

Will you be ready when opportunity comes knocking?

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Even if opportunity is ringing the bell, banging on the front door and shouting from the hilltops, we may not hear it. Why? Many of us give ourselves negative messages. These messages can keep us from grasping opportunities that are there for the taking.

What are some of these discouraging internal messages? They include:

1. I'm not good enough.
2. It's too hard.
3. It's the wrong time.
4. I'm too old/too young.
5. I'm not that smart.
6. I'm too busy.
7. I can't do this by myself.

What do these messages really mean?

I'm not good enough. This is the voice of our inner critic. Our inner critic can come in handy when we're looking for ways out of a scary situation — even if it's a situation full of great potential. The critic makes us focus on our shortcomings. We need to silence the critic and remind ourselves of our strengths.

It's too hard. Ah, comfort. Step outside — or even think of stepping outside — your comfort zone and you may get frightened. It's natural. But think how boring life would be if nothing was ever a challenge. It might help to think of a time when pushing yourself led to something great.

It's the wrong time. Is it ever the “right” time? More likely, you need to make it the right time. So think twice before turning your back on opportunity because of timing.

I'm too young/too old. This is a convenient opportunity-buster. After all, no matter your age, you can always consider yourself too old or too young! Instead, remember when you love what you're doing, you're happy. And that's what keeps us youthful.

I'm not that smart. This phrase is first cousin to “I'm not good enough.” It's another self-defeating judgment. Remember that, while you may not know enough to accomplish your goal right now, you'll learn a lot along the way.

I'm too busy. Are you really too busy? Or are you avoiding something that feels like new territory or you really don't want to do? Make time and put it on your schedule. And say “no” to other activities that will divert your plan. By the way, if you really don't want to try something new right now, that's okay. Simply admit it and move on!

I can't do this by myself. No one said you had to! Everyone goes through times when they feel isolated or even misunderstood. That can feel really lonely. So recruit some help. Turn to a good friend or a trusted family member. See if they'll help you make a plan or even join you in your new endeavor.

Stop your thoughts from chilling your efforts

These samples of negative self-messages are good food for thought. We all have that little voice inside that can sometimes make us feel “less than.” Turn down the volume on that voice. Turn up the volume on the voice that applauds your strengths, skills and potential.