

What is an EA's most important relationship?

An EA's effectiveness relies on their ability to influence through creating positive relationships. When their team, boss and most important stakeholders all hold them in high esteem, chances are that they can influence most effectively. However, there is an even more critical positive relationship that you need to nurture, and that is the one you have with yourself! It turns out that your most important raving fan is you!

Communication researchers are increasingly discovering that communication takes place at an unconscious level. This is because we derive meaning not just from the words and body language used, but also from a range of unconscious signals. What this means is that the people you communicate with are being influenced by not just what you say but also what you really think. If you want to convince someone else about a point of view, you need to convince yourself first. The truth is that the most important conversations you have are the ones you have with yourself - your self-talk.

Self-talk refers to your continual stream of internal and external dialogue and includes your conscious thoughts as well as your unconscious assumptions or beliefs. Psychological theory suggests that self-talk serves important cognitive and regulatory functions such as inhibiting impulses, guiding your course of actions, and monitoring progress towards goals. It also influences your emotional reactions and your responses to behavioural deficits that you notice.

On average you have 50 000 conversations with yourself each day and research suggests that up to 70% of it is negative consisting of self-blaming, self-attacking and self-neglecting statements. We are often our harshest critic! This negative self-talk comes from a motivation of trying to keep you safe by helping you not to repeat mistakes or behaviours that cause you pain. However, unless you become aware of the messages that you are sending to yourself and seek to understand the purpose behind it, it is likely to generate negative feelings about your worth and undermine your confidence.

Your self-talk can become a powerful source of information that can boost your performance by simply developing the habit of tuning into any negativity and asking yourself high quality questions such as:

- What am I angry about?
- What am I afraid of?
- What can I do differently?
- What am I doing well?

As you practice becoming a raving fan of yourself, your tendency to judge yourself will diminish and a kinder, more encouraging conversation will begin to emerge. Also, as you intentionally focus on this, your self-awareness expands so you will be faster to catch yourself when you slip into harshest critic mode.