Tell yourself during exercise that you’re not as tired as you think you are and you could make that statement true, a new study shows, reminding us that the body intertwines with the mind in ways that we are only starting to understand.

For the new experiment, which was published last month in the journal *Medicine & Science*, researchers from the University of Kent in England asked 24 healthy, physically active young men and women if they would be willing to ride a bicycle until they were exhausted. During the bike ride they were asked to encourage themselves and give themselves pep talks. The new experiment was designed specifically to determine whether verbally encouraging yourself during a draining workout can affect your mind’s calculations and delay fatigue.

The group that had talked to themselves in encouraging ways were able to pedal longer than expected, and reported that the pedaling had felt easier, even though their physical exertion was tremendous.

On one level, these findings indicate that “motivational self-talk improves endurance performance compared to not using it,” said Samuel Marcora, a director of exercise research.

But a deeper reading of the data, he continued, supports the idea that physical exhaustion develops, to a considerable degree, in your head. “If the point in time at which people stop exercising was determined only by physical ability,” he said, “self-talk would have no effect.” But it did in the experiment.

To be effective, though, self-talk probably has to be consistent and systematic. Dr. Marcora suggested deploying phrases that particularly encourage you and repeat them often, even on a schedule. It is likely we all could stand to hear on a daily basis that we’re feeling good, even if we’re not.

Excerpted from “Keep Telling Yourself: This Workout Feels Good” by Gretchen Reynolds

November 6, 2013 *The New York Times*

**Writing Directions**

Read the passage above and write an essay responding to the ideas it presents. In your essay, be sure to summarize the passage in your own words, stating the author’s most important ideas. Develop your essay by identifying one idea in the passage that you feel is especially significant, and explain its significance. Support your claims with evidence or examples drawn from what you have read, learned in school, and/or personally experienced.

Remember to review your essay and make any changes or corrections that are needed to help your reader follow your thinking. You will have 90 minutes to complete your essay.