

# Noticing Negative Self-Talk

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The inner voices that judge and criticize tend to plague us all from time to time. Negative self-talk is characterized by the presences of words like "should," "ought to," "always," "never," "can't," "don't," "not," "no," and so forth.

Have you ever noticed negative voices among your thoughts? voices that repeat themselves again and again like a recording? Let's call these your "negative podcasts." They may not always be a voice. They might be emotions or images that are negative in nature, like a feeling of guilt or a gloomy darkness you identify as criticism or a lack of appreciation.

Once you identify one of these podcasts, it helps to give it a name. If you hear, "You're too old to go back to school... start over... change..." and so forth, you might call that the "You're too old" 'cast. It helps even more if you can make a written list of these podcasts. And finally, if you can also count them or give a relative measure to their frequency, such as "a few," "some," or "a lot," this will help even more.

**WARNING!** Once you begin this noticing, naming, and counting of negative podcasts, it won't take long for you to start hearing a new one. "You're not counting your negative podcasts very well." Or something like that. This can be handled by simply writing it down and marking it as another negative podcast.

Remember, a choice never comes out in terms that are negative. If you hear criticism, derision, failure, fear, judgement, or anything else negative, you are hearing resistance, not a choice.

## ***Exercise 9. Overcoming Negative Self-Talk***

### **Procedure**

- 1. Relax.** (See the exercise entitled "Creating a Container for the Work" above.)
- 2. Set the intent to notice negative podcasts.**
- 3. Name them.**
- 4. Count or measure them.**
- 5. Write them down.**

As you begin to practice this exercise you will notice days in which you have no negative 'casts at all. But they are not permanently gone. They will return again anytime your energy is low or your lizard brain thinks you are in danger.

Or you might have a difficult time remembering to notice your negative 'casts. Just remember Shunryu Suzuki's advice about developing the discipline of meditation:

***"Begin and continue."***

Each time you notice that you have not been noticing your negative 'casts, forget about blame or self-loathing. Simply remind yourself that you will begin noticing from that moment forward. As it says in the I Ching,

***"Perseverance furthers. No blame."***

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Example: Negative Tapes Count Sheet

| Negative Podcast  | Count                              |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| You're too old... | \ \ \<br><br>or<br><br>a few times |

| Negative Podcast | Count |
|------------------|-------|
|                  |       |

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