



Realistic Self Talk – *Corresponding video introduction:* <https://youtu.be/lxseUctuof8>

Introduction – Positive self talk is Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) coping skill that has been around for quite some time. Positive self talk is known to be effective for many types of mental health conditions. This activity is focused on using positive self talk to cope with anxiety. However, there is a slightly different spin on the concept. For some people, being positive does not come naturally. This can be due to a variety of issues possibly stemming from childhood or it can be a personality trait. Whatever the reason, it can be easier to start with “**Realistic Self Talk**” as an easier to identify with method for starting a dialogue with yourself to overcome challenges. This worksheet takes you through the process of learning to practice **realistic self talk** to cope with anxiety and other stressful life challenges. Learning to have an encouraging but realistic dialogue with ourselves can be a life changing way to cope when things seem overwhelming or difficult to face.

Part 1 – Define

Start by defining the problem and your feelings. It is important to be honest with ourselves during this process. **For the purpose of this exercise, everyone participating should try to identify one problem that causes anxiety and stress.**

Think about something that you tend to dislike or even avoid doing because it can be overwhelming, stressful, scary or anxiety provoking. Some examples:

“I am afraid of public speaking”

“I have difficulty starting and maintaining conversations with people I don’t know”

“I have a chance at a promotion at work, but I don’t have the guts to go for it”

“I have a difficult time saying “no” and I am in a situation where I really need to say “no” to someone

Try to come up with your own challenging or anxiety-provoking situation and share it with the group





Part 2 – Identify

This part requires some more self-awareness and introspection. Think about the problem or the difficult situation that you defined in the previous section. Then try to identify what negative things that you may be thinking to yourself that hold you back or discourage you. How are you speaking to yourself in your own head? Examples are provided below based on the same examples from the previous section:

“I am afraid of public speaking”

- Self thought example: *I think to myself that “If I speak in public, I will make a fool out of myself” or “I am not interesting enough to do public speaking”*

“I have difficulty starting and maintaining conversations with people I don’t know”

- Self thought example – *“If I start a conversation with strangers, they will reject me and not want to listen”*

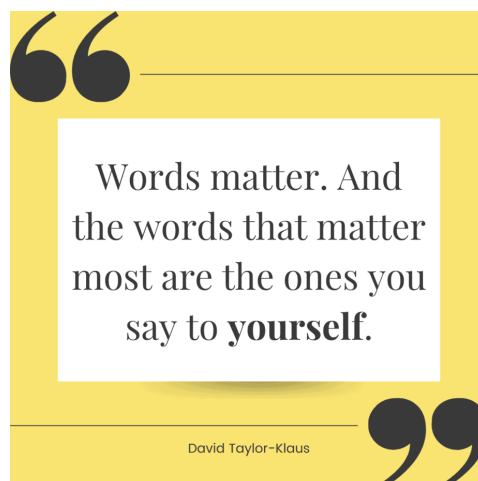
“I have a chance at a promotion at work, but I don’t have the guts to go for it

- Self thought example - *“If I go for the promotion, I won’t get it so what is the point” or “I won’t be able to handle the rejection if I try for the promotion”*

“I have a difficult time saying “no” and I am in a situation where I really need to say “no” to someone

- Self thought example - *“If I say no then this person won’t like me and they will reject me”*

Now based on your identified problem or difficult situation, what thoughts may be holding you back? Share these with the group or even write them down if you are able:





Part 3 – Develop Realistic Self Talk Statements

This is the final task in this process. The idea here is to come up with encouraging but realistic statements to counter the negative and discouraging statements you identified in the previous part. One rule is that it has to be believable. The key is to “convince” yourself that you can succeed with a realistic believable statement that contradicts your negative thoughts.

Below is an extensive list of “Realistic Self Talk” examples. Review the list as a group to get a good idea and circle some that stand out as being potentially helpful to you.

List of Realistic Self Talk Statements:

So maybe I am not the best right now, but I am good enough

I may need some practice but if I work on it, I'll get there

People get rejected all the time and life goes on, so why should I let stop me?

People with less skill and ability than me have done this, so clearly, I can do it

Almost everyone gets nervous when they do this, so I don't need to let anxiety hold me back

I'm going to make some mistakes but if I keep pressing forward, I will succeed

It is okay to be stressed for a while but if I keep coping it will get better with time

I can be uncomfortable for a while but eventually I will feel better and better

I always find a way to get it done if I keep on trying

I will stay focused, and I'll find a solution

I have been through worse and survived so I can do this too

I can still be happy even when life is challenging

After enough time passes will anyone even remember or care about what I am worrying about now?

I might bend but I won't break

Even if I feel weak, I can muster up enough strength to get through

I am not perfect and that is okay, I just need to make an effort and that is good enough for now

I don't need to fear failure as everyone fails sometimes and its just a learning experience

Even when other people are difficult, I can tolerate that if I need too

I have nothing to prove to anyone other than just proving to myself that I can at least try to do this

In the grand scheme of things, is this really worth getting so worked up over?

If its too much I can do this little by little and I will get there



Closing it Out:

Finally, for your situation, what realistic self talk statements are you going to use? The four examples are continued below to provide ideas:

“I am afraid of public speaking”

- *I think to myself that “If I speak in public, I will make a fool out of myself” or “I am not interesting enough to do public speaking”*
 - ***I may struggle a little if I try but everyone struggles a little bit so I can still do this***
 - ***If I prepare and speak from the heart, I will be fine, and some people will be interested***

“I have difficulty starting and maintaining conversations with people I don’t know”

- *Self thought example – “If I start a conversation with strangers, they will reject me and not want to listen”*
 - ***It might be nerve wracking at first to start a conversation, but I have nothing to lose by trying***
 - ***If the person doesn’t talk back, it really doesn’t matter. It will be uncomfortable, but it happens to everyone***

“I have a chance at a promotion at work, but I don’t have the guts to go for it

- *“If I go for the promotion, I won’t get it so what is the point” or “I won’t be able to handle the rejection if I try for the promotion”*
 - ***I have nothing to lose by trying. Even if I don’t get it I am still in the same situation, no worse***
 - ***Rejection will hurt but it wont break me as I can get past it***

“I have a difficult time saying “no” and I am in a situation where I really need to say “no” to someone

- *“If I say no then this person won’t like me and they will reject me”*
 - ***It can be uncomfortable to say no but I will feel so much better after its done***

What are your realistic self statements that you will use to get through your identified situation? –

Assignment: Practice Realistic Self Talk for the next week and report back to group how it worked

