A Method to Reshape our Inner Talk

http://edwardtraversa.com

An analogy I sometimes employ is to ask people to think of their ego as a puppy dog. Like a

puppy it asks for attention, it can be mischievous and adorable all at the same time. There

are multiple reasons why I use this analogy. One of the main reasons is that in thinking of

our ego as a puppy dog, it allows us to observe ourselves without getting caught up in all

the commotion. It breaks up the identification with our inner chatter and allows for

distance to occur between our thoughts and identity.

For example, when I am confronted with a difficult task my self-talk revo� 挀漀洀洀愀㝡n fᰠm愀㝯r

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inner talk in such a manner is useful and beneficial to that individual. Coaching ourselves

becomes an integral part of success.

I am not suggesting that all our internal talk becomes of the second person variety. For

example, I might say “I am hungry” or “I am sleepy” as an accurate reflection of what is

transpiring in consciousness at the time. That’s fine. But when there is something that

needs to change in life or something that is proving to be troublesome it is helpful to gain

some separation from it.

It is also worth noting that it’s not the use of “you “as such that is important because we

could just as easily say “you are such an idiot” to ourselves. Obviously if we take the latter

on-board it is detrimental to our well-being. What is more critical is to find ways which

allow us to gain some space from our thoughts and emotions. Combining this space with

kinder and gentler self-talk can really make a remarkable difference in our lives.

When we are caught up in something and our emotions and thoughts are overwhelming us

we have great difficulty in generating beneficial decisions. In fact, when the latter occurs,

it’s almost a case of “oh no, not again”. That’s because when we are overwhelmed we are

functioning off old outdated patterns which typically have stemmed from childhood. These

patterns served us well at one time, but as we grow into adulthood they are no longer

beneficial and often are detrimental to our well-being.

There is some evidence that employing second person terms like “you” also help in

performance orientated behaviours. In a study of university students, self-help statements

that use “you” instead of I turned out to have a more beneficial result. Hopefully, future

studies will expand to include a greater segment of the population, but the shortcomings of

the research studies aside, it is in the least providing some indication that “You” may be

better than using “I” in some circumstances.

I often suggest that people begin by writing things down and then looking at the writing

when the intensity of what has been written has died down. Then in small steps to begin to

incorporate a way of inner talk that is very similar to talking to ego as if it were a puppy

dog. It’s not a panacea by any stretch of the imagination but finding the right balance

between owning our behaviors and creating enough distance/observing our own behaviors

does help for most people. Our inner talk is one area where by changing a few simple

things can have some beneficial consequences in our lives.