

Self-talk

Objectives

This module will help you explore and understand:

- Self-talk
- Complementary and critical self-talk
- How to change unpleasant self-talk into pleasant self-talk'

Self-talk

What you say to yourself in your mind is called self-talk. It can have a really great impact on your self-esteem and confidence.

How you talk to yourself in your mind affects:

- your attitude
- your feelings
- your self-image
- your behaviour
- your view of the world

We can talk to ourselves in critical and complementary ways.

Starting Point

Take a minute and think about what you've said to yourself today.

Was it critical? Or was it kind and helpful?

How did you feel after you engaged in this inner discussion?

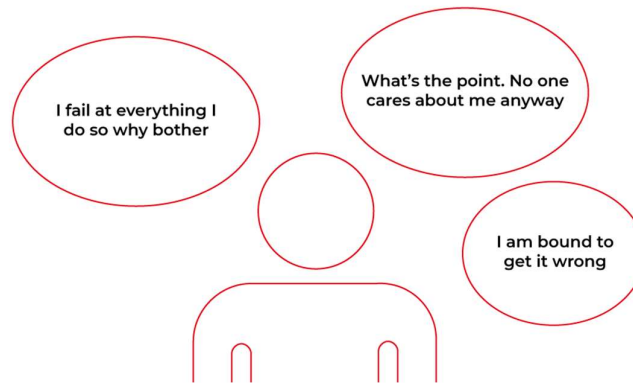
Your thoughts are the source of your emotions and mood. The conversations you have with yourself can be destructive or beneficial. They influence how you feel about yourself and how you respond to events in your life.

Negative self-talk

We all have an inner critic. At times this little voice can actually be helpful and keep us motivated toward goals—like when it reminds us that what we're about to eat isn't healthy or what we're about to do may not be wise. However, this voice can often be more harmful than helpful.

This statement shows negative thoughts can grow and become self-defeating: "I didn't say the right thing at work today. I never say the right thing. Everyone hates me. No wonder I can't make friends. I'll never have friends."

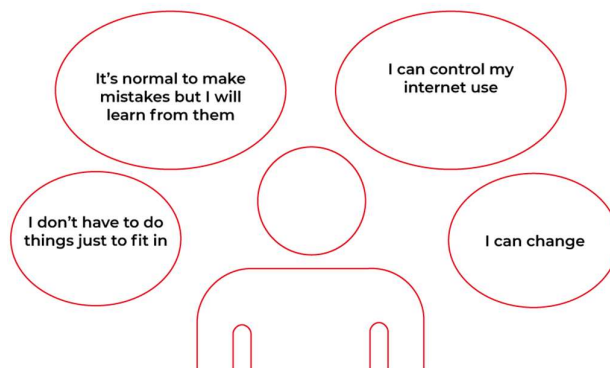
Focusing on unhelpful thoughts may lead to decreased motivation as well as greater feelings of helplessness and sometimes depression. For some people it also contributes to their sexual offending as they use it to justify harmful behaviours, so it's definitely something to fix.



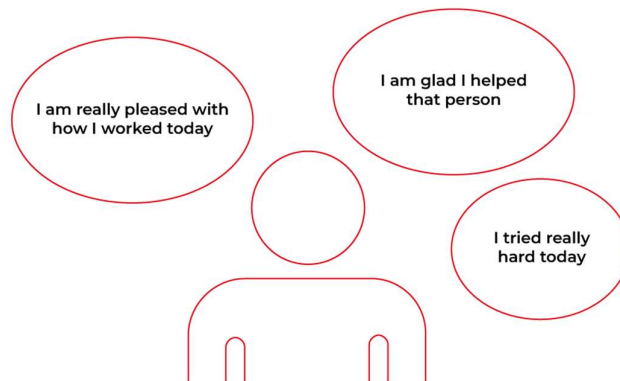
Complementary self-talk

There are two kinds of complementary self-talk- the kind that encourages healthy behaviour and the kind that enhances your self-esteem.

Examples of self-talk that encourage healthy behaviour:



Examples of self-talk that enhances your self-esteem:



Pleasant self-talk =

- pleasant attitude
- pleasant feelings
- pleasant self-image
- pleasant behaviour
- a pleasant view of the world

Pleasant self-talk will help you to make positive changes in your life.

Changing negative to positive self-talk

You need to be aware of the nature of your self-talk and be determined to shift any negative thinking to positive. This is not always easy as even though you will have a number of positive qualities you may struggle to recognise them and find it hard to give yourself credit for them.

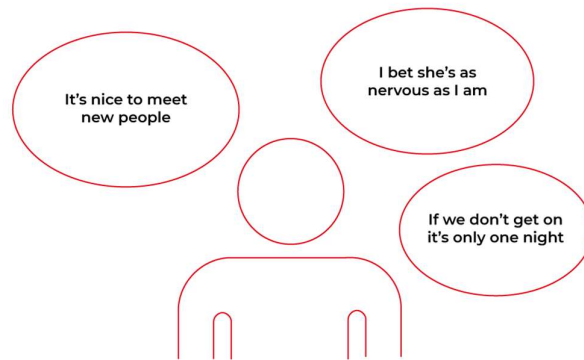
You should now be aware that negative thinking can lead to low mood, loss of motivation and that it contributes to negative unhealthy behaviour – including in some cases offending.

Here are some methods which can help you to tackle your critical thinking:

1. **Challenge your thinking.** For each unpleasant statement ask yourself these questions:
 - What evidence do I have for this belief?
 - What other explanations are there?
 - How likely is this to be the case?
 - If it concerned someone else what would I think?
2. **Do something that will distract you from negative thoughts and unpleasant feelings.** This might be an activity or contacting a friend.
3. **Positive reframing.** Try to find a positive aspect to the situation to focus on, rather than the negative. This is something we often do after a bereavement for example, remembering the positive life someone had rather than the loss.
4. **Use pleasant language.** If you constantly say “I can’t” you will convince yourself that it’s true. Replace critical words with complementary ones.
5. **Reflect on what has contributed to the negative thoughts and unpleasant feelings.** Positive thinking is not about denying that anything is or can go wrong. If something goes wrong then take the time to consider what went wrong in order to avoid future mistakes and look forward more positively.
6. **Don’t be too hard on yourself.** It takes time, practice and determination to change negative thinking and adopt a more optimistic approach.
7. **Catch it, Check it, change it** – the more you start spotting and changing your negative self talk to complimentary the better you will get!

Planning to be positive

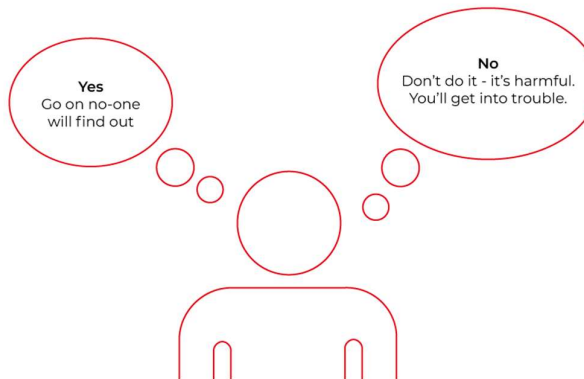
If you know you have to deal with a potentially difficult situation identify and rehearse some complimentary self-talk statements that you can employ before during and after the situation. For example going on a first date:



This planning can be used in any situation. Think of something you are doing this week that you are worried or nervous about and think of three positive self-talk statements you can say to yourself to help prepare yourself positively.

How does this apply to looking at sexual images of children?

This model is used to explain the internal monologue or self-talk someone uses to give themselves permission to engage in illegal online sexual behaviour. By increasing your awareness of this process and the negative effects of offending for yourself and others, you increase your ability and motivation to avoid offending.



Please consider the following questions:

- How has your self-talk allowed you to offend?
- What will your future self-talk be?

*Please return to the website and complete the **Reflection** questions at the end of this module.*