

Unit 3.5 Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

OVERVIEW

Why is it that some people are extremely successful and some of us are not? You may have thought in the past, “He must have been born with it” or “I must have been born without.” Sometimes, people *are* born with great talents, wealth, or opportunity. But in other cases, greatness blooms where there was no reasonable hope that it would ever appear. Some of the most influential personalities of our times—Ronald Reagan, Oprah Winfrey, Mother Teresa—came from very humble beginnings that could not have foreshadowed greatness.

All too often, what stands in our way is not a lack of talent, or wealth, or opportunity, but self-imposed barriers that prevent us from even striving toward greatness, much less achieving it, in whatever our chosen domain might be. If our self-talk tells us that we are failures, that we are incapable of doing this or that, then we simply will not be able to do it. Negative self-talk is like a prison wall: it defines and limits the space in which we can move.

More than that, negative self-talk can become self-fulfilling prophecy. By constantly reinforcing whom we perceive ourselves to be, negative self-talk determines whom, in fact, we can become. If we constantly tell ourselves that we will not become a successful parent, a successful spouse, a successful employee or entrepreneur, then almost assuredly we won't.

On the other hand, positive self-talk can blow away the prison walls of negativity. And while eliminating the confining barriers of negative, self-fulfilling prophecy doesn't guarantee success in itself, it does set us on the right path by opening up a whole new world of possibilities.

UNIT QUESTIONS / EXERCISES

1. Have you ever experienced the effects of a self-fulfilling prophecy? Share your answers with your coach and/or the group.

2. Think of a time when you resolved that you were going to succeed, despite many reasons that would have argued against success. How did you feel? Did you do anything differently than you would have if you had thought success was impossible? Discuss your answers with your coach and/or the group.

3. Think about how this applies to your work relationship at John L. Scott. Is your organization burdened by any self-fulfilling prophecies? How does this affect the organization's performance? How does it affect your own motivation? Discuss these matters with the group.
