

words

Words. “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never harm me.” Think again. How do you talk to yourself? Do you say things like, “I’m no good at sports,” or “I’m too old for that foolishness”?

Be careful. More and more, we’re finding out how much our self-talk affects the way the mind and body function. You see, the brain is a lot like a computer. It can’t make decisions on its own. Rather, it reacts to the data or information we feed into it—and the body responds accordingly. It should come as no surprise, then, that we don’t always feel so well.

Listen to the way we talk. “You make me sick.” “He’s driving me crazy.” “Oh, I could have just died.” “I can’t stomach that guy.” “What a cross she has to shoulder.” “It blew my mind.” “Doesn’t that just break your heart?” “If he steps on my toes one more time . . .” “That just kills me.” “The traffic was murder.” “You are a pain in the ___.”

We say these things mindlessly, out of habit. And what do we wind up with? Nausea, anxiety, ulcers, sore muscles, corns. At the very worst—death. At the very least—hemorrhoids. It’s no wonder. Your brain is just sitting there, waiting for you to tell it what to do. Meanwhile, you respond with enough negativity to make yourself sick.

We need to pay more attention to our self-talk. It’s often the basis for who we are today. Not living up to your potential? If you’re nervous, timid, or afraid to take a risk, it might be because of the messages you’ve been giving yourself. “I could never do that. What if I make a mistake? I would absolutely die of embarrassment!” (By the way, I know of no one who has ever actually died of embarrassment). The office grouch whose communication skills attract people like garlic breath probably has not said anything nice to himself since the Nixon administration. On the other hand, confidence, happiness, and health are all great indicators of positive self-talk.

There’s no doubt about this. Words are powerful and we have a choice in which ones we use. So, choose words that will keep you well. It’s like giving yourself a big hug, without everyone looking at you funny.