

# Lame Excuses

By Suze Hargraves

Learning to speak to yourself in a positive voice is a major step in building self-esteem. By using positive self-talk we learn to nurture ourselves and grow beyond the boundaries that hold us back in life. The obvious things are reframing statements like “I’m an idiot” into “I made a mistake”. If you’re practicing this you’re on the right track but trouble may still be lurking in the darker, less obvious corners of your vocabulary in the form of nasty little self-sabotaging excuses. Oh sure, they seem innocent enough, but once your mind gets a hold of one of these little devils it can tear apart all your good self-improvement work like a bad dog chewing on a good shoe.

Self-sabotaging excuses keep us from making positive changes or doing positive things in our lives. We use them to cover insecurities and allow ourselves to slack off on our goals for self improvement. Inner excuses can keep you from having constructive relationships, doing new things, sticking to a behavior modification plan and more. The bad news is that we may have these little excuses so ingrained in our minds that we don’t even know we use them. Jane Powel of meditationsforwomen.com helps us recognize these types of excuses by offering these three common examples:

- I've had such a hard week. I deserve a break.
- I've never reach my goals. It is just who I am.
- I'm too tired to try.

My personal favorite is the “hard week” version. I’ve had “hard weeks” that have led to my daily exercise routine being traded for shoe shopping. Using the excuse is easy; I start with some tense neck rubbing and a short round of self-pity then move adeptly into the full blown excuse, “I’ve had a hard week. I deserve a reward.” Reality is that buying shoes instead of going for swim at the gym is not going to help me reach my long term self-improvement goals. Believe me, I’ve tried on as many lame excuses as I have shoes to justify this, but no matter how I slice it I have sacrificed my health and my goals for red pumps. Not exactly a good trade.

The good news is that getting these excuses out of your life is not complicated, but it does take some brutal honesty and self-awareness. When you hear yourself making one of these excuses, use some basic steps to get past the excuse and on to the truth:

- Write your excuse on paper. When we write things down it gives us a tangible way to approach our thoughts. If writing is really not your thing, leave yourself a voicemail with your excuse then play it back. You’ll be amazed how easy it is to rid ourselves of these destructive excuses when we can see/hear them clearly for what they are.
- Ask yourself if what you’re saying is really true. If you’re telling yourself “you can’t” you might want to re-think that. Is it actually more “I don’t want to” or “I’m afraid to”? Lying to yourself is self-sabotage in the first degree.
- If your excuse sounds something like, “Things never turn out right for me so I just won’t” then you’re excusing yourself based on the assumption everything will turn out wrong therefore there’s no point in trying in the first place. Using words like “never” and “always” set our expectations of ourselves and our worlds and can become self-fulfilling prophecies. Who are you, Nostradamus? You know the future? Cut that out- no more “never” and “always” excuses.

Learn to recognize these types of excuses and take the steps required to change. It’s always a good idea to seek professional help if you need it to overcome any bad habit and self-sabotaging excuses are just that-bad habits. Professional help is always warranted if any type of behavior is causing your life, work or relationships to suffer.

Don’t let lame excuses limit the potential that is you. You really can teach an old dog new tricks.

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