



Self-Regulation Strategies

Strategy 1. Take control of your self-talk.

The average person has about 50,000 thoughts every day. There is a strong relationship between what you think and how you feel both physically and emotionally. The thoughts that are most influential are those where you literally talk to yourself. We all have an internal voice inside our head that affects our perception of things. We call this inner voice self-talk. Much of the time, your self-talk is positive, and it helps you through your day. But if your self-talk becomes negative it damages your ability to self-manage. Words create worlds. Your inner voice helps create your outer world.

Here are some tips for managing your self-talk

- Often times our cognitive distortions effect the way we interact with others. Cognitive distortions are simply ways that our mind convinces us of something that isn't really true. These inaccurate thoughts are usually used to reinforce negative thinking or emotions — telling ourselves things that sound rational and accurate, but really only serve to keep us feeling bad about ourselves.
- For instance, a person might tell themselves, “I always fail when I try to do something new; I therefore fail at everything I try.” This is an example of “black or white” (or *polarized*) thinking. The person is only seeing things in absolutes — that if they fail at one thing, they must fail at **all** things. If they added, “I must be a complete loser and failure” to their thinking, that would also be an example of *overgeneralization* — taking a failure at one specific task and generalizing it their very self and identity.
- Change your talk from *I always* or *I never* into *just this time* or *sometimes*. Your actions are unique to the situation in front of you, no matter how often you think you mess up. When you start treating each situation as a separate event and stop generalizing every mistake, you stop making your problems bigger than they really are.
- Replace judgmental statements like *I'm an idiot* with factual ones like *I made a mistake*. Judgments that attach a permanent label to you leave no room for improvement. Be objective, and focus on what you can change.



- Accept responsibility for your actions and no one else's. Stop thinking *it's all my fault* or *it's all their fault*.

Strategy 2. Focus your attention on your freedoms rather than your limitations.

Often you can't change a situation or even the parties involved, but that doesn't mean it's time for you to give up. Take a look at how you are reacting to the situation itself. Focusing on restrictions is not only demoralizing – it helps negative feelings surface that confirm your sense of helplessness. Focus on remaining flexible and open-minded in spite of the situation.

Strategy 3. Learn a valuable lesson from everyone you encounter.

You can do this with pretty much any situation that happens in your life even when you're being criticized or someone disagrees with you strongly or questions your motives. There's something that you can gain from practically every encounter. Maybe it's patience with irritating people. The next time you find yourself caught off-guard and on the defensive, embrace the opportunity to learn something.

Strategy 4. Stop and think. You may not be able to stop from feeling an emotion, but you can manage your response to it. Pause before you speak or write back to someone in a moment of anger or frustration. In the face of criticism, warranted or not, ask yourself how you might learn from the situation.

Strategy 5. Train your attention. Life is full of many distractions, but learning to focus on a goal or a purpose leads to calmness and clarity of mind. You can't stop negative experiences or life stressors from occurring, but you can choose how you react to them. Daily journaling is one excellent way to process your frustrations and put things into perspective.

Strategy 6. Talk less and listen more. The more you understand the perspective of others, the more empathetic you're likelier to be. You don't have to agree with the perspective of others, but your effort to see how they see things will result in deeper and better relationships.

