

Critical comment on “Improving your decision making by observing your inner speech”
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While this article by Waldman and Newberg is correct in its main message, it is unfortunately fraught with inaccuracies and problems. To illustrate: (1) the statement that “Inner speech is also associated with lower levels of psychological distress” is invalid as a wide array of distressing psychological disorders are associated with distorted (e.g., ruminative) inner speech activity. Interestingly, the authors discuss this later in their paper, with is in contradiction with the above statement. (2) “Piaget first identified this phenomenon in the 1920s...”, no the soviet psychologist Leon Vygotsky did. (3) “Inner speech begins in the first few years of life...”, no, it develops later once social speech has been established. (4) “When you pay close attention to your inner speech, you’ll discover that some of these voices have different emotional 'personalities'”, no, most people report that their inner speech constitutes only one unified voice – theirs... (5) “Positive inner speech helps us to manage strong emotional reactions, and it gives us the power to modify inappropriate behavior”, no, what research rather shows (as stated in this paper) is that indeed, while “Negative inner dialogues can be particularly destructive.”, positive self-talk (e.g., 'I will pass this exam') has little or no effect on our emotions and behaviors. There are additional issues but I limit my comments to those addressed above.

Don't get me wrong: I think that Waldman and Newberg have noble intentions, but this particular article on inner speech (in which my own work is cited twice) is scientifically problematic. I recommend my own Encyclopedia entry (<http://www2.mtroyal.ab.ca/~amorin/Encyclopedia2.pdf>) if one desires to get a more realistic and science-based view of inner speech.