

# The Angel and the Devil

We all face temptation, especially when we're changing lifelong habits. Can you identify with Garfield in this cartoon?



Angel: “Now, Garfield. You know you should eat a piece of fruit instead.”  
Devil: “Come on, Garfield. You **want** it.”

This kind of “inner battle” is common. If the angel wins, you’re likely to feel resentful and deprived. If the devil wins, you’re likely to feel guilty. Both can backfire and, in the long run, keep you from reaching your goals. (In the cartoon, Garfield ends up eating the doughnut *and* the angel and devil!)

Take a minute to imagine a wiser inner voice: “I do like doughnuts. But what I really want is to be healthy and lose weight. A piece of toast with strawberry jam sounds good.”

Think of a temptation you’ve faced. What might your inner voices say?

Angel: \_\_\_\_\_

Devil: \_\_\_\_\_

Wise Voice: \_\_\_\_\_

# Mental gremlins.

What are your thoughts when you “slip” in your efforts to make a lifestyle change? The way you talk to yourself can make all the difference.

Do you recognize the voices of any of the “mental gremlins” below?

Example: You worked long hours this week and overate fast food on 3 nights.

## Mental Gremlins

- \* **The Scolder** (“You did it again! Stupid! When will you ever learn?”)
- \* **The Labeler** (“Face it. You’re a fast food junkie.”)
- \* **The Threat Maker** (“Okay. No food for you tomorrow.”)
- \* **The Commander** (“You’ve got a meal plan to follow. So just do it!”)
- \* **The Lecturer** (“You know better. This always happens. You should’ve brought something low-fat from home.”)
- \* **Mr. or Ms. Sarcasm** (“Brilliant! Lock you up and throw away the key, and then you might lose weight.”)
- \* **The Comparer** (“What’s the big deal? Sue can work all night and not eat a thing.”)
- \* **The Worrier** (“With your bad habits, you’ll never lose weight.”)
- \* **The Quitter** (“You blew it! Might as well give up trying.”)

## Here’s how to talk back to those nasty mental gremlins.

- 1. First, describe what you did *right*.** “On four days this week, I stayed under my fat and calorie goals.”
- 2. Give information without insult. Instead of describing what you did wrong, point out what still needs to be done.** “I need to make a plan for dinner on nights when I work late.”
- 3. Offer yourself a choice.** “Next time I work late, I can get a turkey sandwich around the corner at the sandwich shop. Or plan what I’m going to eat at McDonald’s and use the drive-through so I’m not tempted to overdo it.”
- 4. Say it with a word or two.** Next time you work late, think: “Drive-through.”
- 5. Describe what you feel, without reference to your character.** “I’m disappointed and frustrated that I went back to old habits.”
- 6. Put it in writing.** Put a note on your car’s dashboard: “Drive-through.”
- 7. Believe in yourself.** Keep the faith. Say to yourself, with a confident tone of voice, “I can do this.” \_\_\_\_\_