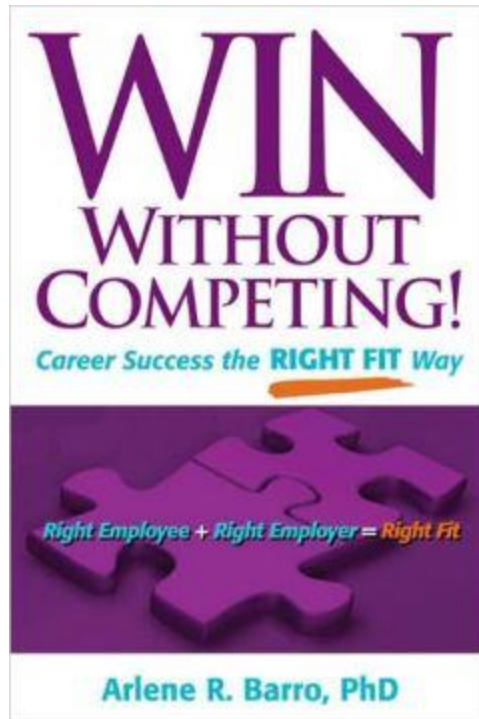


Conquering Stress! With Dr. Arlene —Anxiety Provoking Self-Talk Causes Stress



By Dr. Arlene Barro

All day long we hear an inner voice known as self-talk, which influences our decision-making behavior resulting in right or wrong decisions. Are we hearing one voice or many voices? From whom are these voices coming? Should we ignore their advice, if it makes us feel anxious, fearful or depressed? Find out.

Inner Voices Ruling You?

The voices that you hear are planted in your mind when your parents start guiding your behavior. You grow up with your parents' words reminding you what to do. My mother died of cancer, when I was 7. I do not hear her voice now, but I remember the delicious food she cooked for me. The voice I hear is my father, who consciously transmitted his wisdom to me. What other voice do I hear? My own voice when I was a child.

Ideally, we should cherish the child within us, and keep it alive, but rely on the adult voices to mentor us. In some situations, this may not be your parents, but other adults or older siblings who raised you.

Should you listen and act on the inner voices if you disagree and believe that the results will not benefit you in a specific situation? No! Hear, listen, discuss and then act. Use the inner voices to guide you as you engage in a dialogue with yourself to make the right decisions. Ultimately, you own the decisions.

What if you do not hear any voices except for the child's? My clients have experienced this situation. I believe that they have repressed their adult voices because they are angry for a variety of reasons including: victims of divorce, physical abuse and low self-esteem. The child's voice could become dominant if the adult voices are absent. To balance my clients' self-talk and enable them to thrive, I rebuild their inner voice. When they need an adult voice, they hear my voice which reduces their stress, builds self-confidence and ignites decisiveness, leaving delay behind. Managing self-talk is an art, worthy of pursuit.

Delete Negative Self-Talk

What is the impact of negative thoughts? The Heathwise Staff in *Anxiety: Stop Negative Thoughts*, Sept. 11, 2018, Health Library, University of Michigan (<https://www.uofmhealth.org/org>) reviewed the research. They concluded that anxiety (too much fear and worry) can cause a fast heartbeat, sweaty hands, tension headaches and panic attacks. They pinpointed "returning to the past" as a significant topic which generates anxiety during negative self-talk.

Elizabeth Scott, M.S. in *The Toxic Effects of Negative Stress*, updated Dec. 10, 2018, verywellmind.com said, "the inner dialogue with yourself if negative, may limit your own ability to believe in yourself and your own abilities to reach your potential." Scott's research review indicated that negative self-talk is linked to higher levels of stress, lower levels of self-esteem, decreased motivation, feelings of hopelessness and depression. I discovered, in conversations with my clients, that making erroneous assumptions creates significant negative thoughts, resulting in demeaning ourselves and blaming others. In some situations, acting on erroneous assumptions could be disastrous. What tales are you spinning?

Eliminating negative self-talk is not an option: it is a necessity to ward off anxiety and stress which sets the stage for disease.

Use these stress-busting strategies.

1. Avoid cauldrons of negativity which could stimulate inner voices from wrong-fit friends, social media madness and political news.
2. Be sure to delete the negative thoughts that you have been saying to yourself about yourself since childhood, which includes diminishing your worth.
3. Replace negativity with objectivity. Evaluate yourself and others fairly. Do not concentrate on process (what people do) focus on results, (what people achieve).
4. Make no erroneous assumptions. It is easy. Eliminate all assumptions!

To delete negative self-talk, you will need to change your behavior. Remember what George Bernard Shaw said, “We must not stay as we are, doing always what was done last time, as we shall stick in the mud.” Think of rigidity as the hallmark of sticking in the mud.

Master Positive Self-Talk

Conquering negative self-talk will start moving you toward positive self-talk. Your goal is to encourage, motivate and nurture yourself. You should be your own best friend. The dialogue that you have with yourself should reflect that.

Laughter is a wonderful stress-busting strategy. Use it. Positive self-talk is the top predictor of success. Do it. Make everyday memorable with positive self-talk and thrive. Eager to laugh? Read *Not Laughing Causes Stress* (April 2018).

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