

Finally . . . Someone Who Listens!

I've started talking to myself. Let me rephrase that. I've start talking to myself MORE. It may be a result of my advanced age. Or perhaps it's sunk in that I'm the only one interested in what I have to say.

And I do enjoy conversing with someone of similar background, interests, and opinions. Very similar. Finally, someone to bounce ideas off who will bounce them back; someone who tells me, "Why yes! What a clever idea! I wish I'd thought of it myself. Oh wait! I did!"

Or maybe I talk to myself out of consideration for others. If I unload some of what I want to talk about when I'm alone, I won't be tempted to burden anyone else with it later. It would be like me to be so thoughtful.

Whatever the reason, I'm not terribly concerned about my habit yet. I only talk to myself when I'm alone. Or rather, I only talk to myself when I THINK I'm alone. (I was recently heard mumbling as I walked across the parking lot—or so I said.) But I don't yet answer, offer advice, or ask for clarification. I mostly chide myself or utter minor complaints: "I should do those dishes," "Stupid computer," or "I wish you would stop talking to yourself." I've decided there will be no cause for alarm until I start reprimanding myself for interrupting. In fact, I recommend you take up the habit for the above reasons—and because I don't want to be the only one.

A word of warning though; prepare yourself to be caught in act. One of the most common places to talk to oneself is in the car. I see other drivers do it all the time, though they may be merely expressing in animated fashion their disapproval of fellow motorists—me, for example.

If another driver catches you talking to yourself in the car, look down at the passenger seat, smile, and pretend you're talking to a very small child, and that you don't have air bags. To make it look more real, you might even pretend to pat the make-believe head and smile broadly at the imaginary upturned face. Caution: Don't get so involved in your little ruse that you forget about the driver in front of you who may brake at any moment.

A safer alternative when caught talking to yourself in the car is to liven things up in order to give the impression that you aren't talking at all; you're SINGING! Open your mouth wider, snap your fingers (one hand only), and sway back and forth. While singing with the radio is embarrassing, it is more socially acceptable than talking to oneself. At least, I hope it is.

It is more shameful to be caught talking to yourself when you're alone in a room, or rather when you thought you were alone in a room. If this happens and the other person says, as they are apt to, "Who were you talking to," you should answer with disgust, "You! You don't see anyone else in here, do you?"

If they have any manners, or if they're gullible, they will apologize and ask you to repeat yourself since they didn't quite hear what you said. And because you were probably mumbling about something important only to you—or more likely, about them, you will be forced to say, "I forget now. See! You've distracted me."

If, on the other hand, it is you who comes upon another dear soul talking to herself, the proper thing to do is to answer as though you sincerely believe she was talking to you all along. But speak gently, so as not to startle me.

(Readers or editors who would like to subscribe to or reprint Dorothy's column can contact drosby@rushmore.com)