

WORDS

Sergeant major words - Are you marching to the beat of the same word drum?

When you really listen closely, much of your language will contain many, what I call “sergeant major” words as if you were banging a military drum – should, shouldn’t, have to, must, aren’t allowed to, couldn’t possibly, can’t...

Do you notice how they set up a real feeling of obligation, no choice and no freedom. You may respond to your own words obediently as if you were the soldier under orders from someone or something else or you may play the commander role – being your own worst enemy. Or perhaps you play both. What’s your style?

What impact does such “military-style” language have on your body? Are you experiencing tension, pain, irritation, blockages, stress or exhaustion? Where do you feel it in your body? Imagine being able to change the state of your health and happiness by changing your words.

Alternatively, could a small dose of these words be useful on occasions, and in the right context, to get you moving to a different beat in possibly a more positive, empowering direction?

A good sergeant major is strategic – knowing when to be tough, demand certain behaviours from his troops and know what to do and when to do it in order to get the desired outcome. He or she also knows not to over-tire or push his troops beyond their limits. You may need to learn this strategy too.

Verbs (weapons) of destruction

Catch yourself complaining, criticising, generalising, blaming, whinging, nagging, comparing, being negative, bullying, condemning, trivialising... Isn’t it exhausting just listening to this list but how often do you hear yourself using these weapons?

Stop marching for a moment and notice what impact such “verbs of destruction” are having in your life at present – either the impact of using them yourself or having those weapons thrown at you? Are you killing yourself or others in the process? What specifically can you do differently?

Attention! Stop blaming and making excuses! Start living life now.

How often do you hear yourself saying ““When I lose...kilos of weight, I’ll be happy” , “When I get into my new house, I will feel...” , “When this cancer goes, I will ...” , “If I had time, I would...” or something similar? These are all conditional statements relying on someone or something to change your situation, and they are very much based on something occurring in the future.

What excuses do you hear yourself using to get out of being fabulous, being seen, being heard or being noticed now? What is the cost of making such excuses or putting things off? What would occur if you did “bite the bullet” and do something different from your normal action or reaction?

Instead of delaying your health and happiness till the moment when you feel you have completely “fought your battle and got your end result, start making and enjoying the changes NOW as you march through life. What I have noticed is that when you finally arrive at your end result, you may find another battle to fight!

March, March, March – repetition

When I went through my eating disorder days, repetition was a key feature of my language. “I’m fat, I’m fat, I’m fat. I’m ugly, I’m ugly. I’m ugly.”

If a child hears they are dumb often and intensely enough, they will believe it and more often than not, they will live down to that expectation, and if they are bullied or reprimanded often enough, you know what happens. So why do you put up with your own bullying and reprimands?

Whatever you tell yourself repetitively will appear as your reality or at least seem that way. Addicted to what you are saying and thinking, your mind, body and soul respond in kind, your behaviours then align with what you are telling yourself and the vicious circle keeps going around and around.

Stop marching to the same repetitive negative words and start using repetition to your advantage – using positive, empowering words instead. Imagine where marching to the beat of different words and commands could lead you.

Tone can speak louder than words

I lived in Germany for a year as an exchange student, and spoken German, in my mind, is quite a harsh, loud and direct language. On returning to New Zealand, people took notice of the difference in my tone and volume of my voice and were often “offended” by my communication – not so much the words, but by the message they perceived me passing on through tonality and volume.

Check out the validity of what people might be saying (or not saying) under their words. Check that your reaction to their tone is actually warranted. It is often easy to infer things, believe things that aren’t true and then exaggerate this story – with negative consequences.

Be conscious of the tone you are using. Quieten your voice and make the tone more gentle and loving when you describe yourself – just as you would when you are encouraging a child. That child will respond differently to the tone of encouragement than to constant reprimand.

Placebo and Nocebo – supplies or ammunition

You’ve heard of the power of the placebo? Sugar pills, for example. People think they are being treated medically with a drug, but in fact it is the expectation of healing that influences the healing process. If the placebo has a positive effect, then can’t negative expectations similarly affect your health and happiness?

It’s called the nocebo effect. “It won’t happen. You are too old to have a baby. Unless you take..., you won’t have long to live.” These are all examples of the nocebo effect – preying on the negative and playing the enemy! Do you live (or not live) up to these expectations? Who are you listening to? The no-sayers or the yes-sayers?

Collective thoughts and words (placebo and nocebo) are powerful. They can supply you with useful resources or they can be ammunition. Be selective and discerning in the words you listen to from friends, family, colleagues and even “authority” figures. I have often suggested that people change doctor, health practitioner or professional if their words are not supporting them believe in their health and happiness potential. Take note of what you are listening to - TV, radio, music lyrics, gossip, drug companies and opinions of others. Words can heal or destroy so belong to a troop that has confidence in you and your cause, and who will support you find strategies to win, not lose.