

# Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Course: Self-Talk

Level:



**Objective:** Students will be able to identify the difference between positive and negative **self-talk**, change negative self-talk to positive self-talk, and identify healthy self-talk in their everyday life by choosing to focus on their strengths and uplift, encourage, and motivate themselves.

**Course Intent:** Students will be introduced to the idea of self-talk, taught ways in which to use self-talk in a positive way and be provided with opportunities to engage in practice exercises in and out of the classroom.

## Applications & Benefits:

Uplifting or positive self-talk can motivate students to persevere after failure and promote improved self-confidence over time.

## Course Snapshot

This course incorporates the following lessons.



LESSONS	ACTIVITY	TIME REQUIRED	RESOURCES & MATERIALS NEEDED
<b>What is Self-Talk</b>	Whole-group discussion First Writing of Self-Talk	15 - 20 minutes	Lesson definitions Storybook or photographs (see list) Student Journals
<b>Examples of Positive &amp; Negative Self-Talk</b>	Whole-group discussion Daily Journal of Self-Talk	15 – 20 minutes daily	- Lesson definitions - Balloon - Student Journals
<b>Documenting Strengths</b>	Independent Poster	20 – 25 minutes	Small posters/journals for each student

## Lesson Rationale

As a teacher, your job is to motivate students to learn and engage in the classroom as best as you can, but there is only so much you can do. If a student is upset with their ability to learn in a certain subject, doesn't have confidence in the classroom, and gets discouraged when he performs poorly, it can be hard to help because he is not helping himself. Our thoughts and opinions about ourselves can affect us every day, as well as the conversations you have with yourself throughout the day.

Everyone, no matter what age, engages in self-talk throughout the day. Self-talk is the source of all our thoughts and our thoughts can be the source of our current emotion. If we influence our self-talk, then we can influence our thoughts and emotions. Think about the last thing you said to yourself today. What was it about? Was it positive or negative? Did you feel better after or more motivated and ready for the day? If you didn't feel better, then you are not beneficially using self-talk.

Self-talk, when used correctly, can become a powerful inner tool for us to use that can drastically influence the way we think and the way we view the world. Positive self-talk should be cultivated and practiced. If we try to engage in positive self-talk often, our brain will pick-up on the idea and promote positive thoughts in place of negative ones.

### HELPFUL TIPS

- Everyone can learn to speak positively and in a beneficial matter, but for some, especially those who engage in negative self-talk more frequently, it might take more time and practice to cultivate positive affirmation. Let students know that it is not an impossible task and that practice really will help them.
- Let students know that they have the power to ignore or avoid negative self-talk. Encourage students to talk to themselves like they would talk to a friend.

# Introductory Lesson #1: What is Self-Talk?

## What to Know Before You Begin

### Definitions

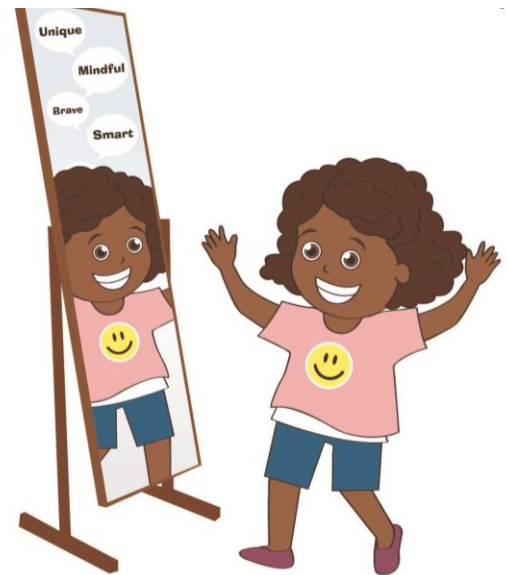
#### What is Self-Talk?

*Self-talk is something that everyone does naturally and throughout the day, even if you don't necessarily realize you're doing it. Self-talk is our inner voice or the conversations we have with ourselves that influence our thoughts, moods, and actions. Some people are naturally better at positive self-talk than others, but everyone can get better at it if they are aware of when they are helping themselves and when they are not.*

*Your inner voice is very influential. It can turn a bad situation worse and even ruin a positive situation if you let it. Talk to yourself in a positive, motivating manner. Practicing a positive internal dialogue can help train your brain to think positively more often. Keep in mind that you are your own best coach. Constructive criticism can be healthy but always aim to be a positive influence on yourself. Criticizing yourself can change something about yourself for the better but being harsh too often can teach your brain to act like a bully and use your thoughts against you.*

#### Why is Using Positive Self-talk so Important and Beneficial?

*Engaging in healthy and optimistic self-talk can influence every aspect of our lives, inside and outside the classroom. Using uplifting speech can help us manage stress, improve confidence, and stay motivated. Think of your thoughts as a flower and self-talk as the water you give to it. If you shower yourself with positive self-talk, your thoughts will become healthy and beautiful. If you feed your mind negativity, in turn, your mind will produce unhealthy and negative thoughts.*



## Activity

For this activity, you can use either one of the listed storybooks, or if those are unavailable to you, print out a few photos of famous athletes playing in their sports. The books and pictures serve as visuals to spur conversation. If you have a projector or Smart Board available, skip the printing and show the photos large and in bright color on the screen.

### **Storybook Suggestions**

- *Salt in His Shoes: Michael Jordan In Pursuit of a Dream* by Deloris Jordan and Roslyn M. Jordan
- *The Most Magnificent Thing* by Ashley Spires
- *Flight School* by Lita Judge
- *Luigi and the Barefoot Races* by Dan Paley
- *A Chair for My Mother* by Vera B. Williams
- *Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman
- *Brave Irene* by William Steig
- *You Can Do It, Bert!* By Ole Könnecke

### **Photograph Suggestions**

Muhammad Ali  
Serena Williams  
Willie Mays  
Michael Phelps  
Rebecca Lobo  
Kerri Strug  
Michael Jordan  
Wayne Gretzky  
Babe Ruth  
Danica Patrick  
Laurie Hernandez  
Naomi Osaka

Begin by telling students that you'd like to read a story, or show them some pictures, of someone who persevered towards a goal. This means that they kept trying and trying. As you read, or discuss the photos, the critical question to ask students is "What could this person be thinking?" If you choose to read a story, ask this question multiple times as you see the main character in a tough situation. If you used photographs, ask the students to tell you what the athlete might be thinking as they are participating (thus, it is important to show an action shot). If needed, guide students to name some positive self-talk that the character or athlete might be thinking. If a student shares an example of negative self-talk, you can respond with, "Hmm. I wonder if that would motivate or encourage them to keep going and keep trying."

After some discussion, explain self-talk to students. Use the information provided and explain that self-talk is the voice that talks to us inside our head that we control. These thoughts influence how we act and how we feel. A lot of times, athletes have motivational self-talk that they repeat to themselves when they are struggling. We hear sports announcers ask athletes, "What were you thinking when you..." Ask a few students to volunteer and pretend to be an athlete after a game, race or match. Ask "What would you think to yourself?" Also, be sure to explain that athletes are just an example, but everyone uses self-talk.

Ask students to take a few minutes to write out the statements they have made to themselves in their head, whether the thoughts were positive or negative. Tell students to be honest with themselves so they can recognize what kind of thoughts they are having. Some prompting questions might be "What do you think before a test?" "What do you think while we read?" "What do you think during art class?" and so on.

## Lesson #2: Examples of Positive vs Negative Self-Talk

**Positive Self-Talk** is uplifting, supportive, and affirming. It can help us navigate through our day in the most productive and healthy way.

**Negative Self-Talk** is destructive, overly critical, and mean. It can ruin our day by upsetting us and defeating our motivation.



### Activity

This activity uses a balloon (not blown up yet) to simulate the effects of positive and negative talk.

Tell the students that you'd like to blow up the balloon, but you aren't sure you're very good at it. Tell them that for each supportive, motivating or encouraging statement they give you, you'll be able to use one big breath to blow up the balloon. Explain that they will be your positive self-talk. As students share words of encouragement, blow up the balloon. When it gets pretty big, ask "What do you think would happen if you said some things that weren't so encouraging?" Tell students to now pretend to be negative self-talk and say discouraging words. As they speak, let air out of the balloon a little at a time. Be sure to end with the positive, and have students share positive self-talk again to blow up the balloon.

Explain that our self-talk can either be positive or negative. Positive self-talk is encouraging and healthy to our mindsets. Negative self-talk can be mean and damage our moods or motivation. Any of the self-talk we use will influence how we act and feel.



## **Turn a Negative into a Positive**

Explain to students that we ultimately have control of what we say to ourselves throughout the day and how we say those things. If we make minor adjustments in the way that we speak to ourselves, the results can be life changing. Share with students the following examples of negative self-talk and ask “How can we turn these into positive self-talk?”

1. **Negative:** I failed and now I embarrassed myself; I shouldn’t have even tried.

**Positive:** I’m proud of myself for being brave enough to try.

2. **Negative:** I let my whole team down by not scoring that goal; it’s all my fault.

**Positive:** The whole team played the best we could and if we win or lose, it will be together.

3. **Negative:** I’m not good at public speaking so my presentation is going to be awful.

**Positive:** I worked hard to prepare my presentation and I am going to try my best.

4. **Negative:** I’m partners in class with someone I don’t know that well. We probably will have nothing in common and nothing to talk about.

**Positive:** I got partnered with someone I don’t know all that well and this is my opportunity to make a new friend.

## **Daily Journal Self-Talk**

Encourage students to keep a pencil and a journal with them, small enough that they can fit it in their pocket or desk. Tell students to start writing down when they notice they have a positive and negative thought about themselves throughout the day, whether they are at home, out with a friend, or in their room. If they feel comfortable, share them with a friend. Let their friend help decide if what you are saying is positive or negative. If they don’t feel comfortable sharing it, tell them to read it out loud and pretend like someone is saying those things to them. Sometimes we can become so used to what we tell ourselves every day that we cannot even realize how damaging or hurtful it can be. Try changing any negative self-talk to positive self-talk.



## Lesson #3: Documenting Strengths Exercises

### Activity

#### **Document Strengths**

This activity encourages students to focus on their strengths and positive qualities. This can be strictly independent or modified to encourage students to motivate each other. Have students each make a small poster about themselves, highlighting their strengths and positive qualities. As the teacher, have a list ready of one positive quality you see in every student and share this with them; they may just need some encouragement! If possible, have students share with one another any strengths they see in each other. Do this in the way that works best for your group of students so that each student gets to hear a strength from someone else.

Throughout the day, tell students to recite their strengths and positive qualities to themselves. Then, when they are faced with adversity, setbacks or mistakes, they can remind themselves of their strengths. Coach students to avoid negative self-talk and instead to learn from mistakes, persevere through challenges and look at failure as an opportunity to learn and grow.



#### **Helpful Tips**

Help students avoid labelling themselves. For example, if a student misspells a word, they may think that they are a 'bad' speller. Instead, help students to simply identify that they made one mistake and to voice their intentions to improve their spelling. Your mind will listen to you and will support statements that you say about yourself, so make them positive. "I spelled that word wrong, but I won't spell that word wrong again and I will get better at spelling every day."



## Quick Quiz

★ 1. Which statement is an example of positive self-talk? ★

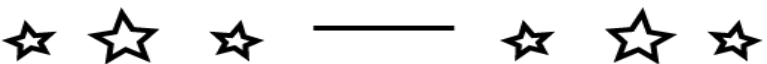
- A.) I embarrassed myself and now I feel dumb.
- ★ B.) I do not know a lot of people at this event and I have no one to talk to. ★
- ★ C.) I got a bad grade on my test; I am never going to do better. ★
- D.) I'm new to this school and I'm going to use this day to get to know people.

2. What can positive self-talk influence?

- A.) Your mood
- B.) Your actions
- C.) Your thoughts
- D.) All of the above

3. How can this self-talk statement be made positive?

"I didn't get a good grade on my assignment."

- A.) "I didn't get a good grade on my assignment. I am such a bad reader."
  - ★ B.) "I didn't get a good grade on my assignment. Oh well, there's nothing I can do." ★
  - ★ C.) "I didn't get a good grade on my assignment. I can put more effort into my next assignment." ★
  - D.) "I didn't get a good grade on my assignment. It's all the teacher's fault." ★
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