

Paul Solomon Lectures

Emotions

A LOOK AT SELF TALK

One of the best ways to find out our beliefs is to look at our self

Talk. There is a conversation going on in our minds. We all talk to ourselves. We are thinking beings and we talk because we think. We think not only in words but in concepts, images and ideas. There is more than one voice in this conversation. We are more than robots. Our self talk is more than just a matter of stimulus and response. We discuss, debate, we examine, consider, even argue inside of our heads.

Our conversation with ourselves determines the quality of our lives and sometimes we are even unaware of what we are saying. Are we bombarding our consciousness with supportive, loving, positive, thoughts consistently, or are we undermining ourselves with putdowns, insults and guilt producing statements that would infuriate us coming from another person? What we are saying makes the difference between being happy or sad, excited or indifferent, confident or timid, supportive or unsupportive to others, filled with love or with fear. Our self talk affects the focus of our lives, our relationships and even our health.

We do not always recognize our own self talk for two reasons. First, we speak aloud at an average rate of 150 to 200 words per minute, while there is evidence that we think at a rate of up to 3,000 words concepts and ideas per minute. That is far in excess of what we can verbalize, much less consciously decide. It is almost frightening to think that these thoughts are going on in our head faster than we can consciously control them.

Much of these unconscious thoughts are a result of our innate survival mechanism. Our bodies and minds respond to all of the stimulus around us, including textures and temperatures, visual images of everything surrounding us – colors, shapes, smells, sounds and tastes. Our responses are learned or remembered and are pre-programmed from early childhood experience. There is so much input inundating our brain, even in this moment, that if we had to be aware of all of it, we probably couldn't cope.

This suggests that something or someone beyond our conscious self controls our mind by feeding us information, suggested reactions and even conclusions more quickly than we can censor or control them.

The concept of a "survival mechanism" which can respond to threat or environmental stimuli without conscious participation is not new. Neither is the concept of "pre-programming" our minds to respond in particular ways to specific stimuli. We have been told that our fears and emotional reactions are largely a result of "conditioning" and of beliefs that we hold in our subconscious mind.

It is widely recognized that a great deal of time and energy of our developing years is spent in a learning-programming process of discovering ways to respond to particular kinds of stimuli, and in practicing these responses until they become "automatic." These automatic reactions may then become life saving "survival mechanisms." They may also become frustrating, emotional or physical reactions or thinking habits which seem beyond control and may require years of therapy to rehabilitate.

It is not unusual to encounter 'good' people engaged in a furious effort to stop thinking the way they think and to stop acting and reacting as they do. To all of us who have been motivated to "self improvement" the process is familiar.

After a myriad of attempts to find out what is causing us to undermine our own attempts at success, joy, unconditional love, relationships and health, we find that what we feel is not really the result of what happens to us, but is the result of what we tell ourselves about what happens. The truth of that is very obvious and is even confirmed by the Bible. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," (Proverbs 23:7)

How can we change our beliefs? Trying to cancel our negative beliefs and self image by telling ourselves the opposite of what we believe will only start an argument. It is said that telling a negative thinker that he should think positively will not produce a positive thinker -- it will produce a negative thinker who feels guilty.

TO TELL THE TRUTH

We can change our negative beliefs by telling ourselves the truth. Negative destructive and self-critical beliefs will not stand the test of truth. For example, when we hear ourselves saying, "This person always tries to make me feel wrong" (and most of us have at one time or another). We can examine first whether we believe that or not. "Is this person really trying to make us feel wrong? Even if this person is trying to make us feel wrong, does he have the power to do so? If he is trying to make us feel wrong, what does that say about his values about himself? Why would he need to make anyone feel wrong?"

Now, we could go to the opposite pole and say, "This person, all people, want what is best for me. They believe I am right and support me in all things." This does not appear to be the truth either. And even if it is – and it may in fact, be – we may not be able to believe it. The truth is usually somewhere in between. "No one is unkind unless he is in pain. If he cannot support me, he is not supporting himself. I can still love him and support him. I can get all of the support I need because I support me."

BINARY AND ANALOG

Binary and analog are terms from computer technology. The word "binary" means a language which consists of only two words or characters, "on" and "off." It either switches on or off and there's nothing in between. If it's on, then the circuit flows, but it will only register an "on" point and an "off" point. We can program a digital computer for any point in between, but it will not register the entire curve.

An 'analog' computer, on the other hand, will register the entire curve. It works not by switching on and off, but by a modulation between on and off, so it has a beginning point and a peak point, and it considers everything in between. Because an analog computer can serve all of the data in between, it can accommodate anything you ask, not just on or off, yes or no, right or wrong, good or evil.

When we think in the manner of a digital computer, we only consider two possibilities. Either the person supports me or he doesn't, either we are smart or stupid, either we can do the job or we can't. When we think in this binary manner, we burn out or run contrary to what is, and that eventually knocks us out.

We can consider all of the possibilities in between and everything beyond. Our minds can accommodate all of the possibilities because we live in an analog world. It is not a digital binary world, but an analog

world. If we cannot accommodate all of the possibilities, then life works against us. We switch on and off. We think of only two possibilities and lose all that is beyond the curve.

When we discover our self talk, we see the limitations in our thinking pattern. When we see our thinking is limited, we tend to switch to the other side and discover that the other side is not true either.

Digital, binary thinking in an analog world does not lead to truth. One extreme is not true and the other extreme is not true. Maybe somewhere in between them is the truth and maybe somewhere beyond them is the truth.

LIFE IS AN ANALOG

When we are willing to look at what is and be alright with what is, then our mind can go beyond digital thinking into analog thinking. Machines and all mechanisms work on a binary basis. Life is an analog. When we use digital, binary thinking in our lives, we are reducing our experiences and possibilities of our lives into the limitations of a machine.

The analog is not necessarily a point between the two poles. It is not a compromise. It is beyond either one. We don't have to be stupid if we're not smart, and we don't have to be smart to not be stupid. We are not either one. We are all possibilities of the expression of intelligence, and that is more than either of the two poles, and it is more than a compromise between. We are not being supported or unsupported. We receive all possibilities of support from ourselves and from the capacity of others to be supportive.

And so it is with almost all of our self-talk statements. We don't have to slip from one side to the other. We can accommodate all of the possibilities. That is the nature of our lives, our intelligence, and it is the nature of the Source of our intelligence.

If we look at our own self-talk, we can find what we have been saying to ourselves about our past and our future, about our relationships, about our careers, our goals and our opportunities. If we find that our self-talk devalues, takes away from the value of any of those things, then our self-talk is not the truth. If we learn the truth, the truth will set us free. The truth allows us to see things as they are, without coloration, without opinion.

LOVE IS THE KEY

The key to changing our self-talk is the use of love as the basis. Only two powers exist. One Source empowers life and all that supports life and living. The other empowers lack, limitation, judgment and death. The truth supports "what is," and supports our ability to cope with "what is." "Untruth" interprets "what is" and assigns fantasies called "fear". "Fear" is a statement of faith in evil."

Some people believe in "fear". It is sometimes considered smart to "fear" because, it is believed, "fear" protects us. The truth is that "fear" weakens and paralyzes. "Respect" protects us and "respect" is a result of discovering truth. "Fear" instructs avoidance. Love or Truth will instruct us to know, to examine, to be informed, to approach rather than avoid, to build strength rather than weakness.

When we change our thoughts to loving, supportive thoughts, we change our minds. When we change our minds, we change our lives.