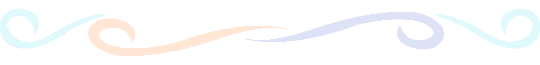
**Stop Negative Thinking**



Without a doubt, each person's inner critic is their own worst enemy. That voice in their head saying hurtful things, putting them down and making them feel unworthy. If not silenced, that negative self-talk can do a lot of damage. But all is not lost, there are several ways you can zip the lips of that inner critic. Here are a few.

* Recognize when your inner critic is talking. Before you can stop the negative talk, you must pay attention to your thoughts and become aware of when they turn negative. If it's easier, start by looking for negative self-talk in others then, once you see when, where and how they appear, you'll better be able to recognize them in yourself.
* When your inner critic is spewing negative thoughts in your head. Tell it to stop. Separate yourself from the critic as if it were another person. You wouldn't stand around listening to someone berate you, make you feel less, and you shouldn't allow your mind to tell you those things either.
* When you're feeling down, hurt or uncomfortable, it's okay. It's perfectly normal. But instead of thinking of these less-than-cheery-feelings as something that needs fixed or turning them in on yourself "it's stupid that I feel this way", just notice the feelings. Acknowledge them and assure yourself that they are appropriate and valid feelings for the given situation.
* When negative self-talk arises, ask yourself how valid the thoughts are.
  + Are you really 'stupid' because you didn't do something right? Or have you put too much belief in needing everything to be perfect?
  + Do you really have nobody that cares about you? You probably have many who do.
  + Does everyone really hate you? While you may not all be best friends, chances are, nobody hates you.
  + Are you truly fat or are you comparing yourself to others who have a different body style? Do you feel this way because your weight or body style isn't what the media considers appropriate?
* Build your defense against the inner critic. Once you've validated your feelings and recognize that 95% or more of what your inner critic says is not true, you can tell those negative thoughts to take a hike because you know in your heart of hearts that they are not true.
* Focus on the good things about yourself and your life. Everyone makes mistakes. As long as you learn from them, accept them as a stepping stone to greater things, you will have less room for negative thoughts in your mind.
* Always remember, your thoughts and feelings are just that. Thoughts and feelings. They are not always right. They can, and many times are wrong or biased.