

Short Story: The Language of the Heart

Level: B1-B2

My inner voice is my best friend and my worst enemy.

I mean, whoever lives inside my head has a hell of a time sending me contradictory messages. No wonder, nowadays I tend to disobey this voice more than I obey it, and it's perfectly all right with me. Hey voice, you have to know what you want! If you are behind the wheel, you have to give me clear instructions. Otherwise, I will just ignore you and do things my own way.

In fact, I've decided to ONLY listen to the voice that gives me good vibes. I tell you, this one is a gem. He or she, wait a minute, is this voice feminine or masculine? Well, I think it is a '*she*' since I am a young woman. So, coming back to our story, I must say that *she* creates such a lovely atmosphere inside my heart, or my mind, or both, and I have no trouble listening to her.

As a matter of fact, she is the one who tells me to wake up in the morning when the other one insists that I should stay in bed because it is warmer, isn't it?

"Wake up, dear." she says. "You'll be late for work. I know it's tough to leave your bed but if you wake up now, you won't be late and that's really good for your career." Whenever I hear this, I tend to wake up without any problems and I head straight to the bathroom.



POSITIVE VOCABULARY FOR SELF-TALK



MOTIVATION

- ✓ You can do it.
- ✓ It's not that difficult.
- ✓ It's very easy.
- ✓ Keep going.
- ✓ You are stronger than you think.
- ✓ You will succeed.
- ✓ You are courageous.
- ✓ You are talented.
- ✓ You can climb this mountain.

ENCOURAGEMENT

- ✓ You are enough.
- ✓ Don't give up.
- ✓ Don't be afraid.
- ✓ Look how far you have come.
- ✓ Don't cry over spilt milk.
- ✓ What matters is the future.
- ✓ You still have enough time to do it.
- ✓ Don't panic, everything is fine.
- ✓ It's not as bad as you think.

CONGRATULATIONS

- ✓ You deserve it!
- ✓ Wow, that's a good job!
- ✓ This looks wonderful.
- ✓ You look great.
- ✓ Enjoy your success.
- ✓ You are successful.
- ✓ I couldn't have done it better.
- ✓ Your efforts are paying off.
- ✓ Oh, this is beautiful!

MORAL SUPPORT

- ✓ Everything will be all right.
- ✓ You are not helpless.
- ✓ You are not alone.
- ✓ You can still do something.
- ✓ Look at yourself in the mirror.
- ✓ You exist.
- ✓ You are a wonderful human being.
- ✓ You are a good friend.
- ✓ Count your blessings.

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Let me call this good voice of reason, Patience, because she is really patient with me.

The other side of my voice always has dark undertones even though she might be saying something apparently nice. "Stay in bed. Stay in bed. Who needs a promotion anyway? Just enjoy yourself." She will say this over and over again until I give in. It's not even enjoyable when I stay in bed because I am overridden by guilt.

I will call this version Sneaky because she always manages to sneak into the brighter crevices of my heart to turn off the lights so that I should lose my bearings.

Patience is kind; Sneaky is not unkind. I don't think Sneaky wants to hurt me, but her actions do hurt me so I think that I am better off without her.

The other day, I received a beautiful present from my co-workers. Patience was so happy for me. She kept telling me: "You deserve it Sarah. Enjoy this gift. You deserve it hundred percent." *My, my, my.* You should have heard Sneaky's voice: "Sarah, ask yourself why these people are giving you presents. I don't want to disappoint you but I think it's because they want something from you. It's their duty anyway to give you presents. Look, they give presents to everyone." Sneaky's nickname is '*Killjoy*', actually. She doesn't like to see me happy. This is why I absolutely want her out of my life.

The tricky thing is that Sneaky is so strong and overpowering and she tends to monopolise all conversations in my head. She loves monologues, as a matter of fact. You might say, why don't you tell her to shut up? Unfriend her like on Facebook or block her like on Twitter. She is useless anyway. Well, I wish you were in my head and you would see what awful tantrums Sneaky throws when you don't acknowledge her existence. Telling her to shut up is the equivalent of snuffing life out of her. Telling her that she doesn't exist is like unlocking a bunch of snakes out of a thousand-year-old trunk. Gosh, she won't let me do that to her. Whatever the case, you wouldn't want to be in my head when hell breaks loose. Sneaky knows this so she keeps on sneaking up on me to disturb my peace.

Therefore, she becomes omnipresent after my futile efforts to quieten her a bit. She becomes more vocal to make up for lost time and I can't really do anything about it. Patience and I look just look at her and wait for her to calm down. Usually, I leave the scene. I walk away. I take a book or watch TV and dread the moment when I have to confront her again. Sneaky is sneaky and she never gives up. Even when I am watching TV, she tries to sneak into the story and I see her everywhere and I have to firmly tell her to leave me alone.

I know some people embrace the bottle so that they can drown Sneaky but my Sneaky is a good swimmer. I think she would swim across a brewery and emerge victorious anyway. I have found out that ignoring Sneaky is the best option. She gets really angry when I am not paying attention to her but afterwards she

leaves me alone. Anyway, I have better things to do than spending my life monitoring her and telling her what to do.

SELF-TALK: VOCABULARY TO BAN

DEMOTIVATION

- ✓ You can't do it.
- ✓ It's very difficult.
- ✓ It's not easy at all.
- ✓ Stop everything.
- ✓ You are a weakling.
- ✓ You will not succeed.
- ✓ You are not courageous.
- ✓ You are not talented.
- ✓ You cannot climb this mountain.

DISCOURAGEMENT

- ✓ You are not enough.
- ✓ Just give up.
- ✓ Be afraid.
- ✓ You still have a long way to go.
- ✓ You'll regret this forever.
- ✓ What matters is the past.
- ✓ You don't have enough time.
- ✓ Panic, everything is wrong.
- ✓ It's worse than you think.

CRITICISM

- ✓ You don't deserve it!
- ✓ Yikes, that's a horrible job!
- ✓ This looks awful.
- ✓ You look terrible.
- ✓ This is not the end of the road.
- ✓ You are a failure.
- ✓ I can do this way better than you.
- ✓ You didn't work hard enough.
- ✓ Oh, this is ugly!

MORAL SUPPORT

- ✓ Everything will go wrong.
- ✓ You are helpless.
- ✓ You are alone in this cruel world.
- ✓ It's over.
- ✓ Don't look at yourself.
- ✓ You don't exist.
- ✓ You are a horrible human being.
- ✓ You are a bad friend.
- ✓ You don't have blessings to count..

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On the contrary, Patience always supports my decisions. She often tells me: "Don't worry, you are doing well. Don't give up, you'll make it. Wow, you look nice today, I like your outfit. Oh, my dear, you are feeling unwell, go to the doctor please before things get too bad. You are strong, you'll make it."

What does Sneaky say? She is like: "Oh, that mouth sore should be cancer. You're about to die. Oh, you look *sooooo* weak, stand up. You shouldn't look so weak. DON'T sleep! Keep working! You are the best. You can't **be** weak. Don't rest." Patience is unlike Sneaky. She quickly tells me to rest because it is important for the body to do so. "Be kind to yourself Sarah. You deserve to rest. You don't need to be the best. Go to bed and you will feel better in the morning."

Patience's tone is so soothing and nowadays I tend to follow Patience's instructions more than Sneaky's yelling. Before, I was scared of Sneaky and I would listen to her, ignoring the pain in my body in order to satisfy her every whim. Now, I listen to my body and I take care of it, whether Sneaky likes it or not.

The problem is that Sneaky makes a big deal out of everything. A small problem becomes a mountain for her and if I listened to her all the time, I tell you I would live in crisis mode all the time.

ME: Oh, I forgot to pay the bills, dear me.

Patience: You can pay the bills now; you still have some time. Just take out twenty minutes from your schedule and settle the bill.

Sneaky (First version): Pay the bill now! They are going to cut the electricity off! What are you doing? DO IT NOW.

Sneaky (Second version): Don't pay the bill now. You can wait a little bit. It's not like they are going to come and cut off the electricity. Some people can actually stay *FOR YEARS* without paying their bills and nothing happens to them."

And if something does happen to me when I have followed her bad advice, she is the first one to make me feel guilty: "Sarah, why on earth didn't you settle the bill when you still had time? You will always be a failure. Look at you, that's why you are always alone because people don't want to be with a person who is full of problems." She can repeat this all day long and won't show any signs of stopping, even when I beg her to stop, even when she sees me crying, Sneaky won't relent. Gosh, I wonder why Sneaky even exists at all. All she does is criticise me day in, and day out, without bringing any positive aspect to my life. I really don't want to be in her vicinity anymore. Enough is enough.

Different Types of Inner Voices



Nice
Kind
Tender
Gentle
Benevolent
Friendly
Pleasant
Agreeable
Relaxed
Likeable
Trustworthy
Spontaneous
Caring

Mean
Nasty
Hard-hearted
Brutal
Heartless
Unfriendly
Unpleasant
Disagreeable
Tense
Hateful
Untrustworthy
Stiff
Careless

Empathetic
★ Encouraging
Coherent
Altruistic
Inspirational ★
Motivational
Helpful
Attentive
Accommodating
★ Authentic
Compassionate
Courteous
Harmless

Callous
Discouraging
Incoherent
Selfish
Uninspiring
Disheartening
Unhelpful
Inattentive
Unaccommodating
Fake
Compassionless
Rude
Harmful

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This is why I have decided to empower **PATIENCE**. I give her more of my time and my attention. After all, *Sneaky* is just a voice, really. A voice! She doesn't even exist! I mean, she cannot come out of my body and physically harm me. I am the one who allows her to exist. Without my consent, she is absent. She, **really**, is absent. She is dead. Patience is present. Patience is the present. She is truly alive. I listen to her and follow her advice. I love her.

Whenever I catch a glimpse of *Sneaky* desperately trying to bring chaos to my heart, I look away and see Patience's smile. She bolsters me; she's my pillar of strength. She soothes my heart with her empathetic vocabulary. Her grammar is simple and her punctuation clearly chartered. I can read her syntax and know exactly where I am. With Patience, I know I am in good hands.



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