

## **Self-talk: We Don't Have Control Over Events, But We Do Have Control Over Our Thoughts**

We have little control over the events that happen around us and over other people's actions. What we do have control over is our response to these events. Just as we can talk ourselves into being angry, we can talk ourselves down from being angry. We can see the opportunities in a situation or we can focus on the obstacles. Our interpretation and perception of events determine the amount of stress we feel and impact our ability to make changes in our lives.

**All events are neutral** until we place a meaning on them or interpret them based on our past experiences and our perception of the world around us. These perceptions are perpetuated by our self-talk (the "*blah, blah, blah...*" that goes on in our heads).

Our self-talk determines our feelings, actions and thoughts. We do not have control over the events around us, but we do have control over our thoughts about these events.

The event does not cause our feelings or behaviors. Each event is followed immediately by us interpreting and putting meaning on it, which then determines our feelings and behaviors in relation to it.

For example, one woman's husband tells her that he wants a divorce. She responds by feeling sad, hurt and disappointed. She may have said to herself that it was all her fault, that she should have tried harder and that she will probably be alone now for the rest of her life ("*blah, blah, blah...*"). A second woman's husband also tells her that he wants a divorce. She is relieved and thankful that it is over. She may have said to herself that she is glad that one of them finally took the step. Now they can get on with their lives.

The initial event is the same in each situation, but each woman's response is unique based on what she says to herself. She cannot change what her husband has decided to do, but she can change how she reacts to it.