
Session 7

Objectives:

- To understand what self-esteem 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.

Outline:

- Self Esteem: How you shape it
- Self-talk

Split Session Option

- Killer Statements
- Thought-Switching
- Word-switching

Updating

We've talked about communication and assertiveness.

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

When you completed the Sentence Completions and/or the Discovering Insights Exercise(s), did you discover anything you'd like to share. Did you notice that what you think might effect the way you behave?

Everything we do and say and think is shaped by what we believe about ourselves.

This session we're going to talk about how you communicate with yourself.

Some people think mostly positive things about themselves. They feel that they are pretty neat people, that they can do things well, that other people like to be around them, that they deserve to be loved and have good things happen to them in life.

Other people think mostly negative things about themselves. They wish they were someone else, they feel they can't do anything right, they don't like the way they look or act or feel. They don't feel loved and think that nothing good will happen to them and they wouldn't deserve for anything good to happen anyway. They feel lonely, isolated, afraid and often don't have many friends.

Do either of these sound like the way you think about yourself?

Most of us go back and forth between these two ways of thinking.

Stop for just a minute and think about how you see yourself, how you feel about yourself today.

Write down a few words that describe how you feel about yourself today.

Self-Esteem

Can anyone tell me what *self-esteem* is?

Let them share ideas.

Flip chart 24

Self-esteem is:

1. a healthy love and appreciation of who you are;
 2. a feeling of being competent and worthy;
 3. confidence in your ability to deal with life;
 4. the experience of meeting life's challenges appropriately; and
 5. a healthy sense of your relationship to others.
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Another definition of self-esteem is:

- respect for self,
- esteem for others.

Self-esteem is not one single thing that is easy to define. It includes all the things you think and feel about yourself; the opinion you have of yourself.

All the things you know and feel about yourself add up to liking, loving and appreciating who you are or not.

That doesn't mean you are perfect and have nothing left to learn, but self-esteem does mean you accept who you are and are happy with your ability to keep growing and becoming a person that you like.

When you like and love yourself, you take better care of yourself.

Who can think of some things kids do to hurt themselves or put themselves at risk when they feel badly about themselves?

Do you think if you start being nicer to yourself, you would start to believe how special and deserving you are?

Self-Talk

During our first session we talked about the voice inside of us, the one that talks to us about what we're thinking and feeling.

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

Think of some times when the 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."

The voice is giving you all kinds of information to help you decide what choices you need to make, so it's important to listen.

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:

Flip chart 25

What you say to yourself
"becomes . . ."

What you believe about yourself
"becomes . . ."

What you do which strengthens
"becomes . . ."

What you say to yourself which
"becomes . . ."

What you . . .

Who can tell me what comes next?

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

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 thought, pretty soon you start to have negative thoughts about other parts of your life.

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.

This is a downward cycle which can be pretty depressing.

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

Controlling Words

One of the ways to recognize negative 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 sort of rule or position that we can get stuck in.

Flip Chart 26**Controlling words:**

am	have to
are	can't
must	could
should	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:

Take out the "17 Questions" or "Getting to Know Me" activity sheet from the first group. Have them circle all of the controlling words in the statements.

Have them consider the statements they checked. Discuss what their answers tell them about how they shape their thinking and actions and self-esteem.

Split Session Option

Go to Killer Statements on page 16 if you are not splitting the session.

Selfwork #'s 1 and 2.

Re-entry for Split Session

What did you notice since last time about your own level of self-esteem?

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

Let's look at some negative ways we talk to ourselves.

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 say 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 (or tell the group for non-readers).

What is the impact of that negative thought?

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

If you would, there are some things you can do to change the situation.

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

PLEASE NOTE SIDEBAR!

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

The exercise at the end of this session is the most important part of the day. If you are not using the split session format and you are running out of time, go directly to the Positive-override Exercise on page 124.

Flip chart 27

Options for being more positive:

- ✓ positive/negative self-talk,
 - ✓ thought-stopping,
 - ✓ thought-switching,
 - ✓ word-switching,
 - ✓ positive override, and/or
 - ✓ stop imagining the worst or really imagine the worst.
-

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 28**Practice Statements**

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

Exercise:

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

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

Give them copies of the list and suggest they try practicing them at home looking at themselves in the mirror. Not everyone feels comfortable with this activity, but if they are willing to give it a try it can be a very useful exercise to hear — loud and clear — what your inner voice has to say about it.

Thought-Stopping and Thought-Switching

The exercise at the end of this session is the most important part of the day. If you are not using the split session format and you are running out of time, go directly to the thought-switching exercise.

It is important to stop negative thoughts, but you have to replace them with positive thoughts.

If you don't, the empty space from the old negative thought will get filled up again with another negative thought.

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

Whenever you get upset with yourself, you are actually communicating with yourself about something that has happened.

We all talk to ourselves saying things like, "That's awful, I'll never be able to talk to that person again." We build things up in our minds so they get bigger and bigger and worse and worse. It seems real and is real to us.

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, "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 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 effect 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.

Word-Switching

Sometimes, switching a single word can help you to be more positive.

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

Flip chart 29

WORD-SWITCHING

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

Each of you think of something you say to yourself from one of these and then switch just the first few words.

Does it feel any different?

Do you feel like you are more in control and more free to choose now?

Use an example from the group or suggest the following example. Let's look at a really simple thing like making your bed. Most of you probably say, "I have to make my bed." Then you begin to believe that you really do HAVE to make your bed — that you have no choice in the matter.

I doubt if any of your parents are actually physically standing there forcing you to make your bed. What is closer to the truth is that in your mind, you chose to make your bed because that was better than facing the consequences or the hassle of not making your bed.

If you think about it differently, you will feel differently about making your bed. Can any of you think of any reasons why you might *want* to make your bed?

If they don't come up with any ideas, give them examples like: it keeps the crumbs out of your bed.

You could choose to make the bed because your mom and dad are nicer to you when you do what they ask you to do.

You could choose to make the bed because it makes you feel good to not have to be reminded to do it.

How you think about it controls how you feel about it. It also controls what you do which has a direct effect on your relationship with your parents.

This is pretty different from believing that you "have to make your bed."

When you acknowledge what you *choose* to do in life, the result is that you feel better about the whole thing.

Thought-Changing Questions

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 30

Thought-changing Questions

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.

Positive Override Exercise

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 on really making the positive thought realistic and dependent upon them for effectiveness.

Part of the Self-work 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.

Relaxation (optional after exercise)

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 . . . (4 inhale 8 exhale).

Now imagine that you are lying on a warm beach.

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 over ridden 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."

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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.

Session 7 — Self-work 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.

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. Make a list of everything you "have to do" in your lives. After you've made your list, change it to "I choose to . . ." Notice if saying it differently makes you feel differently about doing it. Does it change your attitude? Does it change your actions and attitude? Does it generate any positive side-effects with other people in your life?

Notice just how many alternatives you actually do have and the power you exercise in your life to make things work smoothly rather than constantly fighting what you're asked to do.

3. Using the "17 Questions" or "Getting To Know Me" activity sheet, see how many of the

misconceptions you can change by replacing the controlling words 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 . . .

Start your day on a positive note:

- ✓ Something you like about yourself.
- ✓ Something you accomplished yesterday.
- ✓ Something you want to accomplish today.
- ✓ A communication you want to complete today.
- ✓ Someone you want to acknowledge.

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
- * 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 over-ride. 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 self-work 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,

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2. a feeling of being competent and worthy;
3. confidence in your ability to deal with life;
4. the experience of meeting life's challenges appropriately; and
5. a healthy sense of your relationship to others.

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What you say to yourself which

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What you . . .

Controlling words:

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

Options for being more positive:

- ✓ positive/negative self-talk
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Practice Statements

- ✓ I like myself.
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WORD-SWITCHING

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Thought-changing questions:

1. What am I willing to do to make this situation the way I want it?
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