

Adjust Your Inner Voice for Greater Resilience

WE ALL HAVE AN INNER NARRATOR. You know—the voice in your head, your version of Jiminy Cricket on your shoulder, your conscience, or even your inner wise warrior who helps you navigate life. The challenge for so many of us is that our inner voice is more like a perfectionistic drill sergeant than a voice of reason, compassion, or love.

My inner voice can be downright mean sometimes. What about yours?

As a person with ADHD, this voice often tells me, *If I unmask, people won't like me*. Or it says things like, *I need to talk more/talk less* and *People are just being nice to me, but they don't really want to hang out with me*.

Your inner voice is shaped by your past experiences. If you were raised by people and in communities that celebrated you, gave you positive feedback for being just who you are and loved you unconditionally, your inner voice may be an angel.

But if you had a harder upbringing or childhood, chances are that as an adult your inner voice is quite harsh and critical. Especially in vulnerable moments or times when you're feeling insecure, on the spot, or unworthy.

Thankfully, your inner voice isn't set in stone. It is possible to retrain your inner voice to become an inner friend. And when this transition happens, you begin to develop a greater sense of resilience in the face of adversity, because instead of beating yourself up you encourage yourself more lovingly to try again, practice harder, or even let it go.

So, then, what is self-talk exactly?

Self-talk is a term we use to describe the cognitive experience of communicating with ourselves. It is the inner monologue going on inside of our heads as we experience life. Ev-

eryone experiences self-talk differently, and it can include images and feelings as well as words. The reason self-talk is important is because your self-talk influences your self-image and that affects your perception of the world around you and how you fit into that world.

How your inner voice responds to the challenges in your life affects how you handle the stress you face. When your voice is kind and you react lovingly to yourself, you recover from stress or negative experiences faster. There's less "clean-up" internally, because instead of beating yourself up for whatever indiscretion you've committed, you move through it without slighting yourself in such a painful way.

With this in mind, how does your self-talk affect your resilience?

Resilience is your ability to adapt to and recover from stress, trauma, or adversity and learn and/or grow from these experiences. For example, when you're able to rejoin a party after an awkward encounter rather than hiding in the bathroom for the rest of the evening, you can thank your resilience skills for that.

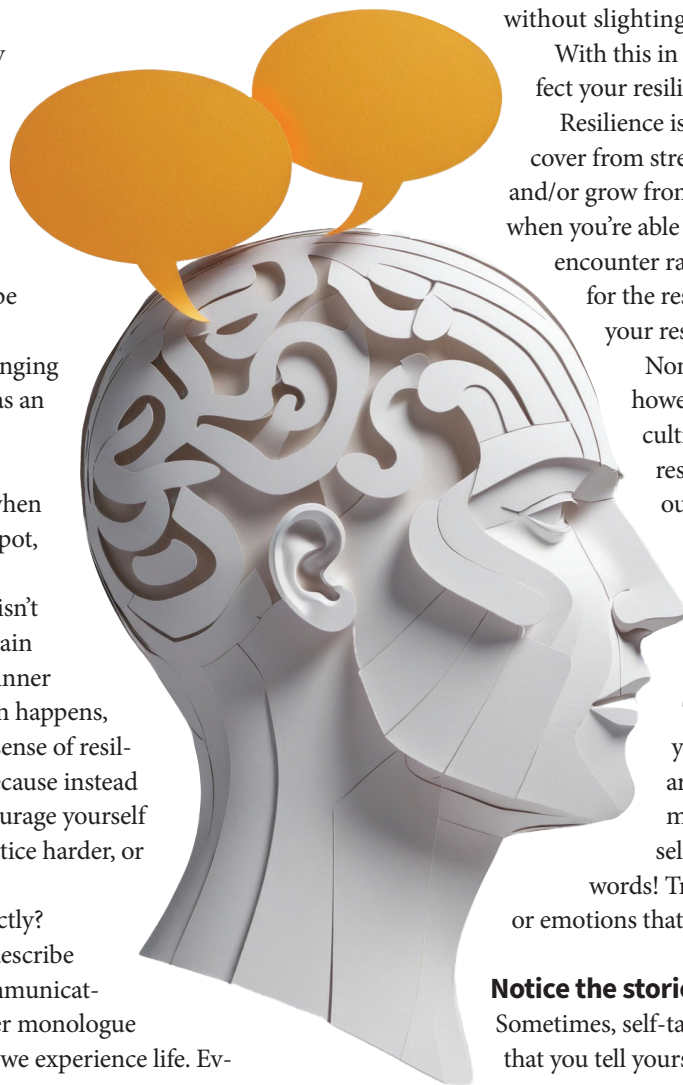
None of this comes without practice, however. These five tips are how I have cultivated greater self-awareness and resilience over the years. Try them out the next time you hear your inner mean girl or guy trying to pull the wool over your eyes and tell you what a monster you are.

Practice mindfulness.

Take a breath and check in with yourself. Notice the thoughts that are hovering around your conscious mind. What are you saying to yourself? Remember, not all self-talk is in words! Try to notice any images, memories, or emotions that you're holding on to.

Notice the stories you tell about yourself.

Sometimes, self-talk can settle into a pattern such that you tell yourself a story about your life that is



limiting or even untrue, such as: “I am awkward at parties,” “I’m not doing enough,” “I’m too much” or “People don’t like me, they tolerate me.” Challenge your self-talk by asking yourself:

- What evidence do you have that this story is true?
- What facts support the story in your mind?
- What else could it be?

Notice how you’re speaking to yourself.

Listen to the perspective from which you are speaking to yourself. Does your inner critic sound like a second voice in your head? Do you hear things like, *You’re terrible at small talk?* If so, try rewording that thought to be kinder, such as, *I feel self-conscious when I try to make small talk.*

Speak to yourself with compassion. Ask yourself, would you speak to someone else that way? Our brain tends to pay attention to negative messaging. By flipping the script and speaking to yourself positively, you can start to shift your self-talk and your inner voice.

Reframe statements made by your inner narrator.

Add context and perspective to your self-talk. This brings the focus back to the factual progress and growing potential. Instead of saying, *I’m such a lame wallflower*, say, *I used to stay home instead of going to parties. Showing up is progress, even if I do hug the wall most of the time. Maybe tonight I can challenge myself to meet one new person?* This is how you remind yourself that even though you’re an adult, you’re also capable of learning and changing.

Put the spotlight on your strengths.

Our mind tends to magnify what it pays attention to, so in your self-talk, make sure you are spotlighting the good stuff. Here’s a hint: We neurodivergent people tend to keep our greatest strengths *right next* to our perceived weaknesses, so it doesn’t take much of a shift to change our perspective entirely. Instead of telling yourself, *I talk too much*, shift the spotlight to *I am friendly and engaging!*

REMEMBER THAT YOUR INNER NARRATOR can be harsh and often inaccurate, and that voice inside you affects how you interact with people and recover from stress and challenges. You, like me, deserve a more compassionate self-evaluation and to hear not the echo of criticism but rather the voice of compassion and celebration in your head. **A**



Caroline Maguire, MEd, ACCG, PCC, earned a master’s degree at Lesley University with a specialization in social emotional learning (SEL). She is the author of *Why Will No One Play with Me*, an award-winning book designed to coach emotional regulation, social and self-awareness, and responsible decision-making skills. She founded the Fundamentals of ADHD Coaching for Families training program at the ADD Coach Academy, which is accredited by ICF. Visit her website, [CarolineMaguireAuthor.com](https://www.carolinemaguireauthor.com), follow her @AuthorCarolineM and download her free video, *How to Tell a Tigher Story*.


ADDITIONAL READING

Coulson, Ronaye. (1970, January 1). Resilience and self-talk in university students. *PRISM*. <https://prism.ucalgary.ca/handle/1880/102048>

Garrett, Leslie. “Why We Talk to Ourselves: The Science of Your Internal Monologue.” *Mindful*, 3 November 2022, www.mindful.org/why-we-talk-to-ourselves-the-science-of-your-internal-monologue

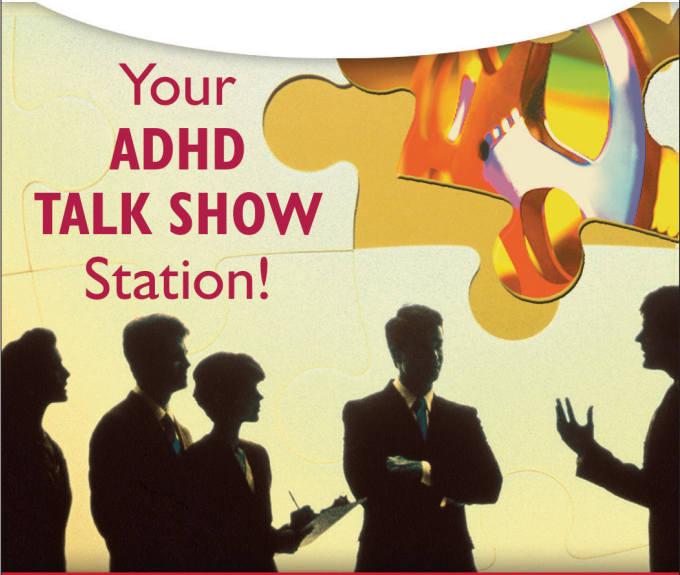
Hurlburt RT, Heavey CL, Kelsey JM. Toward a phenomenology of inner speaking. *Journal of Consciousness and Cognition*. 2013 Dec 22(4):1477-94. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24184987/>

Mosier, Ian T. *Coaching Yourself Through: Exploring the Relationship Between Positive Self-Talk and Resilience* (2020). <https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/theses/2803>

ATTENTION  **TALK VIDEO**

www.attentiontalkvideo.com

**Your
ADHD
TALK SHOW
Station!**



Watch Attention Talk Video!

Catch Us On You Tube
Search: Attention Talk Video