

FAST Pathways® Skills to Keep Stress Useful - Too Much Mind Chat



The way you talk to yourself in your mind profoundly affects how you feel. Not everyone likes to admit that they talk to themselves, but we all do. It's an integral part of our thinking.

Often when you're worried or anxious, that voice in your mind sounds worried or anxious too. If you find yourself experiencing low confidence, or being self-critical, that's probably mostly to do with your inner voice. It might be that you've learned to suppress it, so it doesn't always reach your awareness; but by grumbling away in the background, it's still affecting you.

Maybe you talk yourself out of things you'd really like to do; or beat yourself up after a conversation that didn't go so well. Maybe you try to reason with that voice, or to argue back – but that just gives it more energy, and it can quickly become draining.

Maybe it's someone else's voice, playing through your mind – the memory of an argument, or some unpleasant criticism; or your imagination creating things which might be said in a particular situation. The might just be too much mind chat, and you'd like to be able to quieten it down and focus on one thing at a time; or sleep more restfully.

So let's explore some simple ways to change your inner voice.... The exercise explores a few ways to get you started. As with any of the techniques, you can immerse in a little imagination. If you have a critical or judgmental sounding inner voice, try giving it Helium so that it gets all squeaky, and the more it tries to sound serious, the squeakier it gets. Give it a backing track of circus music, or a ridiculous accent. What would it sound like as Sylvester the cat, spitting all over the place? What would it sound like as a badly-tuned radio, with the sound drifting in and out?

If an adjustment makes it feel worse, do the opposite, and when you find what makes it feel better, do it again – giving it those few precise repetitions to teach your mind the new pattern, so that it can start to do it differently all by itself.

Once you've listened and experimented, you can also practice changing that inner voice's tone: Perhaps it's a doubtful voice, quiet and hesitant – how is it different when you turn up its volume, helping it to speak clearly, with a tone of comfortable authority? Perhaps like a news reader, or someone who always puts across whatever they have to say clearly, and engagingly.

Try using the voice you'd use to read a story to a small child, or to explain something which you absolutely adore – so that every word has depth and texture, a richness of tone which draws you in, engages your attention, and holds it, spellbound. And when you find what makes it feel better, do it some more, teaching your mind the way you want things done.