

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Self-talk is the stream of unspoken thoughts that run through our heads. These thoughts can be positive or negative. Some self-talk comes from logic and from a clear understanding of what is going on. But other times, **self-talk may be based on a lack of information or a biased or unbalanced perspective.**

When we experience uncomfortable or strong emotions, our self-talk is sometimes negative. “I cannot believe that just happened! How could I be so stupid? What is wrong with me?” Instead of letting negative thoughts run unchecked, we can **take control of the conversation** by looking critically at what we are saying to ourselves. Just like there are things we say or think to ourselves about a situation that can make us feel worse, there are things we can say or think that can help us calm down. **We call these things positive self-talk.**

As an educator, it is important to both model positive self-talk, as well as teach youth how to check their negative thoughts and think more positively. Below are some important points when talking to youth about this skill.

1.

Try to consider both sides of a situation.

Positive self-talk does not mean that you ignore what is going on around you or ignore how you are feeling. It just means that you approach stressful situations in a more positive and balanced way. Help your students counter a negative thought (e.g., “I do everything wrong”) with a more positive and balanced one (e.g., “It is clear you can do this -- you received a B+ on an exam earlier this year.”). **Try to find a positive spin somewhere.**

2.

Stay in the moment.

Stay focused on the present situation, not what has happened in the past or what may happen in the future. **We can't see into the future.**

3.

Don't wait to laugh about it later.

One day you may look back and find it funny - you might as well make that day **today.**

4.

Know your triggers.

If you are about to enter what you know will be an uncomfortable situation (e.g., telling a parent about a poor test grade), **plan ahead:** What can you tell yourself beforehand? What can you do or tell yourself during the situation? What about afterward?