# The Importance of Positive Self-Talk and Gratitude Practices



**Self-talk**: An inner voice that provides a monologue to our day and helps us process our experiences. Often happens naturally and with us being aware of it. It includes conscious thought and unconscious beliefs and biases.

Negative self-talk: Self-criticism that does not focus on motivation or growth. It can be overly critical and may relate to increased experiences of stress, anxiety, depression and low self-esteem, to name a few. Examples include catastrophizing, overgeneralizing, personalization and all-or-nothing thinking.

Positive self-talk: Focuses on supporting and motivating oneself. Self-affirming and positive statements can increase self-esteem, healthy coping skills and improve personal performance. Studies have shown it can lower rates or intensity of stress, anxiety, depression, and other challenging experiences.

**Positive self-talk is a habit that, with practice, we can develop!**

**Steps to developing positive self-talk:**

**NOTICE**: Recognize and identify negative self-talk when it arises.

**REFRAME**: Explore more helpful thoughts that could replace the negative. See examples below.

**REPEAT**: Healthy habits take time and repetition to develop.

**SUPPORT AND CONNECTION**: Foster relationships and communication with those who care about your wellness, such as loved ones, community members, friends, health professionals, school counselors etc.

| Negative self-talk | Positive self-talk |
|---|---|
| I've never done it before. | It's an opportunity to learn something new. |
| It's too complicated. | I'll tackle it from a different angle. |
| I always mess up. | Sometimes I make mistakes, but I have succeeded other times. Mistakes can lead to learning. |
| I'm too lazy to get this done. | I couldn't fit it into my schedule, but I can re-examine some priorities. |
| There's no way it will work. | I can try to make it work. |
| No one bothers to communicate with me. | What can I do to open lines of communication? |
| I'm not going to get any better at this. | I'll give it a try. Skills take practice to master. |
| I can't. | I haven't yet. I can try. |

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**Gratitude**: The quality of being thankful and feeling appreciation for the good in one's life or having received something positive. This includes recognizing and appreciating what we have received from outside of ourselves. This could be from other people, nature or our higher power etc.



While there are likely times in our lives when we express gratitude easily, it is a habit that can be cultivated further. Studies show that practicing and expressing gratitude can have several benefits in our lives and well-being.

Gratitude practices increase our **positive recall**. Strengthening our positive recall builds our awareness of and focus on the aspects of our life that we appreciate rather than focusing on the negative.

Practicing gratitude can also strengthen our **resiliency**. Resiliency is our ability to cope with and recover from adversities and challenges in life.

Gratitude practices include **connecting** with our internal gratitude and expressing gratitude to others. By doing both, we are strengthening our connection to our internal and external resources, which we can utilize to navigate and cope with challenging times.

## Additional Potential Benefits of Gratitude:

- Boost self-esteem and self-efficacy
- Increase satisfaction in life
- Increase positive emotions such as happiness and optimism
- Strengthen sense of community
- Boost immune system and soothe nervous system
- Reduce experiences of stress and anxiety

**How can we cultivate it? Here are some starting ideas:**

- Create a gratitude journal
- Writing thank you notes to others
- Think about the people who inspire and support you
- Create art to celebrate positives
- Mental subtraction: imagine what your life would be like if a positive thing had not occurred


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