

Unit 1: The Power of Language— Words That Build and Break

≡ Components	Discussion Forum Reading Video Written Assignment
≡ Duration	20 min
≡ Notes	Language Inventory: shame words vs builder words (300+ words), neuroscience of self-talk video (5-7 min)
✓ SOU Evidence	✓
⌚ Section	Module 2
⌘ Status	Not Started
≡ Subsection	Language Audit

Overview

Duration: 20 minutes

Components: Video, Reading, Written Assignment, Discussion Forum

This unit explores how language shapes identity and begins the process of replacing shame-based self-talk with builder language.

Learning Objectives

- Identify shame-based language patterns in your self-talk
- Understand the neurological impact of repeated negative self-labeling
- Distinguish between identity labels and behavior descriptions
- Begin conducting your own language audit

Video Content (5-7 min): How Language Shapes Identity

Key messages:

- The words we use to describe ourselves literally shape our neural pathways
 - How self-directed language impacts nervous system state (Porges)
 - The difference between shame words (identity) and builder words (behavior)
 - Why builder language matters for entrepreneurship
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Reading: Language Audit—Shame Words vs. Builder Words

The Power of Labels

The words we use to describe ourselves literally shape our neural pathways. When someone repeatedly hears or says "I'm an addict," "I'm a failure," or "I'm broken," the brain begins to organize behavior around that identity.

Research Insight: Porges' Polyvagal Theory shows that language—especially self-directed language—impacts our nervous system state. Shame-based labels trigger defensive responses (fight, flight, freeze), making growth and connection harder.

Shame Words vs. Builder Words

Shame Words (identity-based, fixed, totalizing):

- "I'm an addict"
- "I'm a screw-up"
- "I'm broken"
- "I'm a failure"
- "I'm too much / not enough"

Builder Words (behavior-based, specific, growth-oriented):

- "I'm in recovery"

- "I'm learning"
- "I'm rewiring old patterns"
- "I'm a cycle-breaker"
- "I'm building something new"

Notice the difference: Shame words describe what you **are**. Builder words describe what you're **doing**.

The Neuroscience of Self-Talk

Your brain doesn't distinguish between external criticism and internal self-talk. When you say "I'm so stupid," your brain processes it the same way it would if someone else said it to you.

Key Research: Maté (2008) demonstrates that self-concept formed under stress, trauma, or chronic disconnection becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you believe you're "broken," you'll unconsciously select environments and relationships that confirm that belief.

Written Assignment: Language Inventory

Create two lists and reflect on their impact:

Part 1: Your Lists

Shame Words I Use:

- List 5-10 words/phrases you use to describe yourself at your lowest

Builder Words I Want to Claim:

- List 5-10 words/phrases that describe you at your best

Part 2: Reflection (300+ words)

Answer:

1. What words have you used—or heard others use—to describe you at your lowest?
2. What words describe you at your best?

3. How have these words impacted your choices and behaviors?
 4. What's one "shame word" you're ready to retire?
 5. What's one "builder word" you want to claim?
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Discussion Forum

Prompt: *"Share one builder word you're claiming for yourself. Why does this word matter to you? Respond to at least 2 others with affirmation."*

Instructions:

- Post your builder word and why it matters
 - Affirm at least 2 others
 - Practice saying "I am [builder word]" out loud
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Submission

Upload your Language Inventory with both lists + 300+ word reflection.