

Using 'self-talk' as part of your endurance sport training? Here's what you need to know

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You have probably caught yourself muttering some encouragement to yourself, perhaps when you were facing a particularly difficult physical challenge, or experiencing some sort of stress; "Come on, you can do this!" or "I know I can do this!"

Sports psychologists have now found that speaking to yourself in the

second person: "You need to dig deep!", is actually more effective than speaking to yourself in the first person, "I need to dig deep!"

In a new study, sports psychology researchers at Bangor University found that participants told to use the second-person pronoun 'you' when encouraging themselves while cycling created a superior power output than those told to use the first person pronoun "I."

This was the first study to show that how athletes use self-talk makes a difference. The research could provide coaches and others with a new element to consider when developing effective self-talk interventions.

James Hardy of the University's School of Sport, Health and Exercise Sciences and one of the paper's authors explained:

"Sports psychologists have long known that self-talk can be useful for aiding enhanced performance. However, nothing was known about the way that a subtle grammatical difference in self-talk, using first ("I can do this") or second ("You can do this") person pronouns, can effect performance; that is, until our recent research."

"There are of course different types of tasks associated with sports and much less is known about endurance tasks, which is why we applied this to cycling."

"Our findings from 16 active males indicate that second person self-talk generated significantly greater power output and faster time-trial performance than first person self-talk. Interestingly, the participants did not report noticing any difference in ratings of perceived exertion. So they were able to do more work but didn't notice any difference in workload."

This is the first evidence that strategically using grammatical pronouns

when implementing [self-talk](#) can influence physical [performance](#) providing practitioners with a new aspect to consider when developing interventions.

More information: James Hardy et al. To me, to you: How you say things matters for endurance performance, *Journal of Sports Sciences* (2019). [DOI: 10.1080/02640414.2019.1622240](https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2019.1622240)

Provided by Bangor University

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