**Encourage Rather Than Criticise**

Now that we have dealt with the excuses that lead to procrastination, the other type of self-talk that needs to be addressed to overcome procrastination are yourself-criticisms. When you criticise yourself for procrastinating, you just make it harder for yourself to get on top of things. The more you beat yourself down, the harder it is going to be to get back up and start doing.

Below are some common self-criticisms and the more motivational self-talk that could be used instead. Notice that what is important about the motivational self-talk, is that it separates your behaviour of not getting something done, from who you are as a person and your personal qualities (i.e., the behaviour of not starting a task, does not mean a person possesses the quality of laziness). Also, the motivational self- talk focuses on what can be done from here on in, rather than dwelling on what hasn’t been done. You can’t change the past, but you can change the now and the future. Finally, the more motivational self-talk gets rid of “I have to”, “I should” and “I must”, replacing them with things like “I choose”, “I would prefer”, “I will”.

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| **SELF CRITICAL SELF-TALK** | **MOTIVATIONAL SELF-TALK** |
| I have to get this done. Suck it up an get going loser. | *I choose to work on this task. I know I can get it done if I just focus on one thing at a time.* |
| I should be finished by now. If I can’t even do this I must be a real idiot. | *I would prefer to be finished by now. But let’s focus on what I can do to get closer to the end.* |
| I must finish this today. Come on stupid, think. | *I will finish this. It’s just going to take more time that I expected. Let’s plan how to get it done.* |
| I can’t believe I haven’t started yet. I must be so lazy. | *The first task is to plan how to get started. I will feel better following this first step.* |
| Others can get it done faster than me. Why am I so slow? | *What others do is no concern of mine. Focusing on my own task is more productive.* |

Tune into that self-talk that puts you down for not having achieved things and ask yourself:

* How is criticising myself helping me get the job done?
* What is a more motivating way to speak to myself to help me get the job done?

If you struggle with thinking of something encouraging to say to yourself, imagine that a friend of yours was using these self-criticisms on themselves, and write down what you would say to them to encourage and motivate them to move forward with a task. We are often good at being motivational and encouraging towards others, but less good at doing it for ourselves. The aim is to practice talking to and treating ourselves, as we would a friend.

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