Smarter
Learning

Naming Self-Talk

Below you can find ten examples of contaminated self-talk. Read through these and reflect on whether any could be contributing to unwanted emotional and behaviour responses in you.

It is up to you how you work through this activity; however, it might be useful to identify the main types of self-talk that have the biggest influences on your interactions, and possibly rate their strength level.

1 **Catastrophising** is when you believe that you can predict the future, typically with negative consequences. You would typically start with a present situation, anticipate what the worst possible outcome could be and then talk yourself into increasingly negative comments.
e.g. what if I don't perform well in leading my first team meeting? I could lose the credibility of my team. If I lost my credibility as a manager, my team will start lose confidence in me and my abilities. If I lose the confidence of my team I will end up having to do more work myself and even have to discipline some of them. How would that look to my superiors? They would not like that and they could start worrying about how I am performing as a manager.

2 **All-or-Nothing Thinking** is when you make statements that are completely black or white. There is nothing in between and you are either great or a complete failure.
e.g. I will either be amazing at the team meeting or I will crash.

3 **Victimisation** happens when you blame other people for the cause of your own challenges. This could be a way to avoid responsibility for example.
e.g. It's not my fault that I am not performing at work. I am used to working from home and now I've been pressured to work in an open plan office. Having people around me constantly chattering makes me lose concentration.

4 **Emotional Reasoning** happens when you start believing that your feelings are facts and that just because you feel something it must be true. allow feelings about an event to override a rational evaluation of that event. For example, if your feelings tell you to distrust somebody you treat this as truth rather than a possibility.
e.g. I feel useless every time that I am in a team meeting. It is obvious that other people think the same of me. I do feel like I'm a failure.

5 **Magnification** occurs when you make things more difficult than they actually are. It is essentially looking at issues and amplifying them.
e.g. I really did not come across that well in the team meeting. I bet some people are going to complain about me to the CEO.

6   **Mental Filter** happens when you actively pay attention to one aspect and ignore everything else around that particular situation. You are selective in what you choose to believe and discard any information that goes against this detail.
e.g. One of my team members mentioned how they did not like the update that I made to the spreadsheet. I'm sure other people had similar comments even though they said that they found it useful.

7   **Mind Reading** is when you believe that you know what people are thinking whilst ignoring other possibilities. It includes making assumptions about the motivations of others and turning these into facts.
e.g. that new financial controller is definitely scheming to get me kicked out of the company. I can tell what he is thinking.

8   **Irrational Shoulds** are very debilitating comments that you make about how the world and you should be organised. You start putting expectations in place based on these mental models leading you to judge and finding faults in yourself and others.
e.g. I should be confident in presenting my ideas in team meetings. I should not be in this job if I am not comfortable with public speaking.

9   **Overpersonalising** is when you automatically accept blame when something bad occurs even though you have little or nothing to do with the event. You believe that everything is your fault without considering more plausible explanations for what has happened.
e.g. Jane was difficult today. I am sure I must have annoyed her somehow.