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## Is talking to yourself a sign of madness? No it's good for you, say scientists

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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It has been described as the first sign of madness.

But talking to yourself may actually be good for you, scientists have found.

Exercising your 'inner voice' can improve self-control and reduce impulsive behaviour. And according to researchers, it can even strengthen dieters' willpower, help defuse arguments and improve decision-making.



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First sign of madness? Scientists say talking to yourself could be good for you

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Psychologists from the University of Toronto in Canada asked volunteers to complete several challenges to test their self-control.

In some, they were prevented from talking to themselves by being forced to recite one word repeatedly.

Researcher Professor Michael Inzlicht said: 'Through a series of tests, we found that people acted more impulsively when they couldn't use their inner voice or talk themselves through the tasks.'

In one challenge, the volunteers performed a test on a computer. If they saw a particular symbol appear on the screen, they were told to press a button.

If they saw a different symbol, they were told they must refrain from pushing the button.

The majority of the symbols required the volunteers to press the button, making this become an impulsive response.



Their self-control could be measured by how well they resisted pressing it when an alternative symbol did appear.

The second phase of the study included measures to prevent participants from exercising their inner voice while performing the tests, to see whether blocking this dialogue had any effect on their powers of restraint.

In order to stop the volunteers talking to themselves, they were instructed to repeat one word over and over as they performed each test.

Professor Inzlicht said: 'Without being able to verbalise messages to themselves, they were not able to exercise the same amount of self-control as when they could talk themselves through the process.'

'It's always been known that people have internal dialogues with themselves, but until now, we've never known what an important function they serve.'

'This study shows that talking to ourselves in this "inner voice" actually helps us exercise self control and prevents us from making impulsive decisions.'

Alexa Tullett, author of the study, added: 'We give ourselves messages all the time with the intent of controlling ourselves – whether that's telling ourselves to keep running when we're tired, to stop eating even though we want one more slice of cake, or to refrain from blowing up on someone in an argument.'

'We wanted to find out whether talking to ourselves in this "inner voice" actually helps.'

The team's research has been published in the science journal Acta Psychologica.

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