

Would You Speak to Your Friends the Way You Speak to Yourself? **By Debi Silber, MS, RD, WHC The Mojo Coach®**

Very often when we speak to our friends, we shower them with compliments, praise and approval. It makes them feel proud, valued and respected and makes us feel good as well. We recognize the benefit of positive speech, we see the happiness it brings to our friends and we feel good about bringing this joy to others. So if we know all this, why is it so hard to speak this way to ourselves?

For many moms, negative self-talk is a way of life. "I'm so dumb/lazy/fat" can be how we define ourselves. We place ourselves in a particular category and limit ourselves from ever expanding beyond it. It's like we're willingly putting ourselves in prison while we hold the key. It's bad enough many moms feel this way about themselves but most share these negative thoughts with their coworkers, friends, spouses and even children.

So let's look at how negative self-talk would affect those in each group, starting with coworkers. Maybe you said something you didn't intend to say at a meeting, submitted a report that wasn't your best or handled a situation in a way that wasn't the most effective. You berate yourself, letting others know just how terrible your actions were. What message are your coworkers receiving? Are you a valuable resource and integral part of the team or are you positioning yourself as a weak link? Is your contribution necessary and valued or would your office have been better off without your input? Those answers are determined and defined by how you portray yourself. Of course we all make mistakes, but when we magnify them we're simply making *more* of the mistake while making *less* of ourselves.

Now take a look at how you speak about yourself when you're with your friends. We teach others how to treat us. If we speak negatively about ourselves, we're setting the tone for others to do the same. It shows we don't value or respect ourselves so others learn to follow by example. For some moms however, criticizing themselves is their way of fishing for compliments. For example, one mom says how bad of a mom she is in order to receive a reassuring boost that she is in fact a good mom.

The problem with this method is that friends may find it tiresome and draining. At some point, when you keep putting yourself down, your friend may simply not want the responsibility of picking you up. That's your job, not hers. She wants to be loyal and supportive, but her time and energy is limited. Does she want to spend it boosting your self-esteem or enjoying your company? Then there's the way we speak about ourselves to our spouses or significant others. For most of us,

we want our relationships to bring us joy, satisfaction, enrichment and fulfillment. We want to feel loved, respected, appreciated and adored. So let's look at how we're going about this. What are we "bringing to the table" when we show that we don't love and respect ourselves by calling ourselves names? To make matters worse, why would we choose to point out all of our imperfections? No one's perfect, but by finding a way to love our uniqueness, idiosyncrasies and quirkiness others can love them too. It's "the spin" we put on ourselves; if we think we're something special, that feeling radiates to those around us.

Finally, let's examine how our negative self-talk affects our children. Imagine you're getting ready to go out, you're getting dressed and your children are in your room with you. Clothes are flying everywhere as you scramble to find something that's clean, stylish and fits without cutting off your circulation. You're frustrated, angry with yourself for letting yourself go and not taking the time to buy clothes that suit your current size. While this may be a defining moment where you embark on healthier eating and exercise, it's a defining moment for your kids as well.

First of all, you are your children's greatest role model. They study you to learn how to think, feel, behave and react. So think about what you're teaching them. Is this how you want them to think, feel and act? Of course not, so why is that the lesson you're choosing to teach them? If you want them to accept, love and appreciate themselves, then why don't you give yourself that same love and appreciation? You're their mom and that's why they love you. Period. It's who you are, not how you look or what you wear.

Learning how to speak to ourselves more positively may take some practice. For some it means counteracting every negative comment with a positive comment. For others it may mean finding something they like about themselves in order to begin the process of self-love. Whatever gets you there doesn't matter. What's important is to begin speaking to ourselves the way we speak to others...for everyone's sake.



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