

## SELF TALK

Spring is here and summer days are on their way. Hoorah! The robins in my garden are building their nest in an aloe. The burnt grass in the conservancy is an emerald green. We are emerging from hibernation saying “this is the summer that.... I’m going to Sort the house, swim Midmar mile, cycle the Argus, get back into that favourite dress, change the world.”

” What’s your “that..” ?

And has “the voice” started its’ negative monologue yet?

Seth Godin calls it “the Heckler” SARK calls it “the inner critic”

“As if you could do that”.

“You never got it right before”

“Is this the best you can do?”

Do you recognize it? A lot of the time it’s more of a white noise, a running commentary in the background remarking on all the things we should be doing or aren’t doing enough of or aren’t entitled to do.

Sometimes it steps to the fore, loud and overbearing, or worse, plaintive and whiny. The first time I paddled a singles Dusi, although I had completed the first 2 days, whilst waiting for the start on Day 3 “The Voice” started. “It’s just been luck you got through this far”, “how can you think that you can get to the end”, worse still was “you could drown”. On and on as we all sat on the still morning water of Inanda dam, knowing that after 5km of safe flat we would hit the exciting rapids of Day 3.

I have yet to meet someone who doesn’t have a problem with the “Heckler” to some degree. Some hear it louder than others, and some more frequently than others. You will know, it cannot be eliminated, but we can choose how we are going to respond to it. If you engage with “the Voice”, explaining clearly why you are justified in doing what you are doing, as with any big mouth bully, it will just get worse. Louder and more belligerent and instead of just talking about the moment at hand it will start to drag in the past and even how you are ultimately going to fail far into the future.

In my readings I have seen that there is a strategy that works.

*Acknowledge and move on.*

*When the heckler announces that you're incompetent, unqualified or hardly ready to step forward, think, "oh."*

*And then proceed.*

*You give it no purchase. No opportunity to escalate. Each jibe is met with "noted."*

*Over time, the heckler gets quieter, because it just isn't worth the effort. (Godin)*

My strategy on Inanda dam that day was to focus on why I should carry on. Again, I didn’t engage in justifying myself or rationalizing. I just had a list of why I should continue. From the sublime to the ridiculous. If I didn’t finish I couldn’t wear the t-shirt. My seconds had sacrificed time and sweat to encourage and support me. I owed it to all the strangers who had cheered me on; from the Merchiston boys to women doing their washing in the muddy waters of the Umsunduzi River. If I gave in I would be sorry later. If I gave in now then giving up in whatever “next situation” would be easier. I needed to be true to myself and my purpose in doing this.

I stayed on the water with jiggly knees, I didn't drown. I made it to the finish. And I've made it twice more in a single. Funny how "the Heckler" is quite subdued on Inanda dam these days.

I would love to know how you deal with the "inner critic" [fiona@7-summits.co.za](mailto:fiona@7-summits.co.za)