

“DO YOU TALK to yourself? Of course you do . . . we all do at different times and in various situations.

Kids do it, teenagers do it, even adults do it.

We’ve all seen a toddler as she looks at a red puzzle piece and says, “This red piece goes into this round hole.” She says this to herself, and then she begins to operate on that assumption. When it doesn’t fit, she gets frustrated. As we get older, we stop talking out loud to ourselves, fearing that people might think something is wrong with us.

Our oldest daughter, Sunshine, was born with Down syndrome. Down syndrome children have a very candid way of self talking. I don’t know if you have ever been around many Down’s children, but like Sunshine they have a way of communicating that shows. When Sunshine feels frustrated or fearful or sad, she will self talk. This is true for a lot of children with Down syndrome.

Let me give you an example. Sometimes we will ask her to do something that she doesn’t want to do. But she is not like an average teenager or any average person who will stand and argue with you. She will go upstairs, shut her door, and for the next five or ten minutes, she will self talk. You can stand by the door and listen as she has a long conversation with herself.

Because of the speech impediment in Down’s children, they typically can’t communicate very well, so they self talk in order to work out their fears and frustrations. Sometimes Sunshine creates an imaginary friend, or she might talk about her “cousins” always being with her.

After Sunshine has been upstairs for awhile talking to herself, she will eventually come back downstairs, look at me or her mom, and say, “Okay, I’ll do it. Brian (her make-believe friend) told me it’s okay. That’s simply self talk at work.

We’re not all like Sunshine. Most of us have self talk hidden in our subconscious. So how do we identify it? Some studies show that our normal rate of talking is about 120 words per minute, but we can think at the rate of 1,300 words a minute. Consider the result. No wonder some of us get so depressed when we dwell on our problems. Can you imagine just ten minutes of negative self talk? That’s ten minutes of thinking about how bad your life is. That’s 13,000 destructive, discouraging words being pumped into your spirit every ten minutes.

Self talk is powerful.

Sometimes people say, “Hey, don’t worry. Be happy!” We all know that is often easier said than done. Like me, perhaps, many of you find yourselves upset and anxious as you lay down at night. Instead of falling asleep, all of those negative self thoughts start running through your mind. You start thinking to yourself, “Why did I say that? Why did I do that today? How am I going to pay my bills? How am I going to . . . ?” Can anybody relate to that? That’s simply self talk.

Now here is the great news—God understands you. He is the one who created you, He made you, He formed you, He knows how you work, and He understands how powerful your self talk can be. I am here to tell you that there is no level of spirituality which you can reach where you won’t have to battle negative self talk. Some people think, “Well, if I were just more spiritual, or if I were just more mature, then I would never have any negative self talk. I would always be positive and say positive things and believe positive things.” This is simply not so. If you think you have to reach a certain level of spirituality or maturity, my friend, you are going to create a lot of confusion in your life.

Only you can identify and be responsible for the words you tell yourself each day, week, month, and year. Only you have the power to control the way you think and talk to yourself. God is there for you. God created you to be more and do greater. The key is to recognize when you're not talking to yourself the way He would.

ACTION POINTS

1. Before you go on to the next chapter, identify how self talk has a negative impact on your life.
2. Recognize and identify how much time you spend talking negative words to yourself rather than positive words.
3. How can you take responsibility for your thoughts and begin to bring them in line with God's Word?"

Excerpt From: Phil Willingham. "The Most Powerful Voice in Your Life."