

Self-Esteem

1. Dealing With Negative Thoughts

1. Using a Journal to Tackle Negative Inner Voices

Using your journal, work on replacing negative inner voices in your mind with more nurturing voices to help build up a more positive picture of yourself.

Step 1: Commit to making journal entries for two weeks for ten to fifteen minutes every day, ideally at a regular time.

Step 2: Start by writing about what you are thinking and feeling at the time – express your concerns, wishes, feelings, thoughts and reflections.

Step 3: After a week, look back at your journal and try to identify any negative patterns of negative statements. Can you associate the critical voice with any voices from your past or present? When do you think you might first have heard that kind of statement? Who might have made it and in what setting?

Step 4: Commit to mindfully challenging and replacing the negative voices when you write in your journal next week.

* If you have identified the negative voice as being that of someone you know, ask yourself what reasons they may have prompting them to speak like that. Look for evidence that suggests that the negative voice is inaccurate or too extreme.

* Imagining what you would say to a best friend who is in the same situation.

* Remembering someone from you past or present who is supportive to you, and imagine them responding to your negative statements.

2. Step Back From Your Thoughts

The first step is to distance yourself from your unhelpful thoughts and notice them with curiosity without believing them to be true.

Then identify the ways in which your thinking might be affected by your body image problem, and take these negative thoughts with a huge pinch of salt.

Think of these intrusive thoughts as body shame propaganda, trying to lower your morale and keep you preoccupied and distressed.

3. Labeling Your Thoughts

Write your intrusive thoughts down.

For example,

'I am **having a thought** that I am fat.'

'I am **having a memory** of being bullied as a child.'

Challenge your distorted thoughts by asking yourself the following questions:

1. What evidence do I have that what I believe is actually true?
2. Am I confusing a thought with a fact?
3. Am I falling into a thinking trap (e.g., catastrophizing or all-or-nothing treatment)?
4. What would I tell a friend if he/she had the same thought?
5. Am I blaming myself for something which is not really my fault?
6. Am I taking something personally which has little or nothing to do with me?

4. Watch Your Thoughts Pass By

The goal here is to distance yourself from your thoughts by noticing your intrusive thoughts without engaging with them, rather watch them pass by like being on the pavement, watching cars pass on a road.

- * Get into a relaxed position and just observe the flow of your thoughts without engaging with them.
- * Imagine sitting next to a stream with a number of leaves on the surface of the water, drifting slowly downstream.
- * When thoughts come, put each thought on a leaf, and watch the leaf slowly moving away from you, drifting out of sight. Repeat the same with every thought that comes to your mind.
- * When you are ready, bring your attention back to present and notice your body sensation and sounds around you, then slowly open your eyes and get back to life.

5. Thank your mind

Thanking your mind refers to using the power of sarcasm to diffuse the painful emotions that negative thinking triggers.

When you hear negative, critical thoughts in your mind, thank your mind for being so creative.

For example,

Negative thought: I'm a mean person.

Sarcastic, thankful thought: That was a creative thing to say. Thanks so much.

The thanking-your-mind technique help you relate to your thoughts differently. After a while, you'll see that thoughts are truly just thoughts and don't necessarily reflect reality.

2. Challenge Your Limiting Beliefs

Identifying limiting beliefs

Limiting beliefs could be about your abilities, personality, how you ought to act, other people or even the world in general such as telling yourself "good things never last."

Watch out for any generalizations or prescription for how you or other people should be or do, such as "I must...", or, "they should...", or, "they shouldn't..."

Changing limiting beliefs

The following questions will help you to explore the possibility of a slightly different view:

- (a) What would be a less extreme belief (or beliefs) that I might hold?
- (b) What would be the advantages for me of holding the new belief(s) rather than the limiting one(s)?
- (c) What would be the potential disadvantages for me of holding the new belief(s) instead of the old one(s)?

Challenge your distorted thoughts by asking yourself the following questions:

1. What evidence do I have that what I believe is actually true?

2. Do I know for certain that the worst will happen?
3. Is there another possible explanation for that person's behavior that isn't about me?
4. Am I confusing a thought with a fact?
5. Am I falling into a thinking trap (e.g., catastrophizing or overestimating danger)?
6. What would I tell a friend if he/she had the same thought?
7. Am I 100% sure that _____ will happen?
8. How many times has _____ happened before?
9. Is _____ so important that my future depends on it?
10. If it did happen, what could I do to cope with or handle it?
11. Am I condemning myself as a total person on the basis of a single event?
12. Am I concentrating on my weakness and forgetting my strengths?
13. Am I blaming myself for something which is not really my fault?
14. Am I taking something personally which has little or nothing to do with me?
15. Am I assuming I can do nothing to change my situation?

If you still struggle with finding an alternative

Ask yourself, "If I were talking to a friend who is in the same situation as me, what would I say to them?"

Your response would probably be, "Don't be hard on yourself," or, "You have a great potential. That mistake doesn't make you a failure at all."

Changing negative self-statements

For example, for someone who struggles with being overweight, his negative self-description and reframed neutral description can be like the following:

Negative self-description: 'I am disgustingly fat.'

Reframed neutral description: 'I have difficulty controlling my weight and do not have the body shape that I would like.'

Affirm Yourself

Positive affirmations help you build a sense of positive personal identity that is unique to you. They can help you replace your negative thoughts about yourself and raise your self-esteem.

Exercise: Create a list of positive affirmations personal to you. Keep it where you can see it regularly and read it to yourself through the day.

For affirmations to work, follow the subsequent rules:

Use positive expressions: Saying "I am not a failure" is perceived by your unconscious as "I am a failure" because it fails to assimilate negative concepts. Instead, say "I am a successful person."

Use expressions in the present: It's better to use phrases like "I am a successful person" instead of "I am going to be a successful person."

Visualize the pictures associated with these statements: This will help increase the effectiveness of the statements.

Feel the corresponding emotions: It makes no sense to tell yourself something like "I'm a self-confident person" if you think otherwise in your mind. In a way, you'll only send mixed signals to your subconscious mind.

Repeat, repeat, and repeat: Two times a day if possible.

Following is a list of statements of a positive inner dialogue:

- I accept myself because I realize that there is more to me than my current skill levels and shortcomings.
- I examine criticism for ways to improve, without questioning my worth as a human being.
- I notice and enjoy each achievement or progress, no matter how insignificant it may seem to me or to others.
- I expect others to like and respect me.
- I can laugh at some of the ridiculous things I do every now and then.
- I enjoy making others feel happier and glad for time that we share.

3. Recognize Your Positives

When your self-esteem is low, you are more likely to remember you “perceived” flaws and unsuccessful actions than to acknowledge your qualities and achievements.

This is why you need to deliberately balance your self-image by identifying and acknowledging some of your positive features.

Exercise:

1. Consider the strengths below and choose the ones that describe you.

accepting of others, brave, cheerful, committed, composed, confident, self-assured, cooperative, creative in problem solving, curious, reliable, moral, honest, forgiving, generous, grateful, humble, fair, kind, compassionate, loving, loyal, open-minded, optimistic, patient, persistent, wise, punctual, rational, self-accepting, able to regulate emotions, sensitive, peaceful, sincere, spontaneous, consistent, trustworthy, warm, friendly.

2. Along with the list of strength, write down in your journal five positive statements about yourself that are meaningful and realistic and true.

Examples might include “I am a responsible member of my family,” or, “I am a supportive listener,” or, “I treat others with respect and I am open to new ideas.”

3. Once you’ve completed your list, meditate on each one of these statements and the evidence for its accuracy for a minute or two. Repeat this for seven days.

4. Create an Identity

Many people with BPD have trouble developing a consistent identity or sense of who they are. Their lives are usually full of discarded relationships, goals, and interests.

1. Clarify What's Important in Your Life

To figure out what you value, you need to think about what you want out of your life.

In your journal, try answering the following questions:

Environment:

Do you take time to appreciate and enjoy nature?

How do you see yourself in relation to living creatures and plants?

How can you minimize your carbon footprint?

Work:

How do you define work?

Are you satisfied at work? What can you do to change your work life?

Is your work helping others?

If you don't see your work as meaningful to you, can you think of a different type of work that would feel more meaningful?

Spirituality:

What, if any, are your spiritual beliefs?

Are you living a life that is compatible with your spirituality?

How do these beliefs impact the way you live your life?

What changes can you make to your life to make it more compatible with your spiritual beliefs?

Charity:

Do you spend as much time helping others as you'd like?

How can you be more charitable with yourself?

Community:

What does being a member of your community mean to you?

Do you contribute to your community?

Do you want to make changes based on these thoughts?

Relationships:

How do you show concern for the people you care about?

Do your close relationships help you or hurt you?

Are you doing anything to bring loved ones closer to you?

Family:

How do you define family?

Are you holding onto anger about your childhood?

Do you see value in being close to your family?

Creativity:

What does creativity mean to you?

Do you have ways in which you can express your creativity?

Are you satisfied with the place creativity has in your life? If not, how can you change that?

Growth:

What value do you place on life-long learning?

Are you taking advantage of opportunities that evolve?

What do you want to do differently now that you've thought about learning?

Entertainment:

What do you like to do for fun?

Do you spend enough time doing things you enjoy?

Do you value recreation for the positive effects it can have on your mood and your life?

Finances:

Do you have problems with overspending?

Are you saving for saving for an emergency?

Do you have needs that aren't being met financially?

Can you do something now or in the near future to help your situation?

Health:

Do you spend enough time and energy fostering good health?

Do you exercise, sleep, and eat right?

Do you have an addiction that impacts your health?

Appearance:

Do you like the way you look?

How important is appearance to you?

Is the appearance of your friends important to you?

You:

What do you like about yourself?

Do characteristics do you value most?

What do you dislike about yourself?

Is external approval critical to your happiness?

List of possible positive characteristics and values

Appreciation of others · Artistic ability · Awareness of environment · Assertiveness · Balance · Being part of a community · Being in a team · Capacity to change and develop · Chilling out · Collaborating with others · Connecting with people · Creativity · Excitement · Financial management · Family commitment · Freedom · Friendship · Fun · Generosity · Helping others · Honesty · Honour · Humour · Independence · Individuality · Intelligence · Integrity · Intimacy · Kindness · Learning from experience · Looking after myself · Love · Musical ability · Networking · Not taking myself too seriously · Organizational skills · Physical health · Physical fitness · Relaxed approach and attitude · Reliability · Religious lifestyle · Risk-taking · Self-awareness · Self-expression · Sensuality · Sexuality · Sharing · Solitude · Social conscience · Standing up for rights · Spirituality · Stability · Success · Understanding

2. Create A Personal Life Mission Statement

A mission statement helps you understand the purpose and values of your life.

Writing your life mission statement might take several drafts before you're happy with your statement

1. Review your three most highly rated core values.

2. For each value, consider actions you can take (Because I value _____, I plan to _____).

5. Looking After Yourself

1. Regular Exercise

Regular exercise of 30 minutes three to five times a week

Start exercising gently and build up gradually. Exercise should be an enjoyable activity that leaves refreshed and energized.

2. Sleep Hygiene

An appropriate amount of sleep – Most adults require seven to eight hours of sleep each night.

Sleep quality – Make the bedroom a relaxing place for sleeping. Keep TV, phones, computers, and work out of the bedroom. Turn off lights at least an hour before going to bed. Eliminate noise or obscure it with white noise.

3. Eating Habits

A brain-friendly diet follows these guidelines:

- * Consume most of your calories from minimally processed plant foods.
- * Reduce the size of meat servings, especially red and processed meat (for example, corned beef, bacon, ham, salami, hot dogs).
- * Keep blood sugar steady by eating a high-quality protein breakfast (for example, eggs or yogurt) and not skipping meals, and minimize sugar-sweetened beverages and snacks.