

# Self-Talk

Emotional responses to various situations depend on how we think about the specific situation. What we think will influence how we feel. Even if we cannot change the situation, we can change the way we think about it and therefore the way we feel and act. Our inner voice can be both an ally and a fearsome enemy. This voice is often referred to as negative self-talk and positive self-talk. It is this self-talk (or interior dialogue) that guides our feelings and behaviours. Discovering how to identify our thinking and change our thoughts is a crucial step in dealing with stress and difficult feelings. At times we have great difficulty silencing the negative voice. In this lesson, we will practise changing our inner voice from negative to positive self-talk to help deal with difficult feelings.

## Senior and Junior High School Lesson Plan: Negative Self-Talk

Self-talk—the messages we send to ourselves—is extremely influential to our mood, motivation and mental health. Unfortunately, self-talk can be so automatic that it seems like it is not even there. By learning to recognize negative self-talk—the unhelpful thinking styles that affect us in negative ways—we can challenge and change these messages and the resulting feelings we have.





## Activity 1: The Big 'R' – Recognizing negative self-talk

Take a look at these unhelpful thinking styles. Fill in the two columns labelled “Activity 1” with an example from your life and the related feelings you had when you had the thoughts.

It can be hard to spot negative self-talk. Try thinking of recent events that have caused you to feel sad, anxious or frustrated and then recall the thoughts you were having.

### 1 Jumping to conclusions:

when we assume what others are thinking or when we make predictions about the future.

Jumping to conclusions	Feelings	Activity 1: Personal example	Activity 1: Feelings I had	Activity 2: “CC”
My friend was late meeting with me. He must not like me enough to be on time. He will probably stop hanging out with me.	Hurt, lonely			

### 2 Personalisation:

when we blame ourselves for things we have little or no control over.

Personalisation	Feelings	Activity 1: Personal example	Activity 1: Feelings I had	Activity 2: “CC”
The bus came early and so I missed it! I should have known it would.	Stupid, angry at myself			



### 3 Catastrophizing:

when we think of a situation as the worst it could possibly be.

Catastrophizing	Feelings	Activity 1: Personal example	Activity 1: Feelings I had	Activity 2: "CC"
I got only a B on my test. I am going to fail this class.	Upset, discouraged			

### 4 Shoulding:

when we place unrealistic expectations on ourselves.

Shoulding	Feelings	Activity 1: Personal example	Activity 1: Feelings I had	Activity 2: "CC"
I should run every morning because I should lose a lot of weight.	Feel like a failure when I can't live up to this expectation			

### 5 Overgeneralisation:

when we take one example and place it on all present and past experiences.

Overgeneralisation	Feelings	Activity 1: Personal example	Activity 1: Feelings I had	Activity 2: "CC"
My teacher always yells at me.	Angry, frustrated			



## 6 Labelling:

when we label ourselves or others because of a specific circumstance and do not take other examples into consideration.

Labelling	Feelings	Activity 1: Personal example	Activity 1: Feelings I had	Activity 2: "CC"
I am so stupid, I can't do anything right.	Worthless, unmotivated			

## 7 Emotional Reasoning:

when we take the way we are feeling

Emotional Reasoning	Feelings	Activity 1: Personal example	Activity 1: Feelings I had	Activity 2: "CC"
I feel so nervous for this speech; I'm going to forget what to say and embarrass myself.	Terrified, defeated			

## 8 Magnification and Minimisation:

when you focus on the positives of others and make smaller the positives of yourself.

Magnification and Minimisation	Feelings	Activity 1: Personal example	Activity 1: Feelings I had	Activity 2: "CC"
They are so talented; I got a goal only because I was lucky.	Disappointed, frustrated			

## Activity 2: The “CC” – Challenging and changing negative self-talk

The hard part is over! Now that we have recognised negative self-talk, we need to challenge and change it.

### Ask yourself

- How realistic are these thoughts?
- Is there a different way to see the situation?
- How would someone outside the situation see it?
- Would I see it in the same way if I was in a better mood?
- Is it helpful to see the situation in this way?
- What positive self-talk can I use instead?

Here are a few examples:



Jumping to conclusions	Feelings	Activity 2: “CC”
My friend was late meeting with me. He must not like me enough to be on time.	Hurt, lonely	My friend is probably late because he is so busy. I am glad he is here now so we can hang out!
Jumping to conclusions	Feelings	Activity 2: “CC”
They are so talented; I got a goal only because I was lucky.	Disappointed, frustrated	I work hard to develop my skills. I did a good job getting that goal!

Fill in the column labelled “Activity 2” with your new positive self-talk.

## Conclusion

When you start having negative emotions, it is time to “RCC”: recognize, challenge and change negative self-talk. This is one way to improve your mood, motivation and mental health!