

THE LOGIC & POWER OF SELF-TALK CUES DURING PERFORMANCE

WS 21

Brief Therapy Conference

December 9, 2016

Reid Wilson, PhD
Chapel Hill

Reid Wilson, Ph.D.

Anxiety Disorders Treatment Center

421 Bennett Orchard Trail

Chapel Hill, NC 27516

[919] 942-0700

rrw@med.unc.edu

www.anxieties.com

www.NoiseInYourHead.com

www.PlayingWithAnxiety.com

Video clips of Mary & Bob courtesy of
Psychotherapy.net

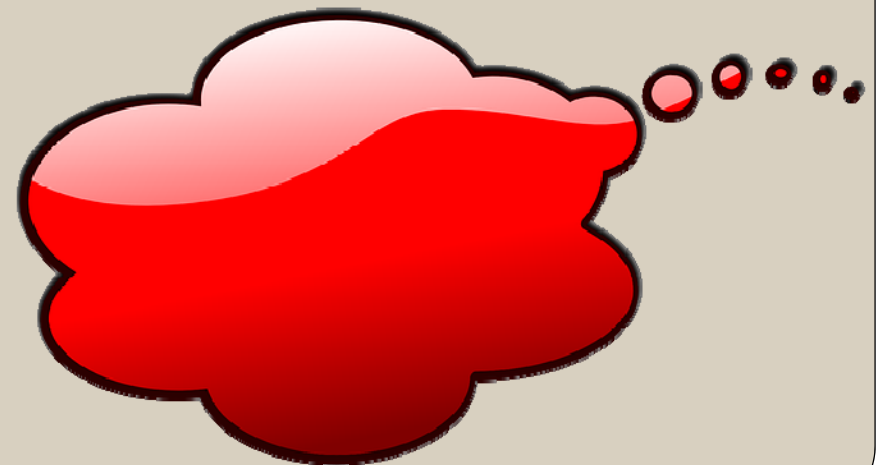
Strategic Treatment of Anxiety Disorders

(6 video set)



We're always talking to ourselves

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



Enhances sports performance

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



Successful protocols

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

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

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

Dr. Barb Frederickson

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

Dr. Les Greenberg

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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**

- 113 subjects
- karaoke in front of experimenter
- “paid on the basis of singing accuracy score”
- Just prior, each subject asked, “How are you feeling?”

STUDY 1

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*.

- 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!

- 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

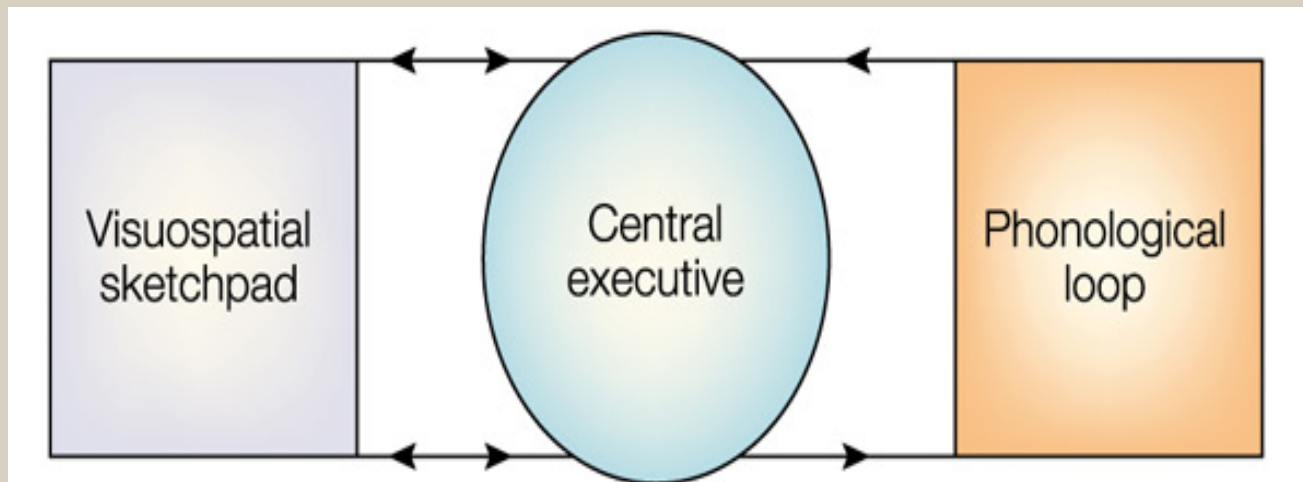
- All had equal degree of HT rate

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

Working Memory

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



Working Memory

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- 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

Therefore...

- 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

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!

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

Infuse self-talk into treatment

It should represent Attitude

Performance!

“Run hills hard”



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"
- "Shorten stride"
- "Pick up tempo"

Once commands relegated to unconscious...

Step 3: Frame the Action

"Run hills hard"



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”
- “Stop washing”
- “Don’t figure it out”
- “Let go”
- “Give me your best shot”
- “I gotta risk something here”

When you are ready to simplify your message...

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

Messages of motivation

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- “... 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

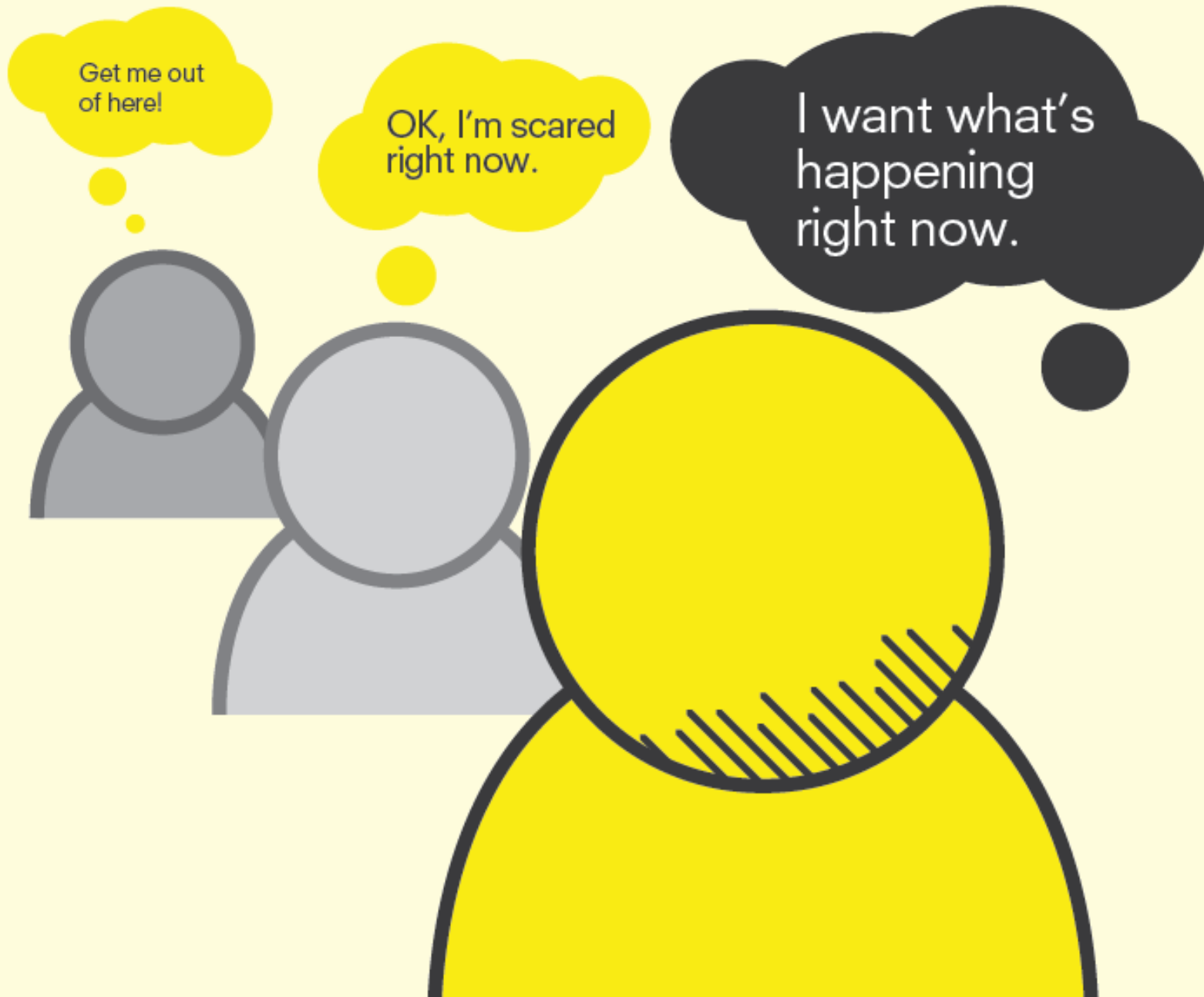
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- “Leave the room now!”
- “Don’t go into the bathroom”
- “Call someone”
- “Take a risk”
- “Keep moving; don’t pull over”

HS Golfer

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“I need to get my confidence back”





What voice responds best to threat?

Talking with Mary [session 2]

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

Clip 1

5½ min

“Give yourself (helpful) messages”

30

- 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...

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- **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**

Bob

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- 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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- “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”

Detachment

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

“Okay, time to practice.”



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



Then turn attention elsewhere

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

[This is not Exposure]

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

- 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”



- “...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.’ ”

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

[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..."

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.”

principle

Step forward while feeling uncertain & uncomfortable. Anxiety needs us to avoid those feelings by not stepping forward.

self-talk

“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.”

principle

The closer we get to the challenge, the more our noisy worries will show up. They will feel as though they are signals of danger. Detach from those messages. Don't fall for that.

self-talk

“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.”

principle

self-talk

Want whatever doubt or
discomfort shows up.

“Good. I want these
feelings, even though
they make me really
uncomfortable.”

principle

Want to take on challenges; seek out the tough encounters. That's the attitude that gives us power.

self-talk

“This is really scaring me right now, but I want to keep going. I can handle this.”

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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*

Thank you
