

## GETTING RID OF NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

There is probably nothing more self-destructive to a dancer's success than the constant flow of negative self-talk that goes through her mind. There is the obvious: I'm too fat, my hair looks awful, my accessories are all wrong. There is the insidious: I'm not as good as the other students, I'll never get it, I'm clumsy. What does insidious actually mean, and how does it relate to your dancing? Something that is insidious has a gradual cumulative effect, developing so gradually as to be well established before becoming apparent. It can be, in effect, the same as the self-fulfilling prophecy phenomenon, where, the longer you believe something the more likely it is to become true. It is also true that what you put your attention on is what you get.

You are in class and you notice that other students are getting steps that you cannot. You criticize yourself and become to believe that you will never be as good as the other students. Because you are beaten right from the start you will never be able to build the confidence and determination it will become true that you will never be as good as the other students in the class. Instead, you must recognize that other students are coming to class with different backgrounds (maybe they have had dance classes before, or music lessons, which would help them understand the essence of phrasing) and different resources (maybe the other students own videos and have been practicing with them), and different physical capabilities (maybe the other students have had gymnastics or track, which would make them more flexible and stronger, enabling them to execute difficult moves and have better endurance). It does not mean that they are ultimately, and intrinsically better dancers than you, it just means that you are coming from a different place and may have to take a different, or longer, route than they do to get to the prize. What you should concentrate on is *your* personal best, not everyone else's personal best in comparison to you.

If you fill your head with negative self-talk you will get what you believe and predict. If, however, you change those tapes to positive self-talk, you will *also* get what you believe and predict. Here are some examples:

Negative Self-Talk: I am not as good as the other students.

Positive Self-Talk: I am going at my own pace and I am better than I was even last week.

Negative Self-Talk: I will never get anywhere with this dancing.

Positive Self-Talk: I am mastering this dance for the recital, I'll go on from there.

Negative Self-Talk: I will never have the poise that the other girls have.

Positive Self-Talk: I've noticed that I am standing much taller than I was a month ago.

Negative Self-Talk: My home-made costume looks shabby compared to the other girls.

Positive Self-Talk: I got a new book today on costuming and I can't wait to use it.

Negative Self-Talk: The other girls are so perky and I'm such a clutz.

Positive Self-Talk: I'm starting to learn about stage presence, and I can already feel myself shine.

So, you can be a student who isn't as good as everyone else, will never get anywhere with dancing, never have poise, will always look shabby and be a clutz. OR you can be a student who improving, mastering steps, developing poise, has a nice costume, and is shining on her own.

***As the thoughts and expectations change so will you.***