



TRANSCRIPT

Episode # 16: How to Achieve Self-Mastery

You are listening to episode 16 of *Mastering The Power Skills*.

What do the power skills of influence, persuasion and presence have to do with your self-mastery and emotional balance? As it turns out, a lot. Join us in this episode and we'll not only explore how these skills can help you become the wisest and most resilient version of yourself, but we'll also learn a little trick for becoming more productive and energized when you're stressed out and overwhelmed. How much more could you accomplish if you were 25% or even 50% more influential and persuasive?

Welcome to *Mastering The Power Skills*, the podcast that provides you with the tips, strategies, and the inspiration to grow your own power and win support for your ideas. And now here's your host, C-suite leadership coach Kathy Dockry.

Hi everyone, today we're going to pivot a little from our usual approach to thinking about the power skills of influence, persuasion and presence. So up to now we've been focused primarily on how you can use those tools externally to get things done more smoothly, and more effectively in the work world that exists outside of who we are.

And as you already know from episodes one and two, we call the skills of influence, persuasion and presence the power skills because they empower us to navigate the dynamics around us and to create alignment between ourselves and other people. But you know that external world is only half of the equation, right? I bet some of you have already started to think about that.

The other part of the equation, of course, is yourself, isn't it? You are the captain of your ship that's navigating all the tricky waters around you. How do you ensure that you show up as the best version of yourself? As the best version of a captain? After all, the key to successful navigation is not only mastering the elements around you, it's being wise, resilient, emotionally strong, and courageous.

It's the ability to be a person that the crew wants to follow. It's the ability to be constantly learning from what you encounter and discarding old, no longer useful

beliefs. The truth is that high level performance is not just performing tasks skillfully, it's being a skillful human being.

Superb athletes are a group that really understand this well. If they want to take their performance to the next level, they can't just focus on their physical game. They need to focus as well on who they are, how they think and how they feel. They want to discard ways of thinking and feeling that don't serve their goals.

And they want to develop new ways of thinking and feeling that are more productive and useful. They kind of want to improve on their innate self-programming. And they take active steps to do that. In other words, they work on developing self-mastery.

So I don't want to belabor the point but, obviously, this holds true for us as well in the work world. What causes two leaders of equal capability to perform differently over time? It's usually a question of either superb, or in contrast, poor self-mastery.

If we're working on our own self-mastery, we're going to amplify our success as capable leaders. And if instead, we don't work on self-mastery and instead cling to old patterns of thinking and feeling, we're always going to perform lower than our

true potential. And that's because we'll be diminishing our success as capable leaders.

So what do you do about this if you aspire to be the best leader you can be? What are the tools for growing your own self-mastery? Well, I've got your back on this, those same skills of influence, persuasion and presence that we've been talking about in this podcast, those skills that we use to navigate the external world or the workplace can be used to navigate your internal world as well.

In other words, not only do the skills of influence, persuasion and presence empower you in the external world, they also self-empower you. They're the tools that help you create the best and highest version of yourself.

Now, if you're finding this a difficult concept to understand, don't worry about that at all. Many of us are not accustomed to the idea that we would work on our inner patterns of thinking and feeling to achieve a higher level of performance and a better sense of mastery. And even if we understand that as a concept, we often have trouble seeing with clarity the tools and the means for doing that.

But essentially, what I'm describing is simply a form of self-coaching. In other words, it's a structured way of growing yourself and accelerating that growth. The

tools that I share in this podcast to influence others, in other words to shape the collective mindset to take you seriously, can often be used or adapted to shift your own mindset so that you feel more confident in yourself.

And the tools that I share in this podcast to help you become even more persuasive with others are often excellent tools to help us change our internal self-talk to new and more productive ways of thinking.

And finally, the tools that I share to help strengthen and grow your leadership presence are also good tools to help us be present to ourselves. In other words, showing up in ways that are consistent and supportive of who we want to be to ourselves.

So from time to time in these podcast episodes going forward I'm going to be sharing with you practical, easy and effective techniques to help you self-coach yourself versus others.

To go back to our earlier analogy, I not only want to make sure that you're navigating the complex dynamics of the workplace skillfully, easily and effectively. I also want to make sure that as the captain of your ship you're showing up as the

wisest, the most resilient, the most emotionally strong, and the most courageous version of yourself.

In other words, not only the person who is doing things well, but also the person who is showing up well, and who everyone wants to follow. And that is what self-mastery looks like.

So I've been spending some time being a little philosophical here, let's turn to the practical and talk about a particular self-coaching technique that you can start to use right away to strengthen your own self-mastery. The technique is to shift our internal self-talk when it's holding us back, and substitute self-talk that is more helpful and more productive.

So what do I mean by self-talk? And why would we sometimes want to change it? So self-talk is that steady stream of internal observations and commentary that permeate our mind. It's kind of close to constant and it can swing from the important to the mundane in a nanosecond.

It's why I can be sitting here at my desk talking to you now, but also thinking of that meeting I have later today while noting as well, the color of the coffee cup sitting next to my microphone. It's matte black, by the way, very goth looking.

And our self-talk is generally chattering away in the background, even when we're not consciously listening to it. In fact that word, chatter, is the name of a wonderful book by Ethan Kross, and that's K-R-O-S-S , who explores the phenomenon of self-talk and its implications on our lives. I'll drop a link to that in the show notes for this episode.

So what's the problem with this background chatter? Well, one problem is that when you're in a demanding or stressful situation, that voice inside your head may be making things worse for you. It can be doing the thinking equivalent of jumping on your back and punching your head at the very moment you could use a calm and steady supporter.

For example, have you ever had thoughts like this, “There's no way I can get this project done by the deadline.” Or, “Tom is going out of his way to block every good idea I have.” And when you've had thoughts like that are they sometimes on repeat, looping over and over again in your mind?

Then you know what I mean. Having those thoughts in your head make you feel worse. It can take an unpleasant situation and turn it into a complete feeling of

overwhelm, anxiety, or even anger. This is not a good way to feel and it's not a good way to show up.

Now, at this point you might be saying, “Well, Kathy, I may not like the thought, but the thought is factually true because it's the reality of what I'm dealing with.” And you may be right. You may not be right, but you could be right. And anyhow, that's not really the point because even if that thought is factually true, that you're going to miss the deadline, or that Tom is a nasty piece of work, your thought is only partially true. It doesn't represent the entire context that you're dealing with.

So self-talk like that, that's only partially true, usually only represents the negative part of the context that you're in. And if you repeat it over and over again, well, of course your stress levels are going to rise and you're going to be sabotaging your ability to be a calm, creative problem solver.

So what are some alternative and equally true thoughts that will get you out of that downward spiral and into a less stressed and more productive frame of mind? So let's go back to that looming deadline and all that work you have to do. An alternative thought might be, “I have a well-established track record of solving problems around time and resources.”

Repeating a true thought like that to yourself over and over again, helps you consider your options. Do you need to change the deadline? Or perhaps renegotiate the work product? Or ask for new resources?

And what about Tom and his pattern of blocking your ideas? Rather than obsess about Tom, you might instead substitute a thought like, “Even though Tom likes to block me, he's receptive to other people.”

Repeating a true thought like that over and over again to yourself keeps you from getting stuck and giving up. It starts opening the door to create a problem solving because maybe you can leverage your relationship with other people, who then can work on your behalf to weaken Tom's opposition to your idea.

Both of these are examples of self-talk that helps you versus stresses you out. You're mastering your internal thinking so that you're reenergized and see new options to the problem that you're dealing with. You're in fact, exercising self-mastery.

So the trick to being effective and shifting your thoughts and feelings is to first notice them. Often our self-talk is running on automatic in the background of our

lives and we don't even notice how we're sabotaging ourselves. But you can more easily pay attention to your feelings.

If you notice that you're feeling increased stress, overwhelm, anxiety, frustration, depression, any negative emotion really, then that's your signal. We actually should embrace our negative emotions as being important messengers. They're telling us that we're having unproductive thoughts about our circumstances, thoughts that are not helping us.

Those negative emotions are your signal to pause and actually listen to that soundtrack in your head. What are you saying to yourself? And just jot a few of those thoughts down on paper, no matter how trivial you think they are, and really look at them. And ask yourself the question, is there a better thought you can be repeating to yourself?

You'll know that you found a better thought by the feeling that you have when you say it to yourself out loud. Did you have a momentary sense of relief? A feeling that some of the negativity was melting away? A feeling that you'll be okay, whatever happens?

Then that's the thought that you should be repeating to yourself over and over to rebalance your emotional climate and find creative solutions. That's the thought that will help you master yourself and your situation.

Now, I sometimes get asked for suggestions on particular thoughts that you can consider, and that's a very good question. When we're new at shifting our thoughts, it can sometimes be a bit challenging to come up with a new, productive thought. And having examples can be helpful.

I'd love to have a future episode that just provides examples of new thoughts. In fact, if you yourself have a good example, or a thought, or a mantra that you sometimes use, I'd love to hear it and feature it on this podcast. Just send me a note at the email that we'll include in the show notes to this episode. It's info@significagroup.com.

But before we close out the episode, why don't I share a recent thought that I've been using? I find it's a particularly good thought for high achievers, and I imagine there's a lot of listeners here that fall into that category.

So a few years ago, during a particularly challenging time for me, think like broken foot, a beautiful 19th century house with unexpected structural issues, and oh

yeah, a global pandemic had just started. This phrase suddenly popped into my mind, and it is so simple it's ridiculous.

Here it is, several times a day when my stress level began to mount, I took a deep breath and I said to myself, "I am not what is happening to me. I am not what is happening to me." Now, before you say, "What? That puny little mantra won't work for me and my mountain of challenges," give me a moment to explain how this little phrase does, in fact, work. And why it's a particularly amazing technique for high achievers.

How this works is that by saying this phrase over and over again, you immediately create a little space between you and your environment. You're training your brain to dial down your primal fight or flight chemistry. And with greater calm, you feel more resourceful. The more times a day you do this, the calmer and the more resourceful you become. You feel better and you perform better.

But why is this such a great technique for high achievers? Well, one obvious reason is that it's short and you don't have to carve time out of your day to do it. But the really cool reason, and the important insight as to why this works is this, high achievers are wired to identify with and to own at a very personal level the challenges in their environment.

So let's repeat that again, if you are a high achiever, chances are that you're so successful because you completely believe the challenges that you are solving are not abstract. They're not merely corporate, they are your challenges.

Now, this isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it's one of your superpowers, you high achiever, you. This tendency to identify with and own a challenge allows you to excel and provide enormous value in whatever you do. However, when you don't manage that urge to identify with and own the challenges around you, you end up stressed and overwhelmed. Even worse, you can lose perspective.

And that's the beauty of repeatedly telling yourself, I am not what is happening to me. You're managing your superpower so that you don't overidentify with the issues and challenges of your day. It doesn't necessarily make the problems smaller, but it reminds you who you are, strong, resourceful, and with a great track record of figuring things out.

Yes, you are not what is happening to you. You are, in fact, bigger and brighter than that. So, all right, my friends, go out there and slay a few dragons. I hope you have an awesome week ahead and I'll see you in our next episode.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Mastering The Power Skills*. If you like what was offered in today's show and want more insights and resources from Kathy, check us out at www.significagroup.com.