

Spiral up or spiral down?

The benefits of positive self-talk

THE IDEA

Thoughts. They're endless, aren't they? What we tell ourselves can really affect our attitude and how we process what life throws at us. Unfortunately, sneaky, self-defeating thoughts can creep in and create an ongoing drama in our minds if not kept in check!

My family has had to tackle that never-ending "voice in the head" and how it influences our behaviour. It takes some practise, but once you can observe and catch those thoughts before they race out of control, life *can* become a little less dramatic.

This visual idea shows the options we have when something happens that throws us off centre – to spiral downwards to self-doubt and unhappiness through negative self-talk, or to acknowledge and accept the situation as it is and give ourselves positive feedback to help us move forward.

It's not what *happens* to us but *how we deal with it* that makes all the difference to the outcome in our lives. Embracing this concept will help your kids become more resilient – and probably make life easier for those around them!

HOW TO EXPLAIN IT

Start by showing your child the line in the centre of the page and explain that this is the point where something *happens*. Use a current situation or give some examples that relate to them, like losing a race at school, not getting invited to a party, or having an argument with their sibling.

Firstly, get them to honestly express their feelings about what happened. It's important to do this so they don't repress or bury what they felt about it. Take some time to talk through how it made them feel and don't rush them into resolving anything.

Next, show them that from this point, **if they start thinking negatively, it will lead them to spiral down** into feeling grumpy and upset where they don't feel good about themselves and can turn into a cloud of gloom.

However, if from the central line they **accept what has happened** and try to **look for any positives** about the situation, or are kind to themselves rather than critical, they can spiral up to an objective, happier state where they feel okay about themselves and moving forward.

Looking at the bigger picture

Talking about why this might have happened and what they could learn out of it is also useful. We encouraged our girls to look at problems as opportunities to grow and learn something from an early age and it's been a great tool for them growing up. *Spiralling up isn't about being falsely positive or having to be happy all the time*, it's about looking at the situation honestly and choosing the best steps to take from there.

Once your kids absorb the concept, when an issue arises, ask them, "Are you spiralling up or do you think you might be spiralling down?" They can then use this as a quick visual reminder to take an objective step back and start some positive self-talk.

