

## **Controlling Negative Self-Talk and Thoughts**

I've been hearing a lot about Imposter Syndrome lately. I have some resources that might be helpful with reigning in that lil' person in a red suit that sits on our shoulder and talks to us on occasion. (It's not Santa if that's what you were thinking.) I have done presentations in the past on mental training as it applies to sport performance, so I went through my notes and pulled something together that's related to Imposter Syndrome. I have tried to be concise. I have also included some links to short movie clips for both amusement and to make a point. You may have to turn up the sound on some of them.

<https://youtu.be/r9B4XEs98yk>

I think that the rise of trolls on social media has contributed to this syndrome coming more to the forefront of late. While Sean Tucker says that, "I have never met a talented troll," negative comments from others tap into those primal fears that we may have experienced on the school-yard playground from the mean kids or even worse, the bullies. Fear of failure. Fear of the unknown. Constantly being compared to others. Being judged by our parents and siblings, our teachers, our coaches and others. It takes some real mental toughness and a high level of self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth to get through some of these things, otherwise, you may start to believe that what others have been telling you may be true.

[https://youtu.be/4\\_unnJ0yGH0](https://youtu.be/4_unnJ0yGH0)

And sometimes, we can be our own worst enemy - our negative self-talk. Those things that we say to ourselves when something wasn't done to our internal satisfaction. The putdowns we make to ourselves. Our own comparisons that we make against others. Maybe we are perfectionists and that feeds into our negative self-talk and imposter syndrome. For me, imposter syndrome is just a variation of negative self-talk. Like athletes, performers and competitors, there are techniques that we can use when we find we are having those negative conversations with ourselves.

[https://youtu.be/YPtVetu\\_0Fk](https://youtu.be/YPtVetu_0Fk)

Reasons for engaging in an activity like photography are:  
Affiliation, Sensation, Self-direction, and Achievement

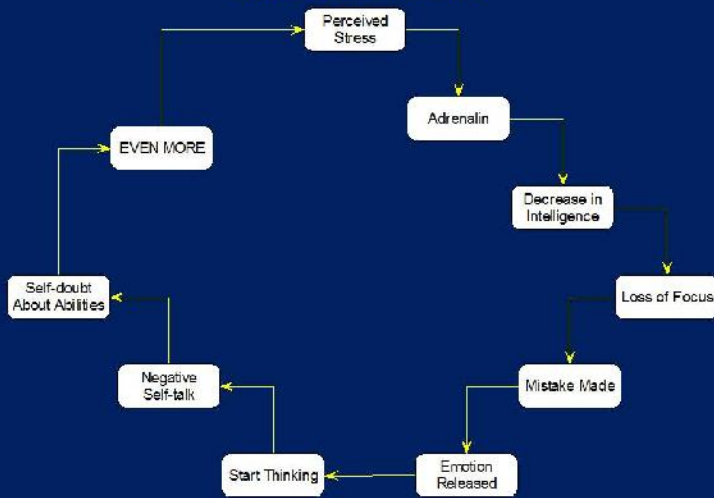
Mental Elements of any activity include:

Thoughts, Beliefs, Feelings, Stress, Concentration, Self-confidence, Emotional Control, Planning, Analysis, Motivation ... And all other things that happen in your mind!

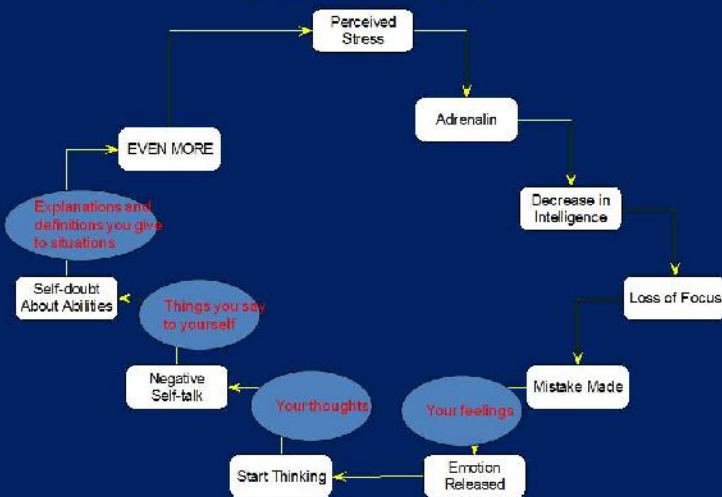
<https://youtu.be/Glj9mE7WeAQ>

Here are some diagrams which show what happens when we become anxious and how to counteract things:

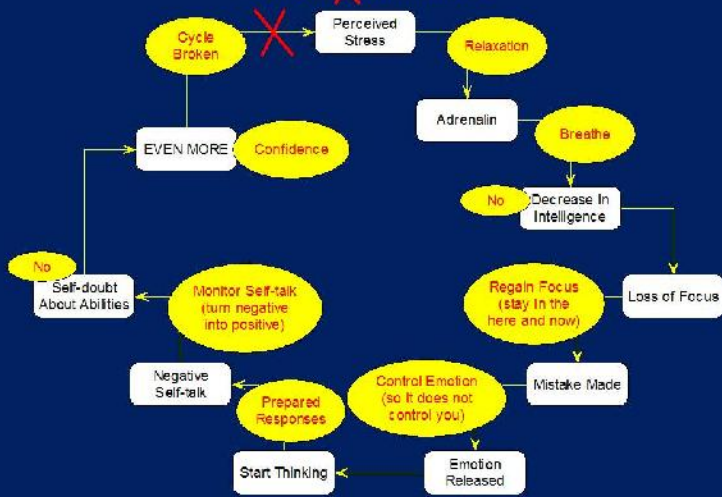
### Cycle of Poor Performance



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### Cycle of ~~Poor~~ Performance



There are Five Steps to Success:

1. Start with the End in Mind - Have a dream - conceive & believe to achieve; Set realistic goals; 2. Hard Work - Ultimate secret to success - "If it is to be, then it's up to me!" 3. Believe in Yourself No Matter What - Ignore goal naysayers; Eliminate "can't", "never" & "impossible" from your vocabulary; Practice doing the impossible daily; Surround yourself with "go for it" people; Study the underdogs; 4. Successful People Take Risks - Get off your backside & get going! 5. Successful People Use Their Failures as Stepping Stones to Success - Turn a setback into a positive.

<https://youtu.be/pUkjrK0frj0>

Qualities of a Mentally Strong Person:

It's about Nurture not nature (it's something you develop rather than something you are born with); Strong internal self-motivation; Invests everything in what they are doing; Differentiates score & own performance; Learns from mistakes; Is coachable; Accepts negative feedback; Is realistically positive; Never gives up/loses hope; Controls their feelings; Performs without emotions, anger or fear; Is calm & stable under pressure; Remains concentrated & undistracted; Is vigorous & full of energy; Has a high self confidence; Has full belief in their potential; Takes responsibility – no excuses; Displays consistent ability every time; Brings their mind to an activity; Mentally works from start to finish; Knows that things begin before the actual start time; Aware next activity's preparation starts after the first one ends.

<https://youtu.be/0i5vRSFfeV8>

Self-Talk - Every person talks to themselves; An automatic reaction to a situation is to give it negative explanation; Need to recognize when we have negative thoughts & sayings, then change them; Negative thoughts often become self-fulfilling;

Negative thoughts: Degrade performance; Cause stress; Impair concentration; Undermine self-confidence (we can't allow negative thoughts or what other people say to control our thinking.)

[https://youtu.be/9x\\_LYAQytr4](https://youtu.be/9x_LYAQytr4)

Key is to recognize when you have negative thoughts and literally think (scream!) to yourself "STOP!" Replace those thoughts with more appropriate ones. Change the radio station that's playing in your head. If you have to, pop a musical tune into your head and think about that.

<https://youtu.be/lxYwQTI6ON8>

Here is an exercise that you can do to help you with getting started about changing the conversations in your head.

### ***Positive Self-Talk and Thought-Stopping***

#### **Key Points**

- Negative thoughts (e.g. “I may mess up these wedding images because...”) are distracters that decrease the ability to concentrate and to focus on important environmental cues.
- To become aware of negative thoughts, the photographer must first recognize their existence. The thoughts may occur very rapidly and be automatic. Personal awareness of these thoughts, and of their nature, is essential to stopping and replacing them.
- You may need to 'listen' to your internal thoughts the next time you have anxiety and record them.
  - What are the thoughts?
  - What conditions do they typically occur in?
  - How do these thoughts make you feel?

#### **Recognizing, Stopping, and Replacing Thoughts**

- Sit quietly, close your eyes, relax, and recall any situation that evokes negative thoughts that have affected your photographic performance.
- Sense the feelings and actions that accompany these thoughts.
- Think **Stop**, and immediately replace negative thoughts with more appropriate ones. Sense the feelings and actions accompanying these new thoughts. Think about how the feelings and actions associated with the old thoughts differed from those associated with the new thoughts.
- Think about how this experience relates to your stressful situations.
- Record your responses in the following chart.

From: Coaching Association of Canada, Multisport Introduction to Competition Part B: Reference Material, Version 1.1, Coaching Association of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, 2007 Section 4, pg. 19-20

<i>What negative thoughts run through your mind before a photo session in which you are anxious you might not do well?</i>	<i>What words might you use to stop these thoughts?</i>	<i>Write down positive thoughts to replace the negative thoughts.</i>
List them below	List them below	List them below
<i>What negative thoughts run through your mind when you are experiencing difficulties during a photo session?</i>	<i>What words might you use to stop these thoughts?</i>	<i>Write down positive thoughts to replace the negative thoughts.</i>
List them below	List them below	List them below

Here are some concluding thoughts: You get what you expect to get! The brain is like a muscle – train it & it gets stronger; Achieve progress for yourself, not others; Compete against yourself, not others; “If it is to be, it’s up to me.” Work hard, believe in yourself, take risks; Turn negatives into positives; All performance is self-fulfilling; you get what you expect to get! Even smallest improvements in mental abilities yield immediate results; Success is about dealing with & overcoming obstacles & challenges; Refuse to allow anyone to be a squatter in your head; Differentiate between what you are doing and who you are; between where the activity ends and where you begin. When you become what you are doing, you pay too big a price when you fail. Success in life is all about learning to deal with and overcome obstacles and challenges. Remember this: whenever it is all over and you move to another phase of your life, the only thing of value you take with you from these years is Who You Are!

<https://youtu.be/pZMS3F39-IE>

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<https://youtu.be/D9Vlrk9KC6Q>