

# Self-Talk

Life is stressful. Those experiencing a great deal of stress may contribute to their own anxiety by the self-talk they use. Many may “catastrophize” or “awfulize” or “make mountains out of molehills.” Often, it’s not the events themselves that cause distress, but the things we tell ourselves about the events.

For example, someone who has a major project due might use the following self-talk:

“I’ll never finish this job...”

“If I miss this deadline, I’ve really blown it.”

“I’m such a FAILURE – I can’t do anything right.”

Such negative self-talk triggers panicky, anxious feelings that will keep someone from being able to finish the project at all.

Each of us can CHOOSE whether we will use negative self-talk or positive self-talk in a given situation.

<p><b>Negative Self Talk</b> produces <b>Negative Feelings</b> that lead to <b>Negative Behaviors</b> (Withdrawal, giving up, lashing out)</p>	<p><b>Positive Self Talk</b> produces <b>Positive Feelings</b> that lead to <b>Positive Behaviors</b> (Confidence, Skill)</p>
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## Steps for Refuting and Eliminating Negative Self-Talk

- ✍ **Choose a situation that generates stressful feelings**
- ✍ **Write down your self-talk about the event...**Your worries, beliefs, judgments, assumptions, beliefs, and predictions – all the thoughts you are having
- ✍ **Identify your feelings**– define them in one or two words, such as angry, depressed, worthless, helpless
- ✍ **Begin to dispute your negative self-talk by asking these questions**
  - ✍ Is there any rational support for this idea?
  - ✍ What evidence do I have that this idea is true? False?
  - ✍ What do I know about myself in other situations that tells me that my negative self-talk is wrong?
  - ✍ Is there any evidence that my negative self-talk is true, or I cause myself undue suffering by convincing myself to be unhappy?
  - ✍ What is the worst thing that can happen to me in this situation?
- ✍ **Substitute positive self-talk for your negative thoughts**
  - ✍ I’m going to be alright
  - ✍ I’m not going to let this situation upset me.
  - ✍ If I feel myself getting tense, I’ll take a deep breath and focus on relaxing
  - ✍ I can keep my reactions within limits that are comfortable for me
  - ✍ I can decide not to be afraid (angry, fearful, etc)
  - ✍ I am a worthy person
  - ✍ I have accomplished much of what I’ve tried in the past.”
  - ✍ Trying something new is challenging and stimulating.
- ✍ **Substitute positive feelings for negative feelings**
  - ✍ Picture a peaceful, relaxing scene when you feel anxious or angry
  - ✍ Visualize the color of the negative feeling and change it to another color and another feeling
  - ✍ Visualize the negative feeling that’s leaving your body as one color, and the peaceful, tranquil feelings that are entering your body as another color
- ✍ **Reinforce your positive messages to yourself** - write them on 3X5 cards and read them daily
- ✍ **Reward yourself when you achieve success** – give yourself credit for doing a good job with more positive self talk, such as “I did a good job!” “I knew I could do it!”