

The need for 'Self-Talk' in your armoury.

Dear Member,

In these early days of battling the enemy you have probably found yourself desperately backed against a wall with no place left to run. You have constructed a reasonable prayer shield and are aware of the most common occasions for temptation. You have approached desistance with enthusiasm and yet still find yourself falling short. Welcome to the club...

This war must be fought using sound tactics and multiple weapons. You must be equipped to deal with those unexpected sneaky opportunistic attacks of the devil. Your prayer shield is about discipline and demonstrating a visible trust in God. Knowledge of your weakness and temptations allows you to exercise prudence and fortitude; but this is not enough. You will already be aware that we each have differing aspects to our addictions.

You need to develop a range of effective 'verbal thrusts and parries' that will minimise the harm these daily triggers / temptations cause - as and when they are encountered. In short, you need to start talking to yourself!

As I have often said - nothing here is new to you. Motivational 'self-talk' is common and regularly employed to prepare us for all sorts of impending pressure occasions: Job Interviews, Public Speaking, Sporting Activities etc...



Occasions of Sin are no different. They are 'known' to you and you should be able to prepare for any eventuality with an appropriate motivational response. In my experience, this very simple process is one of the most effective tools in an armoury. To decide a 'self-talk' response you must first identify the various types of 'occasions' you regularly encounter. Only you can do this, but to help, I will give you a sample of the examples I use.

Some of the responses are meant to scare me whilst others are designed to 'inform' me of how my actions relate to others...and how others may relate to me!

Watching Pornography:

1. "It's worse than heroin addiction and it makes me take risks"
2. "I can never get enough and it needs to be stronger to work"
3. "People and friends will think I'm a pervert if they find out"
4. "Betrays my wife and makes her feel worthless"
5. "It's cheating on my family"
6. "I don't want to pretend to enjoy relations with my wife - porn is not real"
7. "I never find the perfect scene and am never satisfied so why spend hours searching"
8. "Watching porn makes me selfish and secretive and I become horrible to live with"

9. "I stop caring about other people's needs"
10. "My son or daughter could find my internet history and tell my wife OR watch it themselves"
11. "What if my son caught me...or my daughter?"
12. "It gives me splitting headaches and stops me from doing anything else in a day"
13. "It makes me so tired and irritable - I just can't concentrate at work or home"
14. "95% of the models are on drugs and forced to do these acts - they are in *real* pain"
15. "These models are forced into doing worse because of my viewing habits - I cause their pain"
16. "Stops me praying "
17. "Makes me scared to go to Mass because of confession and shame"
18. "Makes me hate myself. Makes me weak. Makes me despair."
19. "Makes me anxious and gives me troubled sleep"

Masturbation:

1. "Betrays my wife - makes her feel worthless"
2. "Separates me from God - leaves me in Hell"
3. "Causes arousal problems unless I fantasize about porn"
4. "Causes long term arousal issues and can stop me having children"
5. "Makes me avoid relations with my partner knowing I have problems with arousal"
6. "Causes embarrassing 'leaking' due to muscle dystrophy through long term masturbation"
7. "Stops feeling good - the sensation dulls. So why do I bother."
8. "Always needs to be done in secrecy - I must always tell a lie"
9. "What will I say if I am caught? It may not be someone I know!"

Thinking about girls you see in the street:

1. "Imagine a stranger thinking about my wife or daughter the same way..."
2. "What gives me that right anyway"
3. "What would my kids or partner think if they knew I thought like that"
4. "Imagine how my family feel knowing they are not good enough to keep me happy"
5. "My family blame themselves for my behaviour - it lowers their self-esteem"
6. "It's a sin and takes me further from God"

These lists can go on forever and although they make hard reading - they are only as effective as your use of good will. I have been an addict since the age of 10. Different 'me centred' versions of these statements have been floating around my head for a lot of that time. When I lost my job and my family, I started seeing an analyst and learnt a great deal about my selfishness. She taught me 'self-talk' as one way to move forwards and to try to take the selfish 'me' out of the equation.

I have also deliberately left out many of the other questions that relate to my sexual addiction. These were not limited to cross-dressing and remain personal to my fight. I mention this because you have to make an honest appraisal of your addiction and what drives it. The self-talk you use has to be specific and 'real'. I cannot help you with that, as I cannot pretend to understand what you think. I can empathise...

BUT...

Even with all that help and the additional weapons she helped me develop, I still found the addiction difficult to overcome. Then I started to trust and confide in a good priest - I started to trust God. His motivational 'self-talk' really made the telling difference. Therefore, I will share with you some of the positive self-talk that I still use, with success, today.

Every evening I look at this list and thank God for the Grace and strength to truly 'live' these feelings:

Grace is the best place:

- "The high I feel leaving confession is so much better than that which I got from porn"
- "Being in a state of grace fills me with serenity and lasts so much longer than the alternative"
- "Waking up feeling calm and without anguish is the greatest feeling ever"
- "Looking at your family and knowing you don't have any lies to hide is so wonderful"
- "Seeing your family on the computer without any fear that they will discover porn"
- "Getting up and feeling good about myself. Proud that I am a real father and husband"
- "Looking my wife in the eye and seeing real love and trust reflected back"
- "Having these feelings every day and knowing they are based on real life - not a fantasy"
- "Knowing that my prayers have power to help others; now I'm not in a *state of sin*"
- "Being able to look in the mirror and know I like myself"
- "Being stronger for the *cross I bare* and choosing to *bare that cross* with my head held high"
- "Being able to use my experiences as a positive, rather than negative example"
- "Truly understanding that good can come from any evil when you cooperate with God's Will"

A final cautionary note.

This weapon may not always be strong enough to completely remove the temptation. Be honest and recognise if this is happening. Then RUN AWAY...

Sometimes flight is more effective than fight - but more of that in a future unit.

To complete this unit:

1. Write down all of your types and occasions for sin
2. Make a list of every possible reason to not follow them up.
3. Identify the 'Top 5' and turn them into short statements you can use.
4. Actively use them as 'self-talk' defences against day-to-day temptations.
5. Review how effective they are for you - if they don't work then change for another.
6. Be pro-active in using them and be proud to do so. (Practice, Practice, Practice)
7. Share the list with your mentor and be ready for his challenges.
8. Recognise that if these are not working then you must 'flee' the situation quickly.
9. Have reviewed the previous chat session and completed any outstanding work.

