
SESSION 3

Objectives:

- To recognize the nature of breakdowns when working toward a goal and develop strategies to reassess.
- To understand what self-talk is.
- To be able to recognize the impact of negative and positive self-talk.
- To begin to develop skill in replacing negative thoughts and limited thinking with more positive thoughts and opportunity-producing thinking.

Session Outline:

- **Updating**
- **Breakdowns**
- **Self-talk**
- **Controlling Words**
 - Exercise: Discovering Insights
- **Killer Statements**
- **Thought-switching**
 - Exercise: Positive Override
 - Exercise Preparation: Positive Statement Sharing
- **Break Or Split Session Option**
 - Relaxation for Split Session
 - Selfwork for Split Session
 - Reentry for Split Session
- **Positive Self-talk**
- **Exercise: Positive Statement Sharing — Part 1**
- **Word-switching**
- **Questioning Changes Thinking**
 - Exercise: Positive Statement Sharing — Part 2
- **Selfwork**
- **Handouts:**
 - Letter to Parents
 - Questioning Changes Thinking
- **Materials:**
 - Butcher paper, treasure box materials or paper, stapler and pens for making Positive Statement Notebooks
 - Small pieces of paper or cardboard for Positive Statements
 - Flip chart or chalk board

Updating

Does anyone have any experiences they want to share since the last session?

How many of you have noticed that you are achieving the goals you set?

Have any of you noticed that you are not?

Breakdowns

If you aren't reaching your goals, then something is breaking down.

You need to ask yourself some questions in order to consider what to do.

Flip Chart 10

BREAKDOWNS

- Do I really want to reach this goal, or do I just think I should?
- Do I need to "chunk down" again?
- Do I need to get support from other people (tell others, ask for help)?
- Am I sabotaging my own efforts, or ruining my own chances of reaching this goal? If so, how?

With older groups, participants may do an example in their notebooks from their own lives. This will give each of them an opportunity to use the process with you there to facilitate.

After you ask yourself these questions; rethink and restate your goal.

Then compliment yourself for recognizing that things weren't working and looking at what needed to happen next. Even this is a step toward reaching your goals!

Who would like to share a goal you had since last time that isn't working? We can look with you at why it isn't working and reset your goal with you.

What have you noticed about what you're saying to yourself about yourself when you're not meeting your goals?

Self-Talk

Remember we talked about how important it is to like yourself.

One of the best ways to help yourself like yourself more is to say positive things to yourself about yourself, such as:

- I am a nice person.
- I like myself even when other people don't treat me very nicely.

The inner voice we talked about earlier is the one that talks to us about ourselves as well as everything else.

Today, we are going to learn how to make that voice your friend and how to use it to feel better about yourself.

Think of some times when your inner voice talks to you.

For example, think about being over at a friends house and realizing it's getting dark. What things do you think your inner voice might be saying to you?

"I need to get home, it's getting dark."

"I'm having a good time, I don't want to leave."

"I'll get in trouble if I'm not home soon."

"I don't want to walk home alone."

Your inner voice is giving you all kinds of information to help you decide what choices you need to make.

Learning to talk to yourself in positive ways is one of the most powerful skills you can ever learn.

To show you how important what you say to yourself is, look at this chart:

Positive self-talk	Negative self-talk
<p>1. I am a person who can make good choices.</p> <p>2. I can control my feelings and actions.</p> <p>3. I am a person who can handle stress.</p> <p>4. I am a person who can make good choices.</p> <p>5. I am a person who can handle stress.</p> <p>6. I am a person who can make good choices.</p> <p>7. I am a person who can handle stress.</p> <p>8. I am a person who can make good choices.</p> <p>9. I am a person who can handle stress.</p> <p>10. I am a person who can make good choices.</p>	<p>1. I am a person who can make bad choices.</p> <p>2. I can't control my feelings and actions.</p> <p>3. I am a person who can't handle stress.</p> <p>4. I am a person who can't make good choices.</p> <p>5. I am a person who can't handle stress.</p> <p>6. I am a person who can't make good choices.</p> <p>7. I am a person who can't handle stress.</p> <p>8. I am a person who can't make good choices.</p> <p>9. I am a person who can't handle stress.</p> <p>10. I am a person who can't make good choices.</p>



Flip Chart 11

This chart should be posted for the balance of the sessions.

What you say to yourself about yourself

"becomes"

What you believe about yourself

"which shapes"

What you do

"which strengthens"

What you say to yourself about yourself

"which becomes"

What you . . .

Who can tell me what comes next?

For example, go through what happens if you say to yourself, "I can't spell." You begin to believe that you can't spell, and you do poorly on spelling tests. Your belief is reinforced and gets stronger. Pretty soon, you don't even try anymore because you've proven to yourself that it is hopeless.

When you have negative thoughts about one part of your life and things begin to happen that seem to prove that you were right in your negative thoughts, pretty soon you start to have negative thoughts about other parts of your life. This is a downward cycle which can be pretty depressing.

As you keep proving to yourself that the negative things are true, you feel worse and worse, and you have fewer and fewer things that you can and want to do in your life.

Does anyone have an example they'd like to share of a way you've done something like this to yourself?

Go through the thought process with one or more participants.

Controlling Words

One of the ways to recognize these thoughts is by how they begin. "I can't, I should or shouldn't, I won't, I'm afraid, I'm not, I couldn't." Each of these sets up a mental situation that we can get stuck in.

Flip Chart 12

Controlling words:

am	are	must	should
have to	can't	could	would
never	always		

Who can think of some others?

Any sentence that includes these words shapes your thinking and can even convince you that it can't be any other way, that you are stuck with things the way they are.

Who can give some examples?

I am always late.

I can't read.

I should go to bed.

I have to go to school.

Whenever you notice that you are using controlling words in your thinking or speaking, it's a good time to look and see if you're controlling your life in a positive or negative way.

It is an opportunity to notice a learned pattern of thinking which frequently causes upset, disappointment, or anger with yourself or others.

By changing the way you think and act and talk about things, you can have more control, sometimes over what happens, always over how you think and feel about what happens.

Exercise: Discovering Insights

Take out the "Discovering Insights" activity sheet from the last session. Have them circle all of the controlling words in the statements.

Have them consider the statements they circled.

Discuss what their answers tell them about how they shape their thinking, actions and self-esteem.

Killer Statements

Killer Statements are statements that kill off a part of you or a part of someone else.

Some examples of killer statements are:

I hate myself when I . . .

She is the stupidest person in the class.

I'll never get this right.

He can't do anything right.

What are some killer statements that you make to yourself or others?

I'd like each of you to now think about one negative thing you say to yourself — about yourself — and write it in your book.

Ask volunteers to share what they wrote.

What is the impact of that negative thought?

Discuss.

Now ask yourself whether or not you'd like to have it be another way.

If you would, what are some things you can do to change the situation?

If you don't want anything to change, then it probably won't.

Thought-Switching

Whenever we get upset with ourselves, we say things to ourselves like, "I'm such a jerk, no wonder no one likes me." When we say things like this to ourselves, we don't feel good about ourselves; we lose confidence in ourselves.

But you can change that pattern of thinking every time you notice it happening.

For example, how many of you have ever said to yourself, "I'm so stupid."

What would happen if you stopped that thought and replaced it with, "I'm not stupid, but that was a big mistake. What do I need to do to fix it?"

The process of moving from negative to positive thoughts is called thought-switching.

Who has an example of something you've been kicking yourself about, something you did that was stupid or embarrassing?

Work through what the person is currently saying. For example, "I feel really embarrassed and stupid, I can't ever face that person again."

Replace it with something like, "If I admit how embarrassed I feel about what I said and apologize, it will be behind me, and I won't have to avoid that person any more."

When you notice yourself having negative thoughts or giving yourself a hard time, you can simply stop and switch thoughts or override your thoughts with other, more positive thoughts.

For example, "I don't like what happened to me, but I'm not going to let it ruin my life. I'll find ways to make sure it doesn't happen again." or

"Things aren't going the way I want them to, but I can make it a little better by doing this, the rest I'll have to live with." or

"I know this person is trying to get to me, but I won't let them. I'm in charge of how I feel."

When you notice that thought-switching has worked for you be sure to pat yourself on the back. "I did it, I feel better," or "That really worked."

Acknowledging yourself is important because it keeps you feeling better and better about yourself and your ability to affect what happens in your life.

You won't always get what you want but you can control what you say to yourself and how you feel about what happens.

Exercise: Positive Override

I'd like each of you now to take the negative thought that you wrote in your book earlier and write a "thought-switch" for it.

For example, "I can't stop . . ." to "I can control my behavior when I choose to," or

"I'm going to flunk out of school" to "I am capable of doing well in school if I choose to." or

"No one likes me." to "I am a very special person and deserve to have lots of friends."

Have individual members who are willing share their negative and positive thoughts. Coach them so they can make the positive thought realistic and so they will recognize their own ability to make it real for themselves.

Part of the Selfwork this week is to practice saying the positive thought-switch to yourself at least once or twice a day and every time you realize you are saying the negative thought to yourself.

You may want to use signals to remind yourself. For example, you might tie a string on your finger or hang a string from the door to remind you or put notes around your house.

If you like, you could share your thought-switch with your family so they can support you.

It is not uncommon for them to say things like, "This is too hard," or "I can't do this," without being aware of the impact of those very thoughts on their ability to do the exercise. These participants can use that negative thought "I can't do this," for the exercise. That thought can be overridden or switched with: "I can do this exercise. My negative thought was 'I can't do this,' but I can and I am doing it now."

Exercise: Positive Statement Sharing

There are several options here depending on the age of the group. Develop a format for receiving positive statements. This might be:

- **Journals:** Those already being used by group members.
- **Body tracing:** For younger groups have them actually make a body tracing with butcher paper. Hang them on the wall around the room.
- **Positive Statement Notebook:** Put together notebooks which can be decorated by the participants. Have other participants and family members write positive statements in the notebook about the participant.
- **Treasure Box:** Participants may find and decorate a special box in which to collect positive statements about themselves.

Have each person write on (or in) their positive statement place the positive override they will be using until the next session.

Participants may take their piece home and decorate it, or create a special book or develop another place totally for gathering positive statements about themselves. They should be available for use in each session.

Break Or Split Session Option

Relaxation for Split Session

Now let's take just a couple of minutes to relax and imagine ourselves filled with warmth. Take a few breaths in and out.

You provide the count. (Inhale: 1,2,3,4. Exhale: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8.)

Now, imagine that you are lying on a warm beach, feel the breeze blowing gently and warmly.

See the clouds overhead, moving slowly in the breeze.

Now imagine one of those clouds gently coming down and settling all around you.

Feel how warm it is as your whole body feels light and relaxed.

Enjoy the softness of the cloud.

Now feel the cloud gently snuggle in and around your body, becoming a part of you, keeping you warm and relaxed and happy the rest of the afternoon and into the night.

Once you're fully enveloped in the cloud, the rest of it drifts away, and you feel warm and relaxed and happy laying on the beach in the sun.

Now wiggle your toes and fingers in the sand, and let your consciousness come back to this room.

Wiggle the rest of your body a little, still feeling warm and relaxed and, when you are ready, open your eyes.

How many of you feel good now?

You can get that feeling back anytime you want to this week by just thinking back to your cloud and allowing the cloud and the sun in your mind to keep you warm and relaxed and happy.

Selfwork for Split Session

Select Selfwork from numbers 1 and 2 found at the end of Session 3.

Split Session Reentry

How did it go with your thought-switching exercise?

Did you notice since last time any changes in how you think or feel about yourself?

What did you notice about the controlling words in your life?

We're going to talk about a few ways you can teach yourself to think more positively.

Positive Self-Talk

Liking yourself is the beginning point for feeling better about your life.

One way to teach yourself to think more positively is to say positive things to yourself such as,

Flip Chart 13

- I like myself.
- I am a nice person.
- I like the things about myself that are different from other people.
- I like myself even when other people don't act like they like me.
- I deserve lots of friends.

Exercise: Positive Statement Sharing — Part 1

Have the group say the list in unison. Then discuss how it felt to say the sentences.

Was there another voice inside them that was contradicting the words even as they were spoken?

Whatever format members have selected for collecting positive statements, have each member write down (or say and you can write down) one positive thing about every other member. These may

be written directly on a body tracing or in a book or journal, or put on pieces of paper for a Treasure Box.

When this is complete, give each participant a minute to read what has been written about them. Then ask them to put them away until later.

Word-Switching

Another way to change the way you speak to yourself is "word-switching." Sometimes our words keep us trapped.

Look at these controlling words and think about how word-switching can give you more options.

Flip Chart 14

WORD-SWITCHING

- I must — I prefer to
- I should — I choose to
- I need — I want
- I'm afraid to — I'd like to

Who can think of an example of a situation that would really change if you changed the way you speak and think about it?

For example, "I had to come today," versus "I had some other things I wanted to do this afternoon, and I chose to come today."

Does it feel any different?

Do you feel like you are more in control and more free to choose when you change your words?

Use an example from the group or suggest the following example. How many of you get into hassles with your parents over making your bed? Can you think of any reasons why you might want to make your bed?

You might choose to make your bed because you like your room neat, because you like the feeling of getting into a bed with nice smooth sheets, or because you like not having a hassle with your parent. Choosing to make your bed for any reason feels different from feeling that you have to make your bed because you are being forced to.

The main point here is: if you think differently about something, you will feel differently about it and you may even act differently.

Questioning Changes Thinking

Another good way to change your pattern of thinking is to ask yourself questions when you're stuck with negative thoughts running through your head.

For example, if you're thinking, "I'll never be able to learn this stuff," or "I'm bored with all this stuff," ask yourself the following questions and see if the

answers provide some new ways to deal with your thoughts and problems.

Flip Chart 15

Questions to Change Thought Patterns

- 1. What am I willing to do to make this situation the way I want it?
- 2. What am I willing to stop doing to make this situation the way I want it?
- 3. What could be great about this?
- 4. How can I do what I need to do and enjoy it?

Your mind is a lot like a computer. If you ask it questions, it will begin looking for answers.

Whenever you hear yourself making statements to yourself over and over that are keeping you stuck, try asking yourself some questions.

Who can volunteer a negative thought that you've been stuck with? We'll ask a few questions and see what other possibilities you come up with.

Do this with as many people as time permits.

Exercise: Positive Statement Sharing — Part 2

Now, let's bring out the things that people wrote about you earlier. Who would like to be first to stand and read the things that people said about you?

Have each person do this in turn. Acknowledge the feelings that come up such as embarrassment. Acknowledge the thoughts, such as "It's not true." Acknowledge the body language.

Encourage each person to stand straight and tall, to speak clearly, and to make eye contact with the people in the room. If they really need assistance, you may stand with them. Be certain all other members are listening and paying attention. They may even be supportive through applause.

When everyone has had a turn, let group members share how it felt both to read theirs and to listen to the others.

Keep these thoughts with you in your book or box or chart.

More importantly, you can keep them with you in a treasure box in your mind. Whenever you're feeling a little down or discouraged, you can bring these out of your mind and share them with yourself.

Session 3 — Selfwork Activities

1. Getting yourself started on a positive foot each morning is one way to build the habit of thinking more positively. As you brush your teeth each morning for example, you can list the following:
 - something you like about yourself;
 - something you accomplished yesterday;
 - something you want to accomplish today;
 - a communication you want to complete today; and
 - someone you want to acknowledge.

When you go to sleep at night, you can do the same thing, acknowledging yourself for all the things you did, said, and thought that were positive. Don't forget to notice if you feel differently about your life as you practice this day after day.

2. Alternately, use the list you have just read. Read it to yourself each morning and night. Pay attention to how you feel each time you read it and to what your inner voice says to you as you read.
3. Using the 17 Questions or Getting to Know Me, see how many controlling words there are and replace them with other words or phrases. Possible substitutes:
 - I prefer . . . I find it comfortable . . .

- I'd like it better . . . It's definitely nice . . .
- It's convenient when . . . It's awkward . . .
- It usually turns out better . . . It works better for me when . . .

Do the things you've said sound or feel different to you? How?

4. Go back to 17 Questions or Getting to Know Me. Would you change any of your answers now? If so, how?
5. Keep the Questioning Changes Thinking list with you this week. When you notice yourself getting into a thinking rut, interrupt it and ask yourself some questions. See how your thinking and problem-solving ability changes.

Dear Parents,

Having healthy self-esteem is something we all want for our children and ourselves. This session we talked about how we shape our self esteem by how we talk to ourselves.

Your children can learn to be more effective by learning to be more positive. There are lots of ways to do this:

- positive self-talk;
- word-switching;
- thought-stopping;
- positive override; and
- thought-switching.

Teaching people to think more positively includes teaching them to use their inner voice to say more positive things such as, "I like myself," "I'm smart," and "I deserve to have good things happen to me."

When you hear your children saying negative things about themselves, help them to replace the negative thought with a positive one. It is not enough to say, "Don't say things like that." You have to replace the thought by suggesting a positive override. For example, if your child says, "I can't do this; I'm no good at math," you can respond with, "If you keep saying that to yourself, you'll probably start to believe it. How about telling yourself, I can get really good at math if I spend a little time working on it."

One of the Selfwork assignments this week is to work on replacing a particular negative thought with a positive one. Your child has written down the thought s/he wants to work on this week. You might want to participate by looking at something negative you say to yourself and replacing it with a more positive statement. Share with each other the impact of just this simple change in how you think.

Sincerely,

Breakdowns

- Do I really want to reach this goal, or do I just think I should?
- Do I need to “chunk down” again?
- Do I need to get support from other people (tell others, ask for help)?
- Am I sabotaging my own efforts, or ruining my own chances of reaching this goal? If so, how?

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“becomes”**

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**What you say to yourself about yourself
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What you . . .

Controlling words:

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Positive Selftalk

- I like myself.
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