

# Step 1: Monitor Your Negative Self-Talk by Writing It Down

According to Dr. Greene, the first step in taming negative self-talk is writing down your negative thoughts. He calls this “thought monitoring.”

Our negative thoughts are reflexive and automatic. We’re often not aware that they’re even popping in our heads until we start feeling worked up and descend into a crappy mood. Writing these thoughts down makes the implicit, explicit. As Greene puts it in his book [\*Fight Your Fear and Win\*](#):

The act of writing — of formulating thoughts into words, of nailing down vague notions with specific language — brings what was reflexive and out of your control into the purview of the conscious mind. Getting them into the light of day, getting them heard, immediately diminishes their horror and their power over you.

For the next two days, anytime you experience negative self-talk, use a pocket notebook or your phone’s note-taking app to write down exactly what you’re saying to yourself. Also, write down what happened immediately before the negative self-talk popped into your mind. This will help you find patterns in what triggers it.

You’ll likely feel weird, or like this exercise isn’t doing anything, which may tempt you to quit. Resist this urge. This an essential step in squashing the negative chatter happening in your mind. It helps you identify its triggers, and gives you a greater sense of control over your thoughts.

Besides, whatever you’ve been doing to silence your inner critic likely hasn’t worked. That’s why you’re reading this article. So what do you have to lose in taking part in this exercise for a couple days?

## Step 2: Imagine Someone You Love and Care About and Ask Yourself, “Would I Say These Things To Them?”

After two days of capturing your negative self-talk in writing, you've likely created an extensive inventory of your inner Eeyore-isms and their accompanying triggers.

Congratulations. You've completed step one in stopping your negative self-talk.

According to Greene, step two requires imagining someone you love or deeply care about — it could be a spouse, a child, a friend, a parent, or even someone you mentor at school or work.

Got that person in your head?

Now, go down your list of negative self-talk statements and their accompanying triggers and ask yourself, "Would I say the same thing to this person I care about if they were going through a similar situation?"

Let's say one of the bits of negative self-talk that you wrote down was, "I'm such a fatty and will always be a fatso." That bit of negative self-talk happened after you weighed yourself in the morning and weren't happy with what the scale reported back.

Now imagine that your son just weighed himself on the scale, saw a number that wasn't healthy, and felt dejected. Would you tell your son, "You're such a fatty, and you'll always be a fatso"?

Unless you're a complete d-bag, the answer is no. You know saying that to him wouldn't help and would only discourage him even more. You love and respect him too much to wound and demoralize him like that.

*So why say that sort of thing to yourself?*

The next time you mess up and feel the urge to spout a self-inflicting diatribe, imagine it was your child or friend who just did the exact same thing as you.

Recognize that you wouldn't use the condemnatory language you typically gin up in your inner monologues with the person you're imagining. Then decide you're not going to use this kind of negative language with another person for whom you care either: yourself.

Self-compassion like this doesn't make you soft; in fact, [it's been shown to boost your willpower — your grit.](#)

## **Step 3: Reprogram Your Self-Talk With Positive Scripts**

The mental exercise outlined in steps one and two can go a long way in taming negative self-talk. But Greene argues that if you want to eliminate it entirely, you need to go one step further and swap the harmful self-talk scripts for positive ones.

Here's how to create them:

Take a look at your list of negative self-talk scripts and their accompanying triggers.

Imagine the person you care about again and ask yourself, “What would I say to that person if they were going through the same situation that triggered my negative self-talk?”

You’d probably say something a lot more affirming and helpful than what you reflexively said to yourself.

Let’s go back to the fatso example. If your son wasn’t happy about his weight, you wouldn’t say, “Yeah, you’re a fatso, and you’ll always be a fatty.”

Instead, you’d probably say something that didn’t ignore the problem, but offered counsel in an affirming way, like: “I can see that you’re unhappy with your weight, but this is something you’re capable of tackling, simply by making some small changes. Let’s think about what some of those small changes might be.”

Go through your entire list of negative self-talk statements, imagine the more affirming thing you’d instead say to a loved one going through the same situation, and write that down next to your negative script.

Greene suggests making your positive scripts as simple as possible when you can; for example:

- “You got this.”
- “You’re capable.”
- “You can change.”
- “You’re strong.”
- “You’re in control.”

Memorize your positive script.

*We hope you enjoyed this. It takes practice to develop new habits. Which means it will take time to see results. Celebrate every victory! Take notes on your progress. We all have bad days. If you fall off the wagon – get back on! xoxo Lynda*