



Solutions for Life!

from **Solutions Counseling & EAP**
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Take It Easy

“What is wrong with you? You are so stupid.”

“It’s no surprise he stood you up, look at you! You’re fat, and such a slob. You can’t possibly have ever thought you were good enough for him.”

“Ugh, I hate your hair, and could your nose be any uglier?”

These are recent comments from one “friend” to another. Great friend, huh? What would you do if a friend talked to you like that? Would you continue to be that person’s friend? Sadly, I know some of you would convince yourself that the friend was “just telling me what I needed to know.” My hope is that the vast majority of you would immediately start the process of distancing yourself from anyone that had the audacity to speak to you in such a way.

Guess what? The friend is you, talking to you.

Don’t deny it. I know you do it. So do I sometimes. When I eat that po-boy instead of the salad. When my clothes don’t fit the way I like. When I am having a bad hair day. When I say the stupid thing instead of the witty one.

Why do we do this to ourselves? Why do we beat ourselves down instead of lifting ourselves up? If a friend was saying she looks ugly, would you agree and say “Yes, you are kind of hard on the eyes.” I think most of us would say “Stop it. You are not ugly. You have the prettiest eyes.” And if a friend of yours got stood up, wouldn’t you come to his defense: “she is an idiot and has just missed out on the best thing ever.”

Oh, we are quick to try to help others feel better, but not ourselves. Don’t you know the rule is if you beat someone else up emotionally it is wrong, but if you beat yourself up emotionally it will totally work? I think not.

I have never seen “going negative” work on anyone. I see it happen a lot in sports. Somehow, the coach decides that he must yell, embarrass, and shame the player into performing. Sure, maybe it makes that athlete try to prove the coach wrong

in the moment, but the seed has been planted. Now that player will start to wonder if all those mean things said were true. And I have had many adults tell me that their tendency to beat themselves up started in childhood when various adults were trying to “motivate” them in just such ways.

What to do, what to do? You are going to have to re-train yourself. You are going to have to start being easier on yourself. If you are dieting and mess up, beating yourself up actually makes it more likely you will continue to make poor eating choices. Whereas telling yourself, “that’s all right. It was delicious and I enjoyed it. Now, I’m going to get back on track” will probably work.

When you mess up in social or work situations, having to go through the process of tearing yourself down actually slows down your ability to do what you need to: decide what you want to do different in the future. Instead of telling yourself how stupid you are, try moving quickly to coming up with next time’s witty response.

When you look in the mirror, stop going immediately to the things you don’t like in that reflection (I know you too well, don’t I?). Choose something you do like, and head there first. Over time, you will find that you are spending less and less time focusing on the things you don’t like. News flash: we all have things we don’t like when we look in the mirror. And we all have things that are likeable, even if we have never paid attention to them.

Please start being nicer to yourself. Be gentle. Be nurturing. You’re worth it!