

MINDFULNESS TIP SHEET #4

INNER DIALOGUE

Everyone has an inner dialogue about what is occurring around us, what we think, how we're feeling about a situation, etc. However, sometimes our inner dialogue isn't helpful and can cause distress. This sheet can be used to help manage negative inner dialogue and shift it into something more positive. This resource can be used to help negate the effects of stress and bolster our resilience through difficult moments in life.

Changing your negative inner dialogue

1

The first step in changing our negative dialogue is to 'notice'. That is, stopping and monitoring what our inner dialogue is saying, as most of the time we miss it completely or don't even notice when it's present. Whenever you're feeling bad about something, stop in the moment and think about what you might've just said to yourself. Try to be as accurate as you can and label the key phrases. What tone of voice is used? What words do you use? Is any of the dialogue repetitive or have a theme? You want to be able to know this well, in order to be able to change it. Try and get a clear sense of how you talk to yourself.

2

Make an effort to soften or counter-act the negative dialogue but do so with compassion rather than judgement. Rather than perpetuating a circular argument, instead learn to counteract through understanding where the inner dialogue is coming from. An example can be instead of saying "you're an asshole (to your dialogue)", you can say something like "I know you're worried about me and feeling unsafe, but you are causing me unnecessary pain. Could you let me say a few positive words now?"

3

Learn to reframe the statements from your inner dialogue in a positive and friendly way. If you're having trouble thinking about what to say or what words to use, use the activity below. While changing the inner dialogue, you may want to comfort yourself physically. This can be shown through holding or "hugging" yourself, holding your face in your hands or even stroking your arm. These gestures can help activate warmth towards yourself, as these gestures help release oxytocin (known as the 'love' chemical) that can help release feelings of caring and warmth.

Activity: How would you treat a friend?

01

First, think of a close friend and when they have been feeling bad about themselves or really struggling in some way. How would you respond to your friend in this situation (especially when you're feeling at your best)? Write down (or mentally note) what you would say, what you would've done and what tone you would've said it in.



02

Now think of yourself in the same situation, think about times when you've been struggling or felt bad about yourself. How do you respond to yourself in these situations? Write down (or mentally note) what you say and do, and what tone you say it in.



03

Did you notice a difference? If so, ask yourself why. What factors or fears come into play that lead you to treat yourself and others so differently?



04

Write down how you think things might change if you responded to yourself in the same way as you did to a friend.



Why not try treating yourself like a good friend and see what happens?

Practice the phrases you used for your friend to yourself. It may feel inauthentic or incredibly uncomfortable, but sit with it, repeat the comforting statements and see how it goes.

Activity: Taking a Break!

Think of a time or situation in your life that is difficult, perhaps causing you a lot of stress. Call the situation to mind and see if you can feel the stress and emotional discomfort in your body.



1 Say to yourself something mindful of the moment

Examples can be:

- This really hurts
- This is stress
- Ouch/ow!

2 Acknowledge that suffering is a part of life (not to sound cynical)

That's life, that's common humanity. Other examples can be:

- Other people feel this way too
- I'm not alone
- We all struggle in our lives
- This is a part of life, but I will get through it

Try "hugging" yourself, holding your hands or stroking your arm to help activate warmth towards yourself while using these phrases.

3 Say something to yourself that is kind

Ask yourself "What do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself?"

Some examples can be:

- This is really tough, but I'm tougher, and I can get through it
- I am strong
- May I give myself the compassion that I need
- May I learn to accept myself as I am
- May I forgive myself
- May I be patient

If you or someone you know needs help contact **TIACS** on 0488 846 988 or your organisation's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), your GP or call: **LifeLine** on 13 11 14, **Kids Helpline** on 1800 551 800, **MensLine Australia** on 1300 789 978 or the **Suicide Call Back Service** on 1300 659 467.