

# CANCEROUS THOUGHTS SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE QUARANTINE

By **TRAVIS BRADBERRY**  
editor@leaderonomics.com

**Y**OUR self-talk (the thoughts you have about your feelings) can make or break your career. When you make a mistake, they either magnify the negativity or help you turn that misstep into something productive.

Negative self-talk is unrealistic, unnecessary, and self-defeating. It sends you into a downward emotional spiral that is difficult to pull out of.

All self-talk is driven by important beliefs that you hold about yourself. It plays an understated but powerful role in success because it can both spur you forward to achieve your goals and hold you back.

*"He who believes he can and he who believes he cannot are both correct."*

—Henry Ford

TalentSmart has tested the emotional intelligence (EQ) of more than a million people and found that 90% of top performers are high in EQ. These successful, high EQ individuals possess an important skill – the ability to recognise and control negative self-talk so that it doesn't prevent them from reaching their full potential.

These successful people earn an average of US\$28,000 more annually than their low EQ peers, get promoted more often, and receive higher marks on performance evaluations. The link between EQ and earnings is so direct that every point increase in EQ adds US\$1,300 to an annual salary.

When it comes to self-talk, we've discovered some common thoughts

that hold people back more than any others. Be mindful of your tendencies to succumb to these thoughts, so that they don't derail your career:

## Perfection equals success

Human beings, by our very nature, are fallible. When perfection is your goal, you're always left with a nagging sense of failure, and end up spending your time lamenting what you failed to accomplish, instead of enjoying what you were able to achieve.

## My destiny is predetermined

Far too many people succumb to the highly irrational idea that they are destined to succeed or fail. Make no mistake about it, your destiny is in your own hands, and blaming multiple successes or failures on forces beyond your control is nothing more than a cop out. Sometimes life will deal you difficult cards to play, and other times you'll be holding aces. Your willingness to give your all in playing any hand you're holding determines your ultimate success or failure in life.

## I 'always' or 'never' do that

There isn't anything in life that you always or never do. You may do something a lot or not do something enough, but framing your behaviour in terms of "always" or "never" is a form of self-pity. It makes you believe that you have no control of yourself and will never change. Don't succumb to it.

## I succeed when others approve of me

Regardless of what people think of you at any particular moment, one thing is

One of the four masteries that Leaderonomics often focuses on is the personal mastery. And one of the areas that is important for the self is one's self-awareness. We provide unique programmes such as "Outward-looking Leadership" and "Strengths-based Leadership" that can empower you to grow your leadership capacity. That includes quarantining those cancerous thoughts. Write in to [training@leaderonomics.com](mailto:training@leaderonomics.com) for more information.

certain, you're never as good or bad as they say you are. It's impossible to turn off your reactions to what others think of you, but you can take people's opinions with a grain of salt. That way, no matter what people think about you, your self-worth comes only from within.

## My past equals my future

Repeated failures can erode your self-confidence and make it hard to believe you'll achieve a better outcome in the future. Most of the time, these failures result from taking risks and trying to achieve something that isn't easy. Just remember that success lies in your ability to rise in the face of failure. Anything worth achieving is going to require you to take some risks, and you can't allow failure to stop you from believing in your ability to succeed.

## My emotions equal my reality

If you've read *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, you know how to take an objective look at your feelings and separate fact from fiction. If not, you might want to read it. Otherwise, your emotions will continue to skew your sense of reality, making you vulnerable to the negative self-talk that can hold you back from achieving your full potential.

## BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

I hope these lessons are as useful to you as they have been to me over the years. As I write them, I'm reminded of their power and my desire to use them every day.

What other toxic thoughts do successful people quarantine? Please share your thoughts with me, as I learn just as much from you as you do from me.

Like this article?  
Follow us  
@Leaderonomics on  
Facebook, Twitter  
and Instagram.



■ Travis Bradberry is the award-winning co-author of the No. 1 bestselling book, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, and the co-founder of TalentSmart, the world's leading provider of emotional intelligence tests and training, serving more than 75% of Fortune 500 companies. His bestselling books have been translated into 25 languages and are available in more than 150 countries. To read more articles from Travis, log on to [www.leaderonomics.com](http://www.leaderonomics.com).