

Change Your Mind to Change Your Body Challenge

DAY 3: MONITOR YOUR INTERNAL MESSAGING

You may be giving yourself negative messages about yourself. These are messages that you learned when you were young. You learned from many different sources including other children, your teachers, family members, caregivers, even from the media, and from prejudice and stigma in our society.

Once you have learned them, you may have repeated these negative messages over and over to yourself, especially when you were not feeling well or when you were having a hard time. You may have come to believe them. You may have even worsened the problem by making up some negative messages or thoughts of your own. These negative thoughts or messages make you feel bad about yourself and lower your self-esteem.

Some examples of common negative messages that people repeat over and over to themselves include: "I am a jerk," "I am a loser," "I never do anything right," "No one would ever like me," "I am a klutz."

Most people believe these messages, no matter how untrue or unreal they are. They come up immediately in the right circumstance, for instance if you get a wrong answer you think "I am so stupid." They may include words like should, ought, or must. The messages tend to imagine the worst in everything, especially you, and they are hard to turn off or unlearn.

You may think these thoughts or give yourself these negative messages so often that you are hardly aware of them. Pay attention to them.

Some people say they notice more negative thinking when they are tired, sick, or dealing with a lot of stress. As you become aware of your negative thoughts, you may notice more and more of them.

It helps to take a closer look at your negative thought patterns to check out whether or not they are true. You may want a close friend or counselor to help you with this. When you are in a good mood and when you have a positive attitude about yourself, ask yourself the following questions about each negative thought you have noticed:

- Is this message really true?
- Would a person say this to another person? If not, why am I saying it to myself?
- What do I get out of thinking this thought? If it makes me feel badly about myself, why not stop thinking it?

You can work on changing your negative thoughts to positive ones by:

- Replacing the negative thought with the positive one every time you realize you are thinking the negative thought.
- Repeating your positive thought over and over to yourself, out loud whenever you get a chance and even sharing them with another person if possible.
- Writing them over and over.
- Making signs that say the positive thought, hanging them in places where you would see them often-like on your refrigerator door or on the mirror in your bathroom-and repeating the thought to yourself several times when you see it.

Negative Thought	Positive Thought
I am not worth anything.	I am a valuable person.
I have never accomplished anything.	I have accomplished many things.
I always make mistakes.	I do many things well.
I am a jerk.	I am a great person.
I don't deserve a good life.	I deserve to be happy and healthy.
I am stupid.	I am smart.

Throughout the day, write down your negative thoughts that you hear yourself say and create new, positive messages. Post some of your negative thoughts and new, positive thoughts in the Facebook group.

Your Negative Thought	New Positive Thought