



Exercise Positive Self-verbalization

This exercise is to help you notice positive aspects about yourself, bring them more to the forefront and to use them when you need them. The exercise is divided into four sessions, you will need about half an hour for each session. It is better to spread these sessions over several days. The general idea is to collect as much information about yourself that isn't negative, but pleasant, useful, notable, or even downright excellent. You make a list of these aspects, which you will condense into a concise yet powerful text with positive statements about yourself. These statements have weight because they are true, not some made-up aphorisms which you say but don't really believe. The idea is to create a small card which you carry with you at all times and can use to boost your self-esteem whenever needed.

Exercise 1: Collecting information

You start by collecting information by yourself. From tomorrow onwards, keep a list of all the things you do that go well. You may add anything positive about yourself to that list too. Note all these things on your smartphone or a (small) notebook – i.e. something you can carry with you all the time, so that you can make a note as soon as something captures your attention. Remember, it is about *collecting* information, so keep the threshold low, also note things you think everyone is able to do or the things you may think are too small to note. Some examples: 'I gave my opinion during a meeting', 'I finally tidied up my cupboard', 'John gave me a compliment for ...', 'I went for a walk', 'I remembered to water the plants'. Everything is usable, sorting out is a job for later.

At the end of the day, spend half an hour behind your laptop or pc. Choose a moment in which you can work undisturbed, put your smartphone in flight mode. In a document you note all the things you collected and then start brainstorming about all the things you're good at. Perhaps you're modest, or can cook well, or manage to get people to laugh easily. Which memories about yourself give you a positive feeling about yourself? What things have you done well? Note all the compliments you can remember getting, things you have done you are satisfied about, and so forth. Also here keep the threshold low; everything positive is good. Remember also the things you have learnt to do differently and what you have attained by doing that. All these things belong on your list.

It may sound strange, but for many people it isn't easy to name their own positive points and they find it difficult to make a list like the one you're making. Don't let that put you off, the effort is worth it. You may feel awkward: some of the information you are noting may not feel positive while you're writing them down. Don't let that stop you, write the points down anyway. In other words, note everything as soon as it comes up without censoring it.

Exercise 2: More information

The next two exercises are to extend the list you have made thus far. When new things come to mind in the next few days, add them to your list.

For the second exercise you need someone who knows you well to help you. This could be your partner, a friend or a family member. Plan a session of about 45 minutes. There are two roles: The one tells, whilst the other takes minutes. It's usually nicest if you switch roles halfway through, so take about 15 minutes first in the role of making notes, then in the role of telling. The person telling gets themselves comfortable and tells about everything they can think of that is positive about the other. Every characteristic, deed, large or small, every

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detail may be mentioned and is noted by the other on the list. After both roles have been fulfilled, each reads through their own list and picks the two most important points. These two points are then spoken out to the other, this being the end of the joint session. Remember to afterwards add *all* the points about you onto your list.

Exercise 3

For this exercise you again need 30 minutes undisturbed time behind your pc or laptop. This time you're going to start tidying up. Start by taking every point and formulating it in the most powerful way possible. It's not about making it unrealistic, but statements about yourself are more powerful when written in the I-form and in the present tense. Where possible try to reword sentences in the form of 'I have' into the form 'I am'. The idea behind this rewording is simple: Something you have you can lose, something you are you cannot. That makes it more powerful. Also now it may feel weird to write these positive aspects about yourself, while it may not feel that way to you. Don't let that put you off, just keep writing!

Exercise 4

The idea now is use the points you have collected to make a so-called 'positive self-verbalization card'. This card will contain a summary of the most important elements from your list. It is to remind you of your positive sides and can help you to actively do something against a negative feeling or negative attitude about yourself or about a situation you are faced with. By peppering yourself up with this card, you're actually doing nothing other than correcting a mistaken belief: You name the positive sides you have, which have become snowed under by a negative feeling. Remember, these statements aren't made-up, they're real!

A good card contains the four or five most beautiful, feel-good and powerful statements. It's people's experience that reading out the statements aloud two times a day makes the card more effective. This way you will soon memorize these statements. Those needing to make a speech usually prepare in this way too: By reading out loud what they're planning to say. Your brain seems to remember the statements more quickly when you say them out loud on a regular basis.

To choose the most powerful statements, read them out loud one by one. Wait after reading and observe how it makes you feel. Which statements feel the most powerful? Which of them give you a good feeling? Which make you feel satisfied or give you a powerful feeling? Use this strategy to whittle down your list until you have the four or five most powerful statements. If necessary reword them to make them more powerful (remember: I-form in the present tense, for example 'I am patient', 'I am good at my work', etcetera). You want to read strong and clear language. If this all makes you feel uncomfortable, you may blame me for that, after all, I did ask you to do it! And I know it isn't as easy as it sounds.

Now start making your summary of the most powerful points. Keep rewriting it until it feels right for you. Perhaps try switching the order or substituting one of the statements with one you previously didn't include in your summary. The number of statements isn't really that important, as long as when you read them all out loud, they give you a powerful feeling about yourself.

Once you're happy with the text, print it out. It's good practice to hang a copy in places you see on a regular basis, like in the bathroom, (inside) your cupboard, on the fridge, etcetera. This will constantly remind you of all these positive points. Many people make a small card which they carry with themselves all the time (you could keep it in your purse or wallet).

Using the card in practice

Now that you've made your card, it's time to use it too! Start off by reading the points on your card out loud twice a day. One of the best times to do that is when you wake up in the morning, possibly even before you've actually gotten out of your bed. The experience is that this can give your mood a positive boost which affects the rest of your day. More importantly, use the card when you notice things are getting hard for you: Bring it up in your memory, sometimes just touching the card can be sufficient, or find somewhere where you can be alone and read the statements out loud to yourself again.

I wish you success!