

You are what you say to yourself

Bonnie Singer, Ph.D.

Think back to a time in school when you struggled and you said to yourself: "I don't get it!" or "I can't do this!" Just for a moment, dare to feel it again.

Do you remember what you said to yourself during that moment of panic when failure seemed certain? Do you sometimes still hear that same voice in your head?



All day, every day, we talk to ourselves.

We tell ourselves we're awesome. We tell ourselves we stink. Starting at a very young age, we spin stories about who we are, and these stories shape how we see ourselves. Once a story grooves itself into our brain, it has the power to shape how we view ourselves for life.

Inner dialogue is a powerful thing.



Just try doing something – especially something complicated like rebuilding your computer or writing an essay – without talking to yourself. That inner conversation is either a positive or a negative one. Positive self-talk helps you work through challenges and persevere for success. Negative self-talk leads you to doubt yourself or even give up in the face of a challenge that in the moment feels insurmountable. Many kids who have challenges with some aspect of learning and school are self-critical when faced with challenges. Their negative self-talk makes it tougher for them to overcome those challenges and succeed.

What students say to themselves impacts their performance – in school, and ultimately in life.

Self-talk can be imbalanced sometimes. When this happens, efficiency in learning suffers because students find themselves lost in the details, unable to see the big picture, or wasting precious time using ineffective strategies.

