



**Winning At Sport**



# How To Remove Negative Self-Talk

by  
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Yours faithfully

Jeremy Lazarus

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## Introduction

Everyone has an internal dialogue, that inner voice which commentates on what we are experiencing. For many people, the inner voice can say things which are not useful. I have never met anyone who, having made a mistake, says to them self in a sweet, gentle tone something like, “never mind, you’re a wonderful and capable person, and I’m sure you’ll get it right next time.” Similarly before matches and competition, it’s not uncommon for athletes to experience negative internal chatter.

In other articles, I cover how to get into the right state. Here, I cover a couple of methods to quieten the ‘inner critic’.

## Changing the Sounds

Firstly, notice the words you say to yourself when you make a mistake or are anxious about something. Now notice the tone of that inner voice. It is probably harsh, loud, and it may remind you of a parental figure or teacher when they were angry with you as a child. Notice what happens if you say the same words in your head but change the qualities of that voice; perhaps slow it down, make it into a Texan draaaawwwwwl or a cartoon character’s voice, or add some light-hearted music, or simply turn it into an almost inaudible whisper. Can you take that voice seriously? Almost certainly not. Do whatever you need to do to that inner voice to make it seem insignificant, or even hysterically funny.

## Using ‘Peripheral Vision’

Another method is to go into a state that many martial artists go into during combat. They go into ‘peripheral vision’, which not only allows them to be aware of all movement in their visual field, but it also quietens the mind. Most people, once they have learned this technique, say that they cannot experience negativity when in that state.

Here's how to do it. In order to learn the technique initially, find a quiet room. Look slightly upwards towards a particular spot on the wall and whilst looking at that spot allow your eyes to become aware of everything on the wall either side of that spot. It helps to slightly open your mouth and to relax the jaw. Whilst looking at that spot, further allow your awareness to expand along both perpendicular walls, so that you are now aware of 180 degrees (some people are able to be aware of what's behind them too!). At this point, notice how quiet your mind is. Initially it may take a minute or two to get into this state. Once you know how to do it and with a little practice, you can easily get into that state almost instantaneously, before and/or during competition.

## Summary

The inner voice that we all have is not real, even though it seems very real at the time. A problem that many people have is that they take that voice too seriously at times! This article has provided you with a couple of methods to deal with it.

## Next Steps

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