# A **NeuroGym** Article



## **The Power of “Next” in Brushing Away Negative Thoughts**

From the Pope to Joe Average working the Drive-thru window, everyone has that negative voice in their head. You know, the one that pops up from time to time and pokes at your weak spots:

* “Hey dummy! You’re not smart enough!”
* “Fatso, don’t bother trying to lose those pounds.”
* “Pssst. Here’s a secret: Everyone knows you’re not good enough to succeed”

The voice might sound different- your mother-in-law, the bully from 4th grade, or a mean ex-boss- but the goal is always the same: to knock you down a peg and make you doubt yourself.

How often you hear from your ‘inner critic’ and how it affects you varies from person to person, but what’s important to realize is that:

1. You are normal.
2. There is a simple way to turn down the volume on the negative chatter.

**Are You Your Brain?**

Of course not! While this may seem like an obvious answer, it’s actually a very important concept to consider when taking on internal doubts.

Your brain is of course the control center of your thoughts, behaviors and emotions. But it’s really just another organ in your body. The brain is made of billions of cells that are connecting with each other non-stop at lightning speed.

Every time you have a positive thought, you reinforce that thought pattern, but—and here is the crux of the matter—every time you have a negative thought, you reinforce that thought pattern *even faster*. But why?

Consider the caveman. With large predators, poisonous animals and extreme weather, the environment of early man was full of danger. So our Neanderthal brains evolved to be on high alert for threats and process them quickly. As a result, our modern brains are prone to react to and absorb negative thoughts faster than positive ones.

That’s why it’s important to realize that you ARE NOT your brain. By making that distinction, you can give your brain a command that will make you aware of when you are having a negative thought or emotion, and have control of its effect on you.

**You Got “Next”**

When those negative voices start to bombard you, sometimes it can be hard to ignore them and stay positive. In fact, they can be downright toxic, setting off a chain reaction that leaves you doubting all areas of your life, work, or relationships.

So how do you take control of these negative thoughts and reframe them? With these 3 steps:

1. Become aware of the negative thought or emotion

Often, these negative voices seem to slip in through your subconscious. By simply taking a minute and consciously acknowledging each time you hear the voice, you are becoming aware of it, which can minimize its negative effect. It also allows you to take the next step.

1. Surrender to the negative thought and release it

Now that you are aware of this negative thought, you can surrender to it. That may sound strange, but it doesn’t mean giving up. In fact, surrendering means you are allowing the negative thought to happen **without the emotional attachment**. This is essential. When you are able to accept the negative thought and let it flow by without engaging in its negative energy, then you can use the magic word: Next!

By saying the command “Next” to yourself each time you let the negative thought pass by, you can get your brain to move on to the next thought or emotion.

1. Refocus your thoughts on what you want to achieve, and take action

As you build awareness of these negative voices and learn to surrender and release them, then you can turn your mind towards what you really want to focus on.

Whether it’s the financial or health goals you have set for yourself, or maybe the professional or personal ambitions that you want to achieve, overcoming the negative thoughts and emotions that have held you back can empower you with the energy and drive to [take action accordingly](http://www.myneurogym.com/go/?p=NeuroGymBlog&w=WTGM-BlogInnerCritic)!

Like any exercise, this takes practice. Focus on one step at a time. First, work on simply building awareness of the negative voice. Each time you do, the emotional power of the voice will fade away little by little. Then you can surrender to it fully and release it. Finally, you will be able to shift your focus to your goals and how you will achieve them.

**The three steps to reframe a negative thought are:**

1. Become aware of the negative thought or emotion;
2. Surrender to it, by allowing it to happen, and release it by saying the word “Next!”
3. Refocus your thoughts on what you want to achieve, and take action.

Do this consistently and you will find your control over your thoughts and emotions rapidly increasing, followed closely by an upward spiral in motivation, happiness, and an automatic boost in positive behaviors. Soon, the loudest voice in your head will be the one yelling “Next!”