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Often times we set goals to high and then fail. Set a goal for each day, thus making the overall goal seem less ominous. Try—"Today I will eat fruit as a snack and exercise for 20 minutes," rather than: "I'm going to lose weight and stop eating junk food." It's better to start with a small, specific goal and overshoot it than to continually fail. This is a concept called **self-efficacy**. Successes and achievements lend one a feeling of accomplishment. Continual failure is self-defeating and by starting small and experiencing successes, each success will bring you up one more on the road to goal

**Continual failure is self-defeating.**

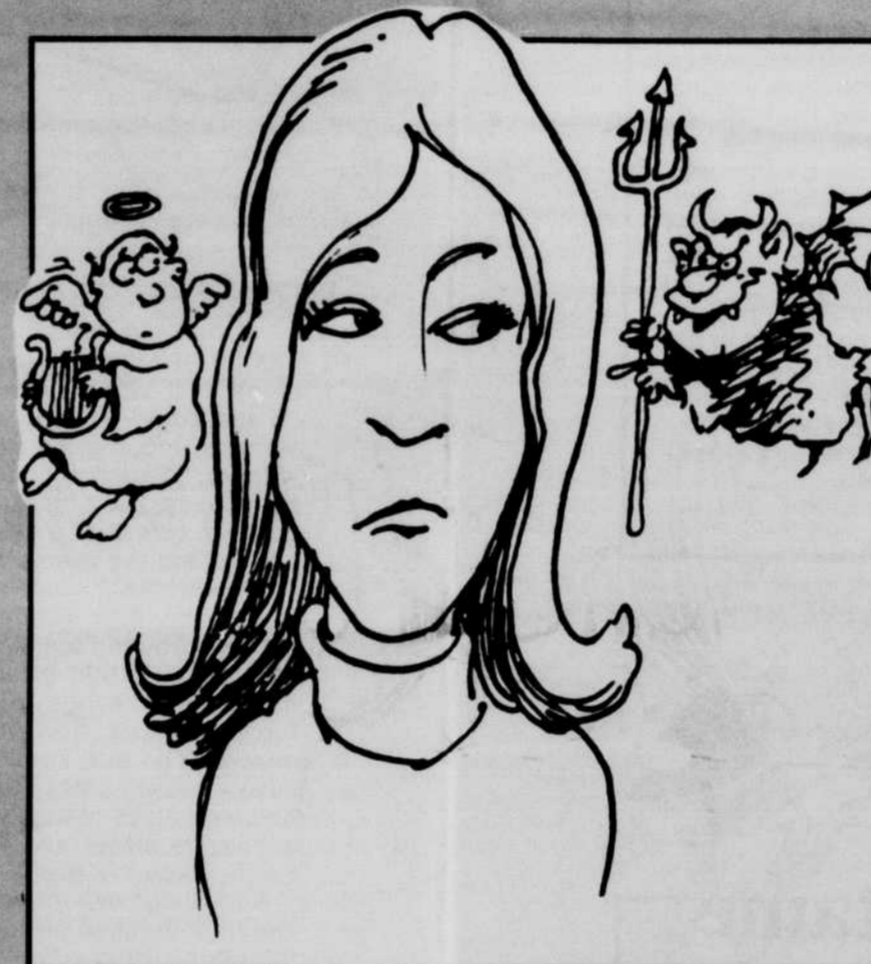
attainment. Habits take a long time forming and a long time undoing. Be patient and kind to yourself.

After choosing what it is you want to change, set a long term goal. Break the goal into specific behaviors you can target. Choose a plan of action for each specific behavior and turn these into daily goals. If you feel comfortable, let a friend know what you plan to do. Keep a record of your progress, adjusting and reforming goals as needed—and most important—expect to succeed. Don't mull over past failures. This is a new day and a new goal . . . and good luck!

## A CONTRACT FOR CHANGE:

When deciding that behavior change is something you'd like to try, it's a good idea to systematically work through the forces which enable the behavior to persist and to set small goals which feed into one large goal. Try this step by step method for behavior change. It might be helpful to write it out in contract form complete with your signature at the end.

1. Area of concern (target area for Behavior change):
2. Current baseline behavior (trace the habit of chain behavior; it's context, and how often it occurs. This sheds some insights into forces enabling the behavior or encouraging it).
3. Reasons for wanting to change this behavior (personal justification worthy of moving you to action):
4. State your desired behavior in a positive, affirming goal statement. Don't discuss what you won't do, discuss what you will do, for example, "I will eat fruits and vegetables for snacks, 4 days a week," rather than "I will not eat candy."
5. Five things I will do to achieve this goal. These are small steps which move one toward goal attainment. It's easy to set goals and not reach them because no direct action plan is formulated.
6. Make a list of positive forces which will assist you and use these and identify negative forces which will stop you (for example, days when I over schedule myself, I will miss exercise; so plan ahead and make time).
7. Have one witness who will help you, not through antagonism and condescension but through encouragement and accountability.
8. Set short term check points, such as weekly evaluations, bi-weekly evaluations, etc.
9. Your signature and your expectation to succeed. Good luck!



## I'm No Good (and other little mind traps)

by Beth Gaiser

**"Man (Woman) is not troubled by events but by the view he (she) takes of them." Epictetus**

Every day we go, do, see, interact and experience. And we do all this through the filter of our perceptions. It's largely automatic—cruise control. Much of what we think and feel occurs without much cognizance or awareness. It's a strange idea to think about thoughts or to think about feelings but during times of emotional stress, it's important to tap into these "things" skittering across our consciousness.

Much of self-esteem, self-concept, feelings of effectiveness or ineffectiveness are linked to the evaluative perceptions held about oneself. These perceptions are the result of "self talk" or the continual dialogue going on inside. Self talk can be nurturing and realistic or self-effacing and irrational.

Albert Ellis, in his book: **A Guide to Rational Living**, discusses irrational ideas. Ellis' basic thesis is that emotions have little to do with actual events. In between the event and the emotion is the self talk which produces emotions. These emotions can be positive or self defeating.

Pam Butler, in her book **Talking to Yourself**, describes a similar idea. There are two parts to us: the part of

is a friend that teaches us more on our own time at our own pace. Try out a few of these books, available at Peralandra, the U of O Bookstore, Mother Kali's and various national bookstore chains:

**LAUREL'S KITCHEN:** An excellent cook book and nutrition handbook which teaches how to cook an array of vegetarian dishes, and discusses natural cooking, vegetarianism and turning away from refined, high fat, low fiber foods.

**THE RELAXATION AND STRESS REDUCTION WORKBOOK:** This work book describes numerous methods of stress management from relaxation, to irrational thoughts and perceptions, emotional stress, physical tension, imagery, time management and communication styles. A must for anyone seeking to reduce their stress and enhance the quality of life.

**WOMEN'S REALITY:** This book discusses the roles in which women are socialized toward and the implications of these: fear of independence, co-dependency, lack of faith in oneself and one's abilities and how to move past this into a more autonomous, nurturing fulfilling life.

us that is self supportive and encouraging and the portion of us which is judgmental and conditional. The latter part, called "Self Two" are the "shoulds." Self Two says: "you should do this, you should have done that." Self Two is the debilitating, self-fulfilling prophecy that tells you you're incompetent, incapable, unlikeable, inarticulate, disorganized, etc.

Self talk—perception—is where most of emotional stress comes from. And usually the stress has its origins in self talk which has gone on unrefuted across numerous experiences. Because of this, it's difficult to believe it might actually be untrue!

Undoing self talk which is stress inducing takes time. The first step is to listen. Ellis recommends taking 20 minutes a day for two weeks to identify the trends.

Once you identify trends—what next? Butler talks about how we tend to beat ourselves with the sticks people throw at us. This is really a matter of perfectionism. Perfectionism is like walking a tight rope: either you're balanced on it or you fall off—there's no area between success or failure. It's black or white; succeed or fail. Perfectionism is a sure path to defeat because no person can be 100% to all things all the time. There's a "gray zone" there where improvement resides, best efforts, and circumstances. Giving up perfectionism means gaining

a realistic perspective on goals and on criteria for attaining those goals.

Self talk has much to do with choice. Much of distress comes from feeling victimized or feeling like events happen to us. There's a choice in many circumstances for responsibility. How responsible am I for another's happiness or well-being? How responsible am I that these things get done? Have I taken on too much? Am I overestimating the importance and underestimating my abilities? Somewhere in this train of thoughts is co-dependency or the belief that we are responsible for the outcome of other's experiences. There's a choice then to let others take care of themselves and to let us take care of our own selves. Self talk may be in there screaming "should! should! should!" But how realistic is that?

Refuting self talk is changing the tapes playing inside. These tapes may be tuned into the Self Two so routinely that it is difficult to hear the other tapes which say "I'm okay." Rarely are we socialized to commend ourselves and reaffirm ourselves. We sabotage good feelings expecting the worst. But inherently there's a part of us which wants to feel good, to be accepted and to feel effective. It takes time to hear these messages and courage to believe their validity. The first step is to listen to the messages going on, to scrutinize their accuracy and challenge their influence.

## O.P.I.N.I.O.N

—Terri Bricher

Changing our bodies is a consuming and unquestioned task accepted by many women. We dye and pluck, deodorize and scent, highlight and paint various parts of ourselves in order to achieve an appearance deemed acceptable by the fashion industry and the beer commercials. Our flesh, too, is subjected to astounding degrees of penance and torture as we attempt to bounce, squeeze, starve, slice, enlarge and drug our physical selves into a socially sanctified shape, a shape that has no relation to individual genetics or well-being.

The problem, however, is not a woman's thighs, rounded hips or protruding stomach. Instead, women must overcome this battle with the flesh by changing our hatred toward our bodies. Women need to make peace with their bodies since respect and strength as a sex cannot be achieved while we are relinquishing our self esteem and self determination to the scales, insurance charts, and media. We deny ourselves the pleasures to be gained through our whole, powerful, fertile bodies and instead wage wars against objectified parts,

or "trouble spots," with the illusion that our social, emotional, or physical lives will be perfect minus those "extra" pounds or inches.

Changing women's attitudes toward their bodies can only be achieved when we trust ourselves and our appetites. Without the need to fear our hunger and emotions, women learn to use food for its intended purpose—for nourishment. As it is, because we have been taught to suppress and deny our appetites, women have lost touch with their natural desires and have used food to satisfy "emotional" needs such as anger, loneliness, reward, punishment, insecurity and fear. When food is used for nourishment only, women develop self-awareness and more effective means of coping with and expressing these emotions. Also, food used for body fuel is more likely to be healthful. Binge foods are usually fatty, sugary refined foods that are denied and subsequently abused.

Women also need to learn to accept their differences and appreciate their own unique talents and priorities. An individual's health is not determined solely by physical measures. Holistic

health encompasses emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual and environmental aspects of an individual—the parts which make a body a whole being. Consequently, we should allow ourselves to set priorities according to our own needs and talents. For example, a woman with exceptional organizational skills may achieve more satisfaction and self esteem devoting extra time to leadership roles than she would pursuing a size 5 body through a strict diet regime.

If a woman allows herself to eat according to her natural appetites and to exercise according to what her own priorities deem to be most satisfying, she will possess a body that is optimal for her own health. She can claim her flesh as her very own and avoid the negative and superficial judgments of self and others since she knows and trusts that she is doing what is best and most healthy for herself. This autonomy ensures self-respect and self esteem and fosters an appreciation of others' successes and differences rather than a need for competition.

## CHANGE

Change wears my sister's moccasins. He stays up late and wakes up early. He likes to come up quietly and kiss me on the back of the neck when I am at my drawing table. He wants to amuse people, and it hurts him when they yell at him. Change is very musical, but sometimes you must listen for a long time before you hear the pattern in his music.

J. Ruth Gendler *The Book of Qualities: Turquoise Mountain Publications, 1984.*

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