TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION
SELF-TALK

Self-talk affects self-esteem. Each day thousands of communicative messages are sent. The majority of these are never verbalized, but heard and handled internally. **The inner voice is self-talk.** Our brains are much like a computer. Each day everything and everyone around us has been programming us. Unfortunately self-talk has done the majority of the programming. Think about your self-talk. What kinds of things do you say to yourself? Researchers have found that 77% of everything we think is negative and counterproductive. Our toughest critic is ourself. For example, if we trip on a stair, what do we say to ourselves? "I'm so clumsy"; if we are late handing in a paper, "I'm always late."; if we get a bad grade on a test, "I'm so dumb."

The brain simply believes what we tell it most. Repetition is a convincing argument; eventually we believe what others have told us, but most of what we believe is what we have told ourselves. We tend to remind ourselves of our mistakes. What we tell our brain about ourselves, the brain will create. We will become what we tell ourselves we are. Our success or failure in anything, large or small, will depend on our programming--what we accept from others, and what we say when we talk to ourselves.

Some methods to foster positive thinking are:
1.   If others put us down, positive self-talk might say, "No matter what you say or do, I'm still a worthwhile person."
2.   If self-talk starts negative comments, we need to say loudly in our mind, "STOP! Erase that!" (Have students practice by thinking of negative comments, then yelling "STOP! Erase that!")
3.   If something is going to be erased, it has to be replaced with a positive state-ment; i.e., "I'm so lazy." STOP! Erase! Replace it with "I'm getting better and faster." Remember negative words like can't, won't, don't, etc., should not be used. The statement must be positive.
4.   Select a few habits that need to be changed. Write a positive statement for each one and repeat it three (3) times a day for 30 days. (Remember, self-talk has been programming you for some time and it will take time to change it.)

Assignment: Give each student two 3 x 5 cards for them to make two copies as they complete this assignment--one for home and one for school. First, have students write five (5) things they would like to change about themself on one side of the cards. Give students a copy of the list of positive affirmations (page I-A-89). Then have them write five (5) positive self-talk (positive affirmations) messages for themselves on the other side of the card. Assign students to work on the positive self-talk for the next two weeks, reminding them regularly. At the end of the time period, have students write a one-page report about the results they have seen. If they didn't do the exercise, have them write a paper on the reason for not completing the assignment.

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