

# INNER DIALOGUE

SELF-AWARENESS SERIES

# DID YOU KNOW?

Our inner dialogue – the ever-present little voice in our head, is often made up of familial or cultural injunctions that **guide** our attitude, decisions, behaviour, and actions. It has the power to either **limit** our potential or **pave the way** for breakthroughs.

Research suggests that our self-talk, if adaptive, can help us cope with stressful events and appraise future stressors as positive challenges rather than threats (Oleś et al, 2020).

In addition, adaptive inner dialogue plays a key role in our cognitive processes. If properly harnessed, it can help us regulate our emotions better (Orvell et al, 2019).

The goal of this worksheet is to facilitate the development of self-awareness on how we talk to ourselves. Being aware of our inner dialogue is the first step in making self-talk our ally. We recommend you to finish the [mini-course](#) on inner dialogue first before continuing this worksheet.

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# ASSESSING MY INNER DIALOGUE

The first step is to recall a negative experience that happened recently. Then, write down your thoughts and emotions in that moment.

## EXAMPLE

1. Think of a negative experience
2. What did you say to yourself?

*My team failed to submit our final project today. It was the biggest project and we failed to submit it on time because I forgot today's date. I thought it was due tomorrow. My boss severely reprimanded me. As a team leader, it was my responsibility to remind everyone and make sure the project was done. Everyone is disappointed. This is our biggest project and I didn't finish it on time.*

*My boss hates me. It's all my fault. Everyone expected me to do well and I always disappoint them. I'm such a failure.*

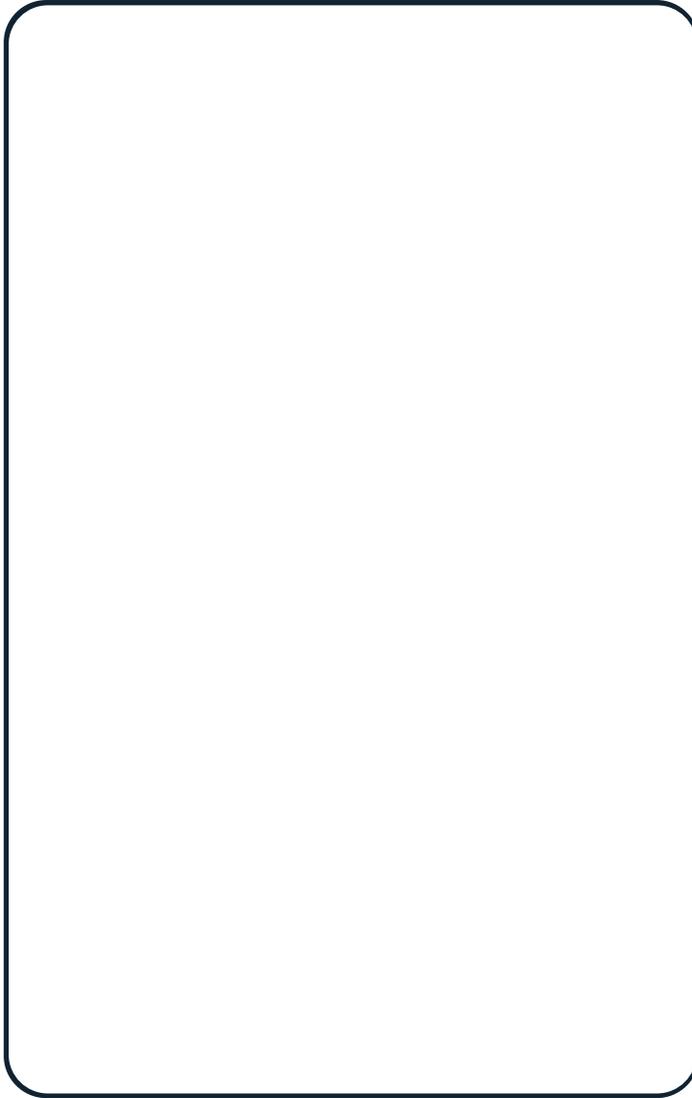
3. What did you feel?

*Annoyed, angry, disappointed*

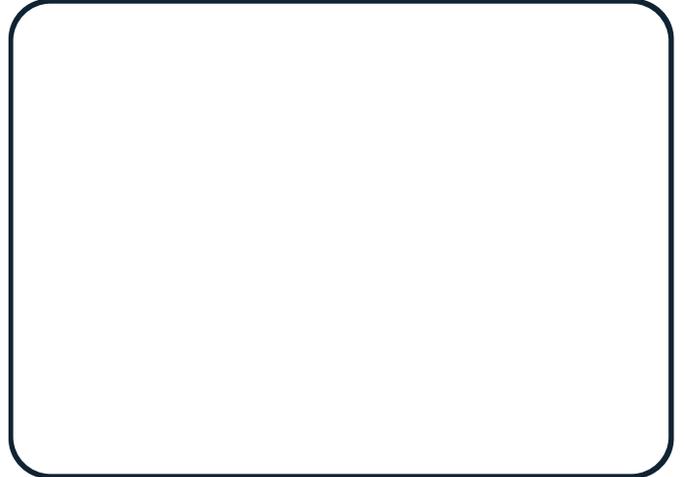
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# ASSESSING MY INNER DIALOGUE

1. Think of a negative experience



2. What did you say to yourself?



3. What did you feel?



**Now ask yourself these questions:**

- Am I being **too hard** on myself?
- Did I blame it **all on me**?
- Did I **blow the incident out of proportion**?

# LET'S CHECK!

What kind of language are you using?

## PERMANENT OR TRANSIENT

Is it changing across time or unchanging?

- I **always** fail
- I **can't** understand
- **At this time**, I haven't succeeded
- I **haven't taken the time to** understand...

## INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL

Does it persist throughout all areas or only in a specific part of your life?

- This is all **my** fault
- I made a mistake **and...**

## GENERAL OR SPECIFIC

Do you see the cause of a negative event as within or outside yourself?

- **This** is unfair
- **Everything** is hard
- **He** treated me unfairly
- This **task** is hard

Try looking back at the negative experience you wrote about and analyze the words you used to explain it.

If you are using words that are **TRANSIENT**, **EXTERNAL**, and **SPECIFIC**, good job! You are using an optimistic explanatory style.

If you are using words that are permanent, internal, and general, there is a chance that you are being too pessimistic. Using a pessimistic explanatory style might be bad in the long run.

Seeing an event as unchangeable, pervasive, and blaming everything on yourself is a **pessimistic** explanatory style. Pessimism is a predictor of **depression**, especially when the environment promotes it.  
(Seligman, 2006)

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# ASSESSING MY INNER DIALOGUE

## EXAMPLE: LET'S CHECK!

PERMANENT OR TRANSIENT

INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL

GENERAL OR SPECIFIC

1. Think of a negative experience      2. What did you say to yourself?

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3. What did you feel?

*Annoyed, angry, disappointed.*

# REFLECT

1. How often do you think of your mistakes?

—  —  —  —

**NEVER** **VERY OFTEN**

2. How often do you blame yourself when something bad happens?

—  —  —  —

**NEVER** **VERY OFTEN**

3. How often do you give yourself a compliment for doing a good job?

—  —  —  —

**NEVER** **VERY OFTEN**

So, is your inner dialogue adaptive or maladaptive? Maladaptive or negative self-talk can limit your potential, decrease motivation, and make you doubt yourself in challenging situations. A pessimistic point of view has the propensity to make you view stressors as insurmountable threats instead of challenges you can overcome by being resourceful. It can also affect your emotions and sabotage your success.

If the way you talk to yourself is more on the negative side, don't worry, it's malleable! Start by using our positive self-talk worksheet to practice being kinder to yourself and eventually make self-talk your ally to achieve your goals and be consistently successful in any endeavour.