

## The Amazing Power of Language

Words...They can make us laugh and cry. They can wound or heal. They offer us hope or devastation. With words we can make our noblest intentions felt and our deepest desires known.

Throughout human history, our greatest leaders and thinkers have used words to transform our emotions, to enlist us in their causes, and to shape the course of destiny. Words cannot only create emotion, they create actions. And from our actions flow the results of our lives.

Many of us are well aware of the powerful part that words have played in our history, of the power that great speakers have to move us, but few of us are aware of our own power to use these same words to move ourselves emotionally, to challenge and strengthen our spirits, to move ourselves to action.

An effective selection of words to describe the experience of our lives can heighten our most empowering emotions. A poor selection of words can devastate us just as surely and just as swiftly.

**Realise now the power that your words command if you simply choose them wisely.**

Words can injure egos or inflame our hearts – we can instantly change any emotional experience simply by choosing new words to describe to ourselves what we’re feeling. If, however, we fail to master words, and if we allow their selection to be determined strictly by unconscious habit, we may be denigrating our entire experience of life. If you describe a magnificent experience as being “pretty good”, the rich texture of it will be smoothed and made flat by your limited use of vocabulary.

*Tony Robbins*

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## Words can inspire others

### ‘Invictus’

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds and shall find me unafraid.  
It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.

***William Ernest Henley late 1800’s***

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While incarcerated on Robben Island prison, Nelson Mandela recited the Invictus poem to other prisoners and was empowered by its message of self-mastery. In the movie *Invictus*, Mandela gives the captain of the national South African rugby team the poem to inspire him to lead his team to a Rugby World Cup win, telling him how it inspired him in prison. In reality, as opposed to the movie, Mandela gave the captain, Francois Pineaar, a copy of "The Man in the Arena" passage from President of the United States Theodore Roosevelt's speech *Citizenship in a Republic* instead.

Both inspiring examples of language.

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### **‘The Man in the Arena’**

*‘It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.’*

*Theodore Roosevelt - Excerpt from the speech "Citizenship In A Republic" delivered at the Sorbonne, in Paris, France on 23 April, 1910*

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## **Our language shapes our life**

What you tell yourself and others on a consistent basis is how you will experience your life.

What does this mean? It means if we continually use words that focus on lack, pain, disappointment, despair, sadness and anger then that is how we will experience our world. If we continually describe our world as multi-coloured, vibrant, fun, fascinating, abundant and loving, then we will experience that world.

If we describe our world as plain, bland and monotonous, then that is how we will experience our life.

People with a negative vocabulary experience a negative life. People with rich vocabularies experience more choices and more variety in how they experience their world.

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***If we continually describe our world as multi-faceted, vibrant, fun, fascinating, abundant and loving, then we will experience that world.***

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Language has enormous intensity. We can't say the word hate, for instance, without having an emotional charge attached to it. We can't say love without another type of charge.

Simply by changing your vocabulary you can transform how you feel, how you think and the way you live.

**Cath's story:** For years I lived in a state of anxiousness. It wasn't until I became aware of the power of language that I realised my vocabulary had become peppered with the words "I'm worried". Here are a few examples of my speech prior to my awareness. I started my sentences like this : - " I'm just

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a bit worried you didn't have enough to eat"; I'm really worried I haven't phoned her back yet"; " I'm worried that it might rain"; " I was so worried in case you didn't get my message" ; "I was worried sick when you didn't ring me"; "I was worried you may have been late" ; " I was worrying you might be thirsty"; "I was so worried when I heard your name" and on and on and on... It was no wonder I reached the level of anxiety I did, there wasn't one tiny thing that I wasn't worrying about!

I no longer use the word 'worried', and if I do, I quickly change it to 'thinking or 'wondering'. I have paid very close attention to this change in my vocabulary and probably the biggest changes I have noticed is in my voice and in my physiology - the tone and clarity of my voice when I am speaking is very different. I speak strongly and with certainty. I also used to have a very defeated walk, I now walk straight and with my head. I am also a lot calmer!!

## Different Perceptions

Tony Robbins talks about a personal experience he had in his book *Awaken the Giant Within* (page 202-203):

*'I was with two men, one who used to be the CEO of one of my companies and the other a mutual associate and good friend, and in the midst of the meeting we received some rather upsetting news. Someone with whom we were negotiating was obviously "trying to take unfair advantage" had violated the integrity of our understanding, and it appeared he had the upper hand. To say the least, this angered and upset me, but although I was caught up in the situation, I couldn't help but notice how differently the two people sitting next to me responded to the same information.*

*My CEO was out of control with rage and fury while my associate was hardly moved by the situation. How could all three of us hear of these actions that should have impacted us all equally (we all had the same stake in the negotiation), yet respond in such radically different ways? Quite honestly, the intensity of my CEO's response to the situation seemed even to me to be disproportionate to what had occurred. He kept talking about how "furious" and "enraged" he was, as his face turned beet-red and the veins in his forehead and neck visibly protruded.*

*He clearly linked acting on his rage with either eliminating pain or gaining pleasure. When I asked him what being enraged meant to him, why he was allowing himself to be so intense about this, through clenched teeth he said, "if you're in a rage, you get stronger, and when you're strong, you can make things happen – you can turn anything around!" He regarded the emotion of rage as a resource for getting himself out of the experience of pain and into the pleasure of feeling like he was in control of the business.*

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*I then turned to the next question in my mind: Why was my friend responding to the situation with almost no emotion at all? I said to him, "You don't seem to be upset by this. Aren't you angry? And my CEO said, "Doesn't it make you FURIOUS?" My friend simply said "No, it's not worth being upset over." As he said this, I realised that in the several years I had known him, I'd never seen him become very upset about anything. I asked him what being upset meant to him, and he responded, "If you get upset, then you lose control". "Interesting" I thought. "What happens if you lose control?" He said matter-of-factly, "then the other guy wins"."*

*What an amazing contrast.*

## Transformational Vocabulary

What other words can you use instead of **angry, furious** or **livid**?

How about **peevd**? Or mildly **annoyed**. What about **miffed**? These words may sound like they don't a little ridiculous or like they don't fully describe the intensity of the emotion, yet this is the idea – to lighten the emotion.

What other words can you use instead of depressed, miserable, gutted or devastated? How about concerned? Or confused? What about curious? Or a little sad?

Do you think this would make a difference to how you experience the events in your life?

The thing to appreciate is that **the words we use to describe our experience then become our experience**. This is because we use our language to describe our world, and because our language can't exactly describe how we feel, what we see and what we hear, we tend to exaggerate, misrepresent or distort our experience.

Literally, words are used to represent to us what our experience of life is. In that representation, they alter our perceptions and feelings. Remember, if three people can have the same experience, yet one person feels rage, another feels anger, and the third feels annoyance, then obviously the sensations are being changed by each person's translation. Since words are our primary tool for interpretation or translation, the way we label our experience immediately changes the sensations produced in our nervous systems.

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*Words are used to represent what we experience in our lives. In that representation, they can alter our perceptions and feelings.*

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Think about a time an event happened that annoyed you yet seemed to anger someone else. The same event can cause any number of reactions because the words we use cause a change in our physiology. There is an actual biochemical change in our body when we use language that has energy.

*Tony Robbins*

## How is your language?

### *Language Task 1:*

Here are some typical words we might use to describe our experience.

What words would you use instead, that would have the effect of changing how you experience an event?

Angry	Disenchanted
Afraid	Concerned
Terrified	Challenged
Frustrated	Stimulated
Furious	_____
Humiliated	_____
Devastated	_____
Scared	_____
Overwhelmed	_____
Stressed	_____
Jealous	_____
Gutted	_____
Miserable	_____
Disgusted	_____
Exhausted	_____

Good	Awesome
Fine	Fabulous
Excited	Over The Moon
Like	Love
Okay	_____
Pretty Good	_____
Happy	_____
Great	_____
Curious	_____
Satisfied	_____

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This exercise helps improve your observation skills and your language skills. You can see now the power of language and how people shape their energy levels by the use of either disempowering and empowering language, and how this relates to our beliefs about the world and how we operate within it.

What you're going to be doing now is taking your own personal awareness of how you communicate up one notch.

Each time you hear yourself using 'disempowering language' ie "I can't..." be aware that you have uncovered a hidden roadblock to your success.

## The words you consistently select will shape your destiny

### *Language Task 2:*

The next step to ask yourself: If I could use 'empowering' language with this situation, what would I say? How would I communicate with myself? What would I feel as a result of that choice?

Language that I notice I use often ....

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Language I use when I am stressed....

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Language I use when I feel certain...

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Language I use when I am feeling disconnected from someone...

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Language I use when I am feeling connected to someone...

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Language I use when I am judging someone....

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***If a collection of words you're using is creating states that disempower you, get rid of those words and replace them with those that empower you!***

## Quality Questions are the Key

We are talking to ourselves all the time. When you think of it, thinking is the process of asking and answering our own questions on an ongoing basis, although we might not be consciously aware of it. Am I thirsty? Will I go for that walk I promised myself? Did she just look at me in a strange way?

### **So how is the quality of your questions?**

The quality of our questions determines the quality of our lives. Ask a terrible question, get a terrible answer! And you WILL be answered! Your unconscious mind loves to serve you by finding an answer to every question you pose.

Consider these habitual poor quality questions for when things are not going the way we might want: 'Why does this always happen to me?', 'Why didn't I get that job?', 'What's wrong with me?'

Now consider these: 'What is the learning I can take from this?', 'What do I need to do differently next time?', 'Where's the gift in this?'

There is so much more power available to you if you ask yourself quality questions. Start asking yourself these quality questions each morning to notice what happens in your life:

- 1. What am I most happy about in my life now?** What about that makes me happy? How does that make me feel?
- 2. What am I most excited about in my life now?** What about that makes me excited? How does that make me feel?
- 3. What am I most proud about in my life now?** What about that makes me proud? How does that make me feel?
- 4. What am I most grateful about in my life now?** What about that makes me grateful? How does that make me feel?
- 5. What am I enjoying most in my life right now?** What about that do I enjoy? How does that make me feel?
- 6. What am I committed to in my life right now?** What about that makes me committed? How does that make me feel?
- 7. Who do I love? Who loves me?** What about that makes me loving? How does that make me feel?

If you really want to create a shift in your life, make this a part of your daily ritual. By consistently asking these questions, you'll find that you access your most empowering emotional states on a regular basis, and you'll begin to create mental highways to happiness, excitement, pride, gratitude, joy, commitment and love.

*Tony Robbins*

## Say it how you want it!!

Our brain can not process a negative straight up. If I say to you, do not think of a blue tree, your brain first has to think of a blue tree before it can stop thinking of a blue tree, or change the tree to green or change the tree to a house.

If you are preparing for a meeting, if you start thinking to yourself 'I hope I don't fail, I better not stuff this up', 'I hope I don't forget what I'm supposed to say', or if you are due to go up to receive an award and you start saying to yourself 'Don't trip up the stairs', 'don't fall over', what do you think is more likely to happen?

Generally we all have great language around what they don't want. For example ask someone what they want in relation to personal growth and they might say 'I want to stop feeling anxious', 'I want to stop feeling overwhelmed' etc.

Start to build great language around what you DO want!

What DO you want? You might want quality connected and loving relationships, abundance, joy, health and vitality, connection.

Whatever you want more of in your life, develop rich, detailed, articulate language around THAT and notice what happens in your life.