

# POWER OF POSITIVITY: THE ADVANTAGES OF POSITIVE SELF-TALK

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“Whether you think you can or you think you can’t—you’re right.”  
—Henry Ford.

Positive thinking is one of the many important tools to have in your toolbox, and one that can always be sharpened. There are many ways in which one can become more positive, but one of the most effective methods is positive self-talk.

Positive self-talk can take many forms: turning negative situations into positive ones, taking problems and turning them into solutions, giving yourself a boost when you need it, or just a friendly reminder that you can do it. It is not a way of ignoring bad situations or ignoring your problem at hand, but rather a way to build yourself up and take situations into a different light. If you automatically turn to pessimism when facing a problem, you will often not solve it. In terms of reaching a goal, this is the same—negativity will only keep you down.

Positive self-talk has many important health benefits including reduced stress levels, a bolstered immune system and a happier daily life. It will also program your brain to automatically turn to positivity in stressful or high-pressure situations, rather than negativity.

Out of all of the competitive sports, squash is up there with some of the most mentally challenging sports. It is commonly said that squash is 80% mental, and 20% physical. The purpose of positive self-talk is to aid you in reacting more efficiently and successfully to stressful situations, like a tough squash match. If you have a positive, driving attitude, you will push forth and reach your goal. On the other hand, if you do not have the proper skills in coping with stressful situations, you will shut down immediately and often forgo any of your goals. Positive self-talk will give you better reactions to high-pressure/stressful points, the ability to let go frustrations easier, the ability to receive coaching advice in between games and the ability to analyze past matches and prepare for the next match.

There are three common negative complexes:

**THE FILTERING COMPLEX:** You automatically magnify the negative aspects of a situation and filter out all of the positive ones.

**SOLUTION:** force yourself to perform the opposite, choose

to focus on the positives first, then circle back to the negative if necessary. During a match, if you choose to only focus on the negative, how will you be able to fix your game to come back and win?

**THE CATASTROPHIZING COMPLEX:** when one thing goes wrong, or you hit one bad shot, this must mean that everything after this will go poorly. This is also commonly known as self-destruction, the act of bringing yourself down continuously. Solution: acknowledge, forgive and forget. If you only focus on the problem at hand, you will never find a solution. If you forget about the bad, and choose to focus on the good, you will be able to act on a solution and become successful.

**THE PERFECTION COMPLEX:** the desire to be perfectly perfect, there is no room for error. Your thinking is completely polarized—either something is perfect, or it’s terrible—and there is no middle ground.

**SOLUTION:** remind yourself nobody is perfect. Identify the cause for the error and provide it with a solution. Enact on the solution, and if that doesn’t work, keep trying. There is no reason for one to stop trying, one is only considered perfect if they have truly given it their best.

The only way to become your best self is if you start giving yourself the mental attention you need. While this may sound trivial and cliché, you are your own worst enemy. The only way to battle out your enemy is if you put forth the effort of consistently trying to make a change.

This small act of being kind to yourself will carry over into all aspects of your daily life, your attitude will improve and your personal outlook on situations will shape into a more positive one. While the process of changing negative language and thinking to positive seems simple, it is. But this is no easy task to simply master overnight, like anything in life—it takes practice.

I will leave you with one rule, with a twist. We all know the maxim: “if you don’t have anything nice to say, say nothing at all.” Instead, take it as this “only say things to yourself that you would say to others.” This is appropriate in both squash and in life. Be kind to yourself as you would to others. 

