

Unit 3.4 Self-Talk, Part 2

OVERVIEW

Why would people be so susceptible to the negativity around them? Quite simply, most people don't respect their own opinion enough, and they tend to think everyone else's opinion is more accurate. More than that, most of us tend to discount positive comments (from ourselves or others) and to internalize and focus on the negative. Just as bad news gets more TV airplay than the good, negative comments often get more mental attention than do the good.

It's not completely clear why this is true, but it may be because we, as humans, are programmed to be acutely aware of danger signals—after all, our lives could depend on our quick response. When there is no danger, our bodies and minds relax, and we are able to go about our normal affairs. And so negative comments—a form of social danger signal—may raise our levels of mental alertness more than positive ones.

We may not be able to control our natural responses like this. However, we *can* control how we talk to ourselves afterward. Even a harshly negative comment is usually uttered only once. But if we repeat it to ourselves a hundred times, it's as if it were actually spoken that often. On the other hand, if we consciously repeat, or reinforce, a positive comment, we create a different reality: as if that comment were uttered repeatedly.

It's not a matter of being prideful or self-centered. It's simply a matter of intentionally choosing what to store in our minds. Thinking healthy thoughts is no more self-serving than eating healthy. They're both important ways of strengthening ourselves, and of ensuring optimal performance in our daily lives.

UNIT QUESTIONS / EXERCISES

1. Think about any negative feedback that you have received lately. How did you react to it? Share your answers with your coach and/or the group.

2. Now, think of any positive feedback you may have received. Did you react any differently to it than you did the negative comments? Why or why not? Discuss your answers with your coach and/or the group.

3. Think about how this applies to your work relationship at John L. Scott. Do negative or positive comments dominate within the organization? How do you react personally to this feedback? How does this reaction cycle affect the organization's performance? Discuss your answers with the group.
