

How to Recognise Negative Self-Talk

Negative self-talk can be sneaky, often running in the background without us noticing. Use this cheatsheet to help you become more aware of when it's happening so you can stop it before it takes hold.



Notice the Language You Use

Pay attention to words like “always,” “never,” or “can’t.” Negative self-talk often includes extreme, all-or-nothing language (e.g., “I always mess up” or “I’ll never be good enough”).



Watch for Self-Blame

If you’re constantly blaming yourself for things beyond your control, it’s a sign of negative self-talk. Instead of thinking, “This is all my fault,” try to assess situations more fairly.



Be Aware of Perfectionism

Negative self-talk often shows up when we set impossibly high standards for ourselves. Phrases like “I should have done better” or “This isn’t perfect” are signs of perfectionist thinking.



Notice Feelings of Unworthiness

Negative self-talk often appears as feelings of inadequacy (e.g., “I don’t deserve success” or “I’m not good enough”). If you frequently doubt your worth, it may signal a need to address your inner dialogue.



Check for Overthinking

Constantly replaying situations in your head or fixating on your mistakes can be a form of negative self-talk. If you find yourself stuck in a loop of doubt, that’s a key sign.



Look for Comparisons

If you often compare yourself to others, especially in a negative way, you’re likely engaging in self-critical thoughts (e.g., “I’m not as good as them”).

Take a moment to reflect on what you’ve noticed in your self-talk patterns. Recognising these habits is the first step toward creating a more positive inner dialogue. With practice, you can replace negative thoughts with supportive ones that boost your confidence and well-being.