

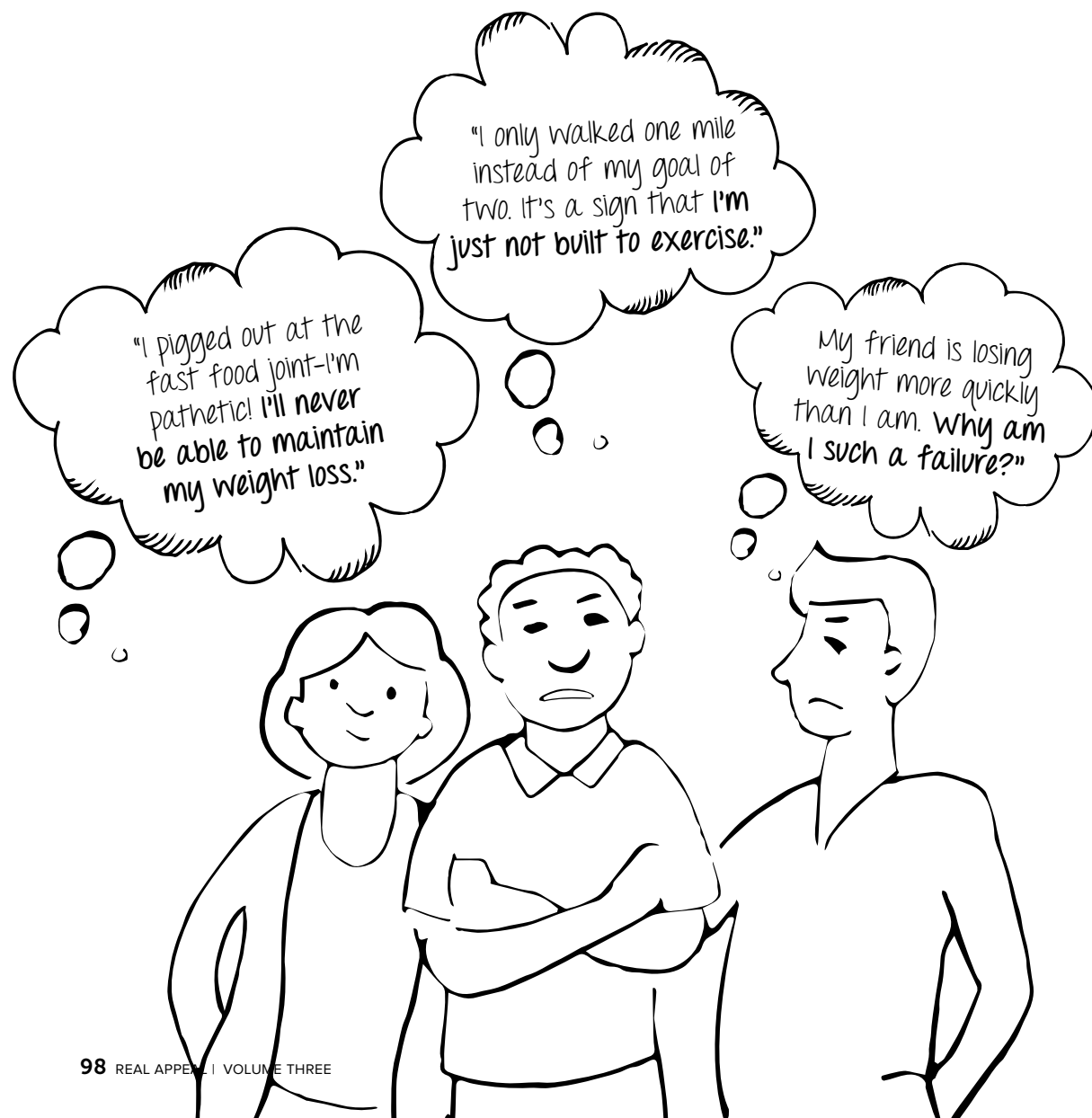


Trash the Trash Talk: How to Silence Your Inner Critic

Criticizing yourself may be so ingrained and second-nature that you might not believe you can do anything about it. But knee-jerk thoughts and emotions can be transformed, and this session is designed to help you accomplish this.

Cognitive Distortions!

You might think that you're giving yourself "tough love" or "the truth" when you trash yourself and that this will keep you on track with Real Appeal. But the exact opposite can happen: You may start believing the defeatist things you're saying to yourself. Tell yourself that you're pathetic and you might give up. Tell yourself that you're not built to exercise, and you won't.



Sounds pretty harsh, right? Or maybe it sounds all-too-familiar. This type of "trash-talk" is common, and we all do it to some extent. In fact, people often engage in several forms of negative thinking, called **cognitive distortions**, simultaneously. These automatic thoughts are normal (in the sense that everyone does it) but ultimately counterproductive. The reason they're called "automatic" is because they occur subconsciously and quickly—within .2 seconds after the event that triggers the negative thought (e.g., a missed workout or overeating).

In fact, research has found that optimists (those who envision a bright future), compared to pessimists (those who have negative expectations of the future), are less likely to have high blood pressure, high cholesterol and even obesity.

Of course, none of this is meant to give you another reason to be down on yourself! The point is to be aware of when negative self-talk is happening and to change it.

The payoff: You'll find it easier to stick with healthy eating and exercise. Research finds that motivational self-talk can improve athletic performance and even make workouts feel less tiring. And a 2012 report from the National Weight Control Registry, the longest ongoing study of people who have maintained substantial weight loss for many years, found that successful weight-loss maintainers regularly rely on positive self-talk as one of their strategies. Fortunately, there are proven ways to evict the negative critic from your head and replace it with a voice of encouragement. We'll show you how.



Flip It: Turn Your Self-Talk from Negative to Positive

Ready to cultivate an encouraging inner coach? With practice, the switch from negative to positive will become second nature, though initially it will require conscious effort. Here's how to make that happen.

1 Recognize that you engage in negative self-talk.

Everyone does it occasionally, so rest assured: You're normal!



2 Catch it when it happens.

"Listen in" on your inner dialogue from time to time. Identify the belittling thought that comes to mind and name it (keep reading to learn the different kinds of negative thought patterns). That way, you'll know what you're dealing with.



3 Tell yourself to "stop."

Halt that negative thought in its tracks. It might even help to envision a stop sign. At first, you may notice your negative thoughts only after they have automatically occurred, but gradually you will catch them sooner and sooner.



4 Replace the thought.

Substitute one that's more positive and constructive (you'll find lots of examples in the upcoming "Watch Your (Internal) Language" section). Repeat it to yourself a few times so it will stick.





Watch Your (Internal) Language!

Believe it or not, you can talk yourself into a good mood or a bad mood, into feeling inspired or frustrated, or just about any other frame of mind. Thoughts affect feelings and feelings affect actions, for better or worse. On the worse side of the ledger, negative thinking can deflate your mood and motivation and keep you from wanting to work out or eat healthy. Here are some common negative thought patterns and tactics for turning them around.

#1: Black-and-white thinking

With this style of thinking, everything is good or bad, all or nothing—it couldn't possibly be between the two extremes. With Real Appeal, you might tell yourself that you're either "on track" or "failing," when the truth could lie somewhere in between. Here's how black-and-white thoughts can be transformed into more realistic (and helpful) shades of gray.

Thinking in black and white	Thinking in shades of gray
I had two slices of cake—I have failed at my weight-loss efforts!	I went a little overboard but I can get back on track, starting now.
I missed another workout; I'll never be able to get fit.	It was just one workout. Fitness is about the sum of exercise over a week or a month.
If I can't drop three pounds a week, I'll never be the size I want to be.	That's just not true. Losing a half, one or two pounds per week can also get me to my goal.

#2: Catastrophizing

When you catastrophize, you blow things out of proportion or imagine the worst-case scenario. But playing the "what if?" game of dire consequences or magnifying a problem so that it gets stretched out of proportion can make you lose perspective and sidetrack you. It also puts fear in the driver's seat, which could be paralyzing, not motivating. Here's how to kick the habit to the curb.

Catastrophizing	Doing a reality check
Because I ate a week's worth of fat at Sherry's party, I'm going to regain all the weight I've lost.	It was one bad eating event but I don't have to let it derail my efforts.
I made a fool of myself in a new exercise class; I can't ever show my face there again.	What are the odds that someone will remember how I did in a week or a month? Plus, they may have been so focused on their performance, they didn't even notice me.
If I can't get down to my goal weight and stay there, no one will ever love me.	I will focus on qualities that aren't appearance related that make me appealing and lovable.

#3: Discounting the positive



With this form of distorted thinking, you tend to reject positive aspects of an experience and dwell on negative ones. If you do a good job, you may believe it's not good *enough* or zero in on the details you messed up. Filtering out the positive can suck the satisfaction out of life and make you feel inadequate, even when you have much to celebrate. Here's how to turn it around.

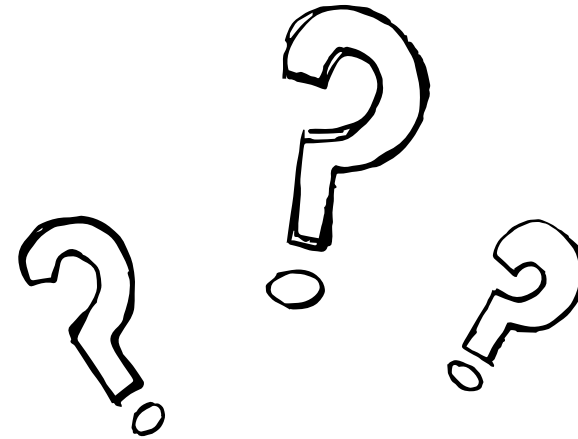
Discounting the positive	Appreciating the positive
Because of my fast-food lunch, it means I didn't eat healthfully today.	I had a nutritious breakfast, 5 servings of fruits and veggies, and lentil soup for dinner. That counts, too.
Despite my best intentions, I didn't exercise two days last week.	That means I worked out five out of seven days—a success by any reasonable measure!
Although I'm losing weight fairly steadily, my measurements aren't where I want them.	My weight is on target—fantastic!—even if I haven't lost as many inches as I hoped to.

#4: Criticizing yourself with "I should have..." statements



When you do this, you're being judgmental and controlling toward yourself. Maybe it's because you have a tacit set of rules or you hold yourself to perfectionist standards. Either way, it's time to cut yourself some slack. Otherwise, you'll feel guilty and frustrated—neither of which is as powerful a motivator as a can-do attitude. Here's how to end self-scolding.

Using "Should" statements	Putting an end to self-scolding
I shouldn't have had that donut. I should be able to control my cravings.	Sure, it would be nice if I could resist sweets but we all have temptations. Plus, life is also about pleasure, and one donut certainly won't kill me.
I should be able to stick with my workout schedule. No excuses!	Sometimes life throws us curveballs and we have to adjust. I'm doing the best I can.
If I were a stronger person, I'd be able to stay at my ideal weight without having to work so hard.	Would I say something like this to a good friend? No, so I'm not going to talk to myself this way!



Are Unrealistic Expectations Setting You Up for Negative Thinking?

If you're constantly down on yourself, maybe it's time to reassess how realistic your goals are. Perhaps your demanding schedule just won't allow you to work out as often or as long as you'd hoped to. Or, maybe you're snacking too often between meals because you're skimping on the right stuff during meals. These perceived lapses may signal that you've set the bar too high or that you're aiming for weight loss that's too dramatic. Ask trusted friends or your coach whether your goals are reasonable; if they're not, adjusting your expectations can help you achieve more realistic, healthy goals and put you in a more positive frame of mind—which will set you up for further success! Remember, slow and steady wins the race.



I will think more positive thoughts 



Commitment Contract

I recognize that negative self-talk is hurting my weight-loss efforts, and I'm going to ditch this habit.

This week, I'll work on changing defeatist thoughts. Here's how I'll do this:

- Using the "Flip It" steps, I'll "drop in" on my self-talk, and when a negative thought pops up about anything in my life, I'll list it in the table below. Then, I'll come up with more constructive thoughts to replace it.

Negative Thought	Positive Thought
I never...	Sometimes I
I can't believe I did...	I'm glad I did...
I should have...	I'd like to...

- If I need my coach's help, I will ask for it. Everyone needs help from time to time, even the most accomplished athletes.
- Meanwhile, I'll continue my other healthy habits to the best of my ability.

My signature: _____