

## What is self-talk

Self-talk is the way that you verbalise or portray the thoughts you address to yourself. They can be negative or positive. And it doesn't always have to be words; it may also be observable actions such as clenching up in frustration, slumping in anxiety or grinding your teeth. Studies have found that these verbalisations or actions can directly impact your behaviour so managing them and making them as positive as possible will mean you can perform better.

## Why use self-talk?

Everyone talks to themselves inside their head when exercising. Research has found that if you channel these conversations in the right way, your performance can benefit:

- Positive self-talk can motivate you. It can help you increase the amount of effort you put in and it can increase your self-confidence.
- You can give yourself instructions and reinforcement. This reminds you to keep strong technique and focus your mind on your race plan.
- You can reframe your negative thoughts. This can help you switch from a negative mindset and self-defeating talk into a more positive frame of mind. Overriding your negative self-talk can reduce your levels of anxiety and help you cope better with the stressors you face in your competition.

## Notes

Research has found that self-set statements are most effective so note down your thoughts here:

## To motivate yourself...

Every time you are training think about what you loved about that session. Was the weather fabulous? Did you find yourself hitting the perfect pace? Are you training for a worthy cause? Did you overtake other people? Note these down as soon as you get back from your session. After two weeks pull these together and put the key points into a list. These will be the points you need to remember and repeat to yourself in competition to ensure you remain motivated when you are trying to perform at your best.

## To give yourself instructions...

Every time you train think about the point of that session. Were you trying to increase your cadence? Hold better technique when getting tired? Stay in a stronger body position? Whatever it was note it down as soon as you return from the session and after two weeks pull these together. Create a list from these for you to read and remember before competition so you can instruct your body to perform as well as it can.

## Cue Word

Look through the list of motivational and instructional words or phrases. Is there a theme? Is there a word that really stands out or resonates with you? If so this is your cue word. It might be something like 'strong' or 'power' or 'drive'. Use it when you need to regain focus or push yourself forward in your performance.

## Reframing

Over a fortnight note down something negative that you thought about in each session. It maybe that your leg hurt, that you were tired, that your core is weak. Collate all of these and ask a friend to read each one out to you. Your role is to turn that phrase into something positive:

- I am tired → Of course I'm tired, I'm running a long way. But I've run this far before and I can do it again.
- This is hard → It is supposed to be hard. It is a challenge. I love challenges.

Practice these once a week and you'll find in competition you are able to reframe the negative self-talk and get into a more positive and performance enhancing mindset.