

Self-Talk Samples: *Cruel* vs. *Compassionate*

Situation	Cruel	Compassionate
Came home to a messy house after a long day of work.	“What’s wrong with you that you cannot keep your house clean?”	“Gosh, life must be busy, I should relax; I’ll make plans to clean soon.”
Screamed at my kids for not listening.	“You are a terrible parent.”	“I can recover from this. Apologize, and give my kids a hug.”
Picked a fight with my spouse because I was in a bad mood.	“Only a horrible mate takes their bad day out on the person they are supposed to love most.”	“My mate will forgive me. I can ask for some time for self-care instead.”
Forgot to get my child ready for picture day.	“Every other parent remembered, why can’t you?”	“This is just a mistake and I can be forgiven.”
Stood my friend up for our lunch date.	“You don’t deserve this friendship.”	“Life is just so busy and I really needed this time with my friend, they will forgive me and we can reschedule.”
Forgot to get eggs.	“You can’t do anything right.”	“Wow, this is a sign you are just really busy. Can someone else go get these eggs?”
Didn’t work out at all like I had planned.	“You’re never going to get healthy at this rate.”	“You are doing your best. Tomorrow’s another day.”
Forgot to take my medications.	“Even grandma can remember her pills, why can’t I?”	“Whoops, honest mistake. What will make this easier?”
Your examples	Your examples	Your examples
Your examples	Your examples	Your examples
Your examples	Your examples	Your examples



Many patients are convinced that beating themselves up mentally helps them to achieve their goals. And sometimes being tough on yourself mentally does help you to accomplish tasks, but it's not the only way. Also, I would argue it hurts in the long-term. Let me explain.

If you are talking to yourself all day, every day, like the examples above in the "Cruel" column, how do you think you will feel overall? Read through the samples above, how do you feel reading those? I feel sad, disappointed, hopeless, tired etc. The way you think affects the way you feel, the way you feel affects the way you act and think and on the cycle, continues.

I challenge you to change the way you think. Give up the "tough on yourself" self-talk. Give up the "if I don't push myself I'll never accomplish anything" mentality. Let go of self-loathing. As I say to my patients, "Let's change that 'kick in the pants' motivational thinking and change it to something more kind, accepting and inspired".

Being kind to yourself doesn't mean you don't accomplish anything, we still have to push ourselves to make healthy choices each day. I'm just encouraging you to change how you talk to yourself as you make those plans to accomplish your goals.

Here are a few tips to help you come up with more positive self-talk as you work to achieve your goals:

1. Ask yourself, how would I respond to my friend or child if they were in this situation?
2. Often forgetting and is evidence of busyness and the need for increased self-care. Can you see your innocent mistakes as evidence of your need for more self-compassion rather than a failure of self?
3. Does your negative self-talk sound like a person in your life? Limit contact with this person if so; surround yourself with people who are kind and nurturing.
4. Do you believe that you can still be successful even if you stop "beating yourself up"? Work with a therapist to change the underlying core beliefs that are interfering here.
5. We all have limits, is it possible you are asking too much of yourself? What are some more reachable goals?

