid

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“The work is not going to be about your uncomfortable sensations, it is going to be about your response to the sensations.”

Dr. Alison Brooks, Harvard Business School 11

STUDY 1

- 113 subjects
- karaoke in front of experimenter
- “paid on the basis of singing accuracy score”
- Just prior, each subject asked, “How are you feeling?”
 - Group 1. “I am anxious”
 - Group 2. “I am excited”
 - Group 3. didn't ask

Group 2 reappraised anxiety more as excitement & then improved subsequent singing performance

Brooks, A. W. (2013, December 23). Get Excited: Reappraising Pre-Performance Anxiety as Excitement. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.

Dr. Barb Frederickson 9

If you will pull up a positive emotion on the heels of these negative feelings, you can literally dismantle all that mental and physical preparation to run

- Actively generate a positive meaning for why you are letting yourself generate feelings of threat
- Then step forward, voluntarily, because you know why you are stepping forward – because you can see it in the broader context of your life's goals
- Then your intentions can transform your experience

STUDY 2 12

- 140 subjects
- speaking anxiety
- 2 minutes to prepare persuasive speech
- “deliver 2- to 3-minute speech in front of experimenter — video-recorded — judged by committee of peers”
- asked to begin by telling the experimenter
 - Group 1. “I am excited”
 - Group 2. “I am calm”

Group 1 a) gave a longer speech, b) felt more excited, and c) were perceived by evaluators as more persuasive, competent, confident & persistent.

Geez, that's a lot of benefit from one simple statement!

STUDY 3 13

- 188 subjects
- difficult math task under time pressure
- “paid based on accuracy”
 - Group 1. “try to get excited”
 - Group 2. “try to stay calm”
 - Group 3. no instruction
- All had equal degree of HT rate

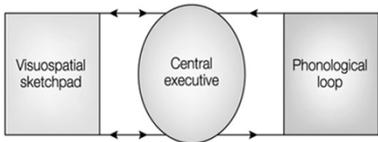
Group 1 increased their subjective feelings of excitement and performed better on the math assessment.

Therefore... 16

- When you’re anxious, change what you want in the moment
 - ask for exactly what you’re experiencing
- But you have to ask for it, because that is signal for working memory to retrieve resource of “acceptance” from past experiences

Working Memory 14

- Roughly 4 thoughts, images or feelings at one time
- Pushes away irrelevant information/distractions (Central Executive)



Once you make one of these messages as your own – like, “I can handle these feelings”

↓

And you repeat the process enough

↓

Your long-term working memory will link together all that you have learned

- When you call up that message, you cue working memory to retrieve any helpful internal resources that are associated with that message
- Your work becomes easier over time!

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Working Memory 15

- Simultaneously (Central Executive) directs attention to where you want it to go in the next moment
- Can reach back into long-term memory & pull up resources
- What will it pull up? ...assets in service of your current, immediate goal

Teaching children how to dive 

- Brain perceives water as solid object
- So urge to protect! Pick up their head as diving
- Messages-to-self: “chin tucked; hands flat, one on top of the other...”
- Repeating those directives in stages – sitting dive, kneeling dive, standing dive....
- Builds working memory to master diving for life

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Infuse self-talk into treatment

It should represent Attitude

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Step 1: Create Your Strategy

- 1) get body forward by dropping head & raising arms
- 2) apply energy to task 3) push forward & up
- 4) get faster turnover of legs

Step 2: Generate Commands

- "Raise the arms"
- "Look 5-6 feet ahead"
- "Swing the arms"
- "Shorten stride"
- "Pick up tempo"

Once commands relegated to unconscious...

Step 3: Frame the Action

"Run hills hard"



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Performance!

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Step 1: Create Your Strategy

1. Act as though the content is irrelevant
2. Accept the obsession/worry when it pops up
3. Seek out uncertainty
4. Seek out anxiety
5. Create rules if you need them

Step 2: Generate Motivations or Commands

- "I want this"
- "Let go"
- "Stop washing"
- "Give me your best shot"
- "Don't figure it out"
- "I gotta risk something here"

When you are ready to simplify your message...

Step 3: Frame the Action "I want this" or "Let go"

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"Run hills hard"



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Messages of motivation

- "... Good opportunity to practice"
- "I want to take this hit"
- "I can handle this"
- "I want to be uncertain"
- "I want to be clumsy"

Self-instructions/commands 25

- “Leave the room now!”
- “Don’t go into the bathroom”
- “Call someone”
- “Take a risk”
- “Keep moving; don’t pull over”

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I don't want this.

Yes, this is hard, and I'll handle it.

threat

HS Golfer 26

“I need to get my confidence back”

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What voice responds best to threat?

Talking with Mary [session 2]

- Combining Interoceptive Exposure with Self-Talk
- Developing that voice

Clip 1 5½ min

27

Get me out of here!

OK, I'm scared right now.

I want what's happening right now.

30

“Give yourself (helpful) messages”

- Reminders of new interpretation
 - “There is enough air in here”
- Commands
 - “Don’t leave -- Stick it out”
- Motivational messages

Clip 2 2½ min

Remember Greenberg... 31

- Transform your fear reaction
 - Let yourself become afraid, then call up a competing emotion
 - by activating a competing emotion that expresses a competing point of view

Make this an aggressive sport – BOB

Detachment 34
Elevate competing emotion

- Quiz him: “How would you practice tonight?”
 - “...bring on uncertainty”
 - “It’s good I had that thought”
 - “I eat doubt for breakfast”



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Bob 32

- OCD Repeater
- 10 years old – NYC trip
- Then “Am I dying? Do I have cancer? Tumor?”
- Now is worst it’s been
- Creeping into work: being late
 - Closing car door — Going to sleep
 - Walking in & out of room — Changing clothes

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- “Neurons that fire together...” 35
- “Oh, no, there it is” (automatic) becomes cue

“Okay, time to practice.”

↓

“OCD, please make me more freaked out...”

↓

Then turn attention elsewhere

35 Clip 4 4 min

33

- “Let me make sure I understand...”
- What’s the biggest fear?
- Me: “So I gotta get rid of it”
- Me: “But then you can’t do what you love”

33 Clip 1 6 min

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Clarifying: “It’s OCD’s job, not yours”

[This is not Exposure]

36 Clip 5 2 min

Making the messages his own

- “What’s next?”
- “Let ‘em come – Give me your threats”
- “I don’t care... I’m not playing this game”
- “You wanna go? Give it to me – Let’s go”
- He’s mindful
 - starting activity that might trigger thought

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Clip 5

5 min

- When you wish to have a good day, then it dominates you, therefore...
- Instructions
 - give OCD job of making you miserable

40

Clip 7

1:30 min

- Self talk: “I can handle this”
- “...as long as I keep that mentality, & as long as I don’t back away”
- “Biggest thing: I’m challenging it... that mentality, with the phrases”



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Clip 8

4 min

[REID: Only this clip from Robyn]

Ownership by linking with outcome picture

- She can’t get behind “I want this”
- But totally gets behind “I want the outcome”

The work is always moment-by-moment

“It is totally understandable that you want to resist, but...”

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- “...not sitting on couch, doing exposure... acting scared the whole time”
- “You become the aggressor”
- “‘I can’t hear you’ ”
- “If one slips through, ‘That’s a good one. Give me more. What’s next? Let’s go.’ ”

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Clip 6

3 min

Examples of Self-Talk

principle	self-talk
Anxiety needs us to avoid. So... take risks, including risk of failing.	“I want to do this, even though it feels risky. I want to get stronger.”

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Self-Talk Cues during Performance

principle	self-talk
Step forward while feeling uncertain & uncomfortable. Anxiety needs us to avoid those feelings by <u>not</u> stepping forward.	"It's OK that I'm anxious right now. I can handle not knowing how this will turn out. I need to do this. I'm glad I'm doing this, even though it's hard."

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principle	self-talk
<u>Want</u> to take on challenges; <u>seek out</u> the tough encounters. That's the attitude that gives us power.	"This is really scaring me right now, but I want to keep going. I can handle this."

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principle	self-talk
The closer we get to the challenge, the more our noisy worries will show up. They will <u>feel</u> as though they are signals of danger. Detach from those messages. Don't fall for that.	"I expected these worries would show up. I don't need to pay attention to them. But I do need to tolerate this anxiety that they're generating."

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principle	self-talk
<u>Want</u> whatever doubt or discomfort shows up.	"Good. I want these feelings, even though they make me really uncomfortable."

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- 6 FREE brief episodes teaching principles
- FREE download of all 50 charts, tables and figures from *Stopping the Noise in Your Head*