“I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul”

~William Earnest Henley~

This is an excerpt from a poem written by William Earnest Henley, when he was 25 years old. The poem was entitled “Invictus”, which means “Undefeated” in Latin. Henley contracted tuberculosis of the bone when he was just 12 years old. Over time the disease travelled to his foot, and at the age of 25 he was told that his severely infected leg would have to be removed, and that if he survived the operation, they would have to amputate his other leg. Henley considered this, and gave the doctors permission to amputate only one leg, up to his knee (this is called a “below the knee amputation”, or BKA). He wrote Invictus from his hospital bed at the age of 25 (Lindquist, 2010). Through Invictus, Henley unilaterally declared that he would not be defeated.

Nelson Mandela read this poem to himself during his 27 year imprisonment. It inspired him and empowered him during the darkest moments of his life, when his self-talk made the difference to his thoughts and his behaviour. Those thoughts directly influenced and developed who he grew to become. Who will you become if you allow yourself to come to being?

This week we talked about self-esteem and CBT. The cognitive aspect of CBT equates to our self-talk, where our thoughts influence our actions. What are you saying to yourself? Are you kinder to others than you are to yourself? If your voice is the only voice you will have until you die, do you like the words it says to you (as Kabat-Zin would ask)? Ali repeatedly told himself: “I am the greatest”. It didn’t matter if anyone else believed that….his outcome was dependent on the fact that HE believed it for himself.

Self-esteem changes throughout our lives, and it can be influenced by what others say to us. Taking in what others say, we develop our sense of self. We might measure ourselves against others, or measure our worth against what others say to us, or about us. Do not accept what others say about you. What are you saying to (or about) yourself? If you don’t tell yourself these things who will tell you? The truth is that you are the only person who needs to believe in you. I assure you that the most successful people in the world would not have become so successful if they did not
believe in themselves. It might be that they believed in themselves, and their uniquely special gift long before anyone else saw it in them. If they didn’t believe in themselves, what might humanity have been deprived of? If you don’t believe in yourself, what are you depriving yourself of? People will believe in you when you believe in yourself, and if they don’t believe in you, is that enough to stop you from expressing the thing only you can bring to the world?

The amazing thing about self-esteem is that it is not fixed. That means that we can fix it! We can grow it and develop it and train our thoughts to recognise it within us. It’s a process that begins by the act of believing in yourself. The odds of you being born are about 1:400,000,000,000 (Lifeinspired.com, nd). YOU ARE THE ONE!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duFOXdTC4qY

References:


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