

## When Self-Talk

a. Drives/pushes you to :

Be perfect  
Speed up  
Work harder  
Please people  
Be strong  
Etc.

Say: "I'll give myself permission to rest, relax, slow down, enjoy, feel, be mediocre, have needs, etc."

b. Catastrophizes - It would be awful:

If I made a mistake  
If someone didn't want to see me again  
If someone got upset with me  
If my emotions got out of control  
If I were disapproved of  
If they knew more than I did  
If my opinion was ignored  
If I couldn't think of anything to say  
If I were wrong  
If I were rejected

Say: "It might not be pleasant, but I would survive. I could learn/grow through this experience."

c. Uses negative self-labeling :

Cold	Weak
Dull	Ugly
Inadequate	Incapable
Irresponsible	Silly
Unimportant	Unfeminine/masculine
Bossy	Too idealistic
Demanding	Self-centered
Thoughtless	Too emotional
Stupid	Lazy
Pushy	Illogical
A failure	

Say: "I will work on what I need to change, but meanwhile I will stop wounding myself and treat myself with respect instead."

a. Sets rigid requirements - I'll do it:

If no one is looking  
If I know I can't fail  
If they speak first  
If I am sure of the facts  
If no one else wants to do it  
If it won't hurt their feelings  
If I am feeling good about it  
If everything else is done  
If they won't be upset with me  
If I'm sure I'm right  
If I can think of something to say

Say: "I'll do it even if . . ."

b. Uses distortions :

a) Conclusion without full evidence

"Ann hasn't called me since we last had lunch together. She really doesn't want to spend time with me." Or "I feel anxious and fearful frequently and I don't understand why. I'm going crazy."

b) Partial picture

"I wasn't asked to be in the jazz chair. They don't think my appearance is sharp enough." Actually, 12 people were interested in that one opening. Ann wasn't asked because the person chosen had a better blend of voice with the group.

c) Over generalization

Word like: never, always, everything, nothing, every time.  
"Nothing I do ever turns out right."

d) Either/or thinking

I'm not perfect therefore I am a failure.  
I didn't vacuum yesterday, I'm a rotten housekeeper.

e) Magnification

I've gained 5 pounds. I have absolutely no self control or will-power.  
He was upset with me last night - I know he is going to leave me.

Say: "That's not true because . . ."

(Challenge each with factual evidence)

## Cognitive Distortions

<i>Distortion</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Example</i>
<b>All-or-none thinking</b>	Tendency to see things in absolute, black-and-white categories	Either I am perfectly competent in everything I do or else I'm a failure.
<b>Overgeneralization</b>	Assuming bad events will happen over and over or that things are always a certain way.	The dogs will always choose my lawn for relief.
<b>Mental filter</b>	Focusing on the negative parts of life and filtering out the positive.	My job's awful because I don't get paid enough (overlooking good work conditions, hours, etc)
<b>Disqualifying the positive</b>	Discounting success or compliments.	I got the promotion because I'm lucky.
<b>Jumping to conclusions</b>	<b>Mind reading</b>	Everybody is noticing that my socks don't match my shirt.
	<b>Fortune telling</b>	I'm going to fail this exam.
<b>Magnification and minimization</b>	Magnifying errors and minimizing successes.	I'm terrible with the kids since I just yelled at them.
<b>Emotional reasoning</b>	Basing thoughts on feelings.	I feel like a loser, therefore I am a loser.
<b>Should statements</b>	Setting arbitrary requirements without considering consequences.	I should be friendly with everyone I meet.
<b>Labeling and mislabeling</b>	Categorizing people based on limited exposure.	The person in that yellow car is really selfish!
<b>Personalization</b>	Accepting the blame for some negative event involving others.	My family would be well-adjusted if it weren't for me.

Cognitive distortions identified by David Burns in  
*Feeling Good* (New American Library: New York, 1980).

## **Possible Tapes You May Be Playing:**

1. I should help everyone who needs it
2. I am inferior
3. God doesn't love me
4. I am too bad to be loved
5. It is terrible when things go wrong
6. Self-discipline is hard to achieve
7. Strong people don't ask for help
8. Anxiety is dangerous
9. My childhood will always affect me
10. I need to be sure in order to decide issues
11. I must look after no. 1
12. There is a perfect solution
13. Making a mistake is terrible
14. It is better not to tell people my problems
15. People will let me down
16. Knowing 'why' is essential to my peace of mind
17. I should never upset anyone
18. If I am criticized I must be a bad person
19. Other people are a threat to me
20. I deserve to be punished for my mistakes
21. I am wrong if a person is hurt by my words and actions
22. I will get nothing out of giving pleasure to others
23. Crying out loud is a sign of weakness and immaturity
24. If people cared for me they would know what I want
25. Emotions will only interfere with my ability to succeed
26. People are not to be trusted
27. There are ways in which I am defective as a person
28. It is better to keep my thoughts to myself
29. People should trust me
30. People must love me if I am to feel good
31. People should be condemned when they do wrong
32. I must do everything 'perfectly' or I will not feel good
33. People ought to follow the advice I give
34. Possible is the same as probable
35. I ought to do better...I ought to do better
36. I can't change what I think
37. I should never get upset
38. I must never show weakness
39. What's the use? Giving up is the best policy
40. I must never tell people how I feel – they might dislike me
41. The more I please people, the more they will like me
42. It is terrible if people don't like me
43. I am unattractive
44. I have no talents

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45. I will never be any good
46. I must get what I want in order to be happy
47. I can't stand it if people don't like me
48. I am stupid
49. I can't do anything right
50. There I go again