

Introduction

Originality and a feeling of one's own dignity are achieved only through work and struggle.

-Fyodor Dostoyevsky - A Writer's Diary

Are you ready to face your fears? Put to test your EI knowledge accumulated thus far in this course, and add some initial coaching elements with it? This week you will take the second graded test and, also will start working on your coaching skills. Exciting!!

At this point you increased your self-knowledge in module 1 and 2, you increased your understanding of exercising emotional intelligence at work (module 15), and you expanded your leadership and feedback skills (module 3, 4 and 5). Your leadership—as you lead your academic, professional, and private development comes to play here while having coaching conversations. It makes sense to start with self-coaching, thus this week, we will tackle the self-talk issue. We are building our coaching skills as they should be built—slowly.

We are all leaders in our lives, no doubt. How emotionally adept are we? What kind of messages are we feeding ourselves? Are they nutritious? Or, are they poisonous?

Or, perhaps we should ask at this point: how willing and prepared are we to improve? Listen to ourselves, and start improving... To improve we would need to know a bit about ourselves, be willing and ready to accept and provide feedback, and have some good coaching tools. This is what you will do this week as well as the next one: working on improvements pertaining to one attribute chosen by you. You will not be alone. You might then move on to decide to get involved in mentoring or coaching... who knows? Think about the multiple possibilities.

Let's roll up our sleeves and start working.

Self-Talk in Peer Assessment: A Self-Awareness Building Tool

Self-talk is the narration that accompanies us at all times.

When you think: *I have to do this... I do not like... Why do I have to... This is interesting... unfair... etc., etc.,* these are all examples of self-talk.

In this Self-Awareness Building Tool we want to concentrate on self-talk associated with peer assessment.

What we say to ourselves during the peer assessment process can be very revealing, and it can be a source of a lot of information and knowledge leading to an increased self-awareness.

This is when learning and improved feedback skills begin.

Consider this phrase, "Research shows that we as humans have between 60,000-300,000 thoughts per day." Please allocate approximately 20-30 minutes to check and challenge this statement. Look up the sources and various data available and share your findings with your peers. Regardless of the found numbers, most likely impressive, we were never taught to deal with what happens in our brain and with that little (or sometimes very potent) voice—the narrator that accompanies us day in and day out (and yes—we all have it, and no—we are not crazy). Let's tame that energy to increase our learning and leadership.

Exercise Self-Talk in Peer Assessment: Building Self-Awareness

When: To be done immediately following the peer scoring. Use the peer assessment that is due this week (from assignment done in week 5). You can also use any other peer assessment-related instance. Just inform your prof. if you need to do so.

Why do this exercise? To raise your self-awareness and learn better peer assessment-related skills (leadership skills). Ultimately, this exercise will lead to help others as well.

How?

Use the space in your Learning Journal to note the thoughts you had while scoring the work of your peers. Pay special attention to any judgments and expressions carrying emotions. Not remembering what are judgments? Refer to your research on NVC as well as the manual on NVC provided in week 3. Differentiate observations (it took me 3 minutes to....) from judgements (this is bad English. It is my luck to always get...). Note as many thoughts as you can. Do not worry about grammar. Pay attention to the content, not the form.

If your self-talk at this point is: I was focused exclusively on the task at hand and had no feelings or thoughts worth recording that were unrelated to scoring, please read the article below and return to this text afterwards. Most likely you might be in self-denial, as we all do have comments and we all can improve. Contact your prof. if in doubt. Refer to your Learning Journal for more guidance on how to do this exercise.

Some tips that you might find useful:

As a coach, I usually use self-talk by:

1. Asking to use an I-phone (or even leave messages on a regular phone), a digital recorder, or a notepad to record the thoughts—usually the ones that do not serve our purpose. A paper pad, or even a crumpled napkin that you have on you when providing or receiving feedback will do. Do this. Do not forget the pen or pencil.

2. Putting aside an additional 10 minute period every time we engage in the peer assessment activity to transcribe the gist of the messages while going through the notes to look for leitmotivs (recurring themes) as well as to start self-questioning. It is important to write down at least one question for ourselves.

"Why am I negative about...?" is one possible question. "What am I unsure about?" is another.

What is your question?

3. Putting aside 15 minutes every two-three weeks to prepare a plan to deal with what we discovered and answer in writing the questions we posed to ourselves. This can be done with a trusted person or on our own.

The point is that after you pay closer attention to your self-talk, you can test, challenge, and change it.

This is true!

The article on challenging negative thoughts says (and I agree) that you can change some of the negative aspects of your thinking by challenging the irrational parts, and replacing them with more reasonable thoughts.

You can also notice much more about the many interrelations between you and your environment, if you choose to go ahead and try it. This is not only an observational tool for you to get you off your autopilot, but also a growing awareness tool that might help in proactive decision making. This might be very helpful in many circumstances. We could use this method for other issues—over and beyond feedback. The rest of the points that I listed above would be identical with the exception that specific timings would have to be adjusted—depending on the issue. Research shows that it takes six weeks to change any habit... if we are on it—of course.

Below is a quick link that includes some good questions and suggestions.

<http://psychcentral.com/lib/challenging-negative-self-talk/>

In understanding self-talk, we might also need to look at what is possible and what is not.

The supplementary reading on the spheres of control and influence will help you with that. These two links represent a good learning tool to retain when feeling overwhelmed, prior to decision-making, and any other time when what we can (and cannot) control and influence are important:

[Chapter 14. Core Functions in Leadership | Section 6. Influencing People | Main Section | Community Tool Box \(ku.edu\)](#)

Find out more about the spheres of influence:

http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/coaching_teachers/2014/01/spheres_of_control.html

Note: the above links are repeated in the Reading Assignment, but kept here to help with the cohesiveness of the exercise.