

## Facilitator Guide: Navigating Overthinking and Self Talk

### Overview

This facilitator guide is designed for high school teachers, counselors, and other faculty interested in integrating discussions about overthinking and self talk into their classrooms. The purpose of this guide is to provide resources and strategies to help students better understand and manage their inner dialogue, particularly in relation to feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and self-doubt.

### Podcast Episode

Overthinking and self talk are particularly relevant topics for teenagers, who are experiencing a variety of physical, mental, and emotional changes that can affect their self-esteem. Before engaging in the activities listed below, listen to the following podcast episode either individually or with your students: “Overthinking and Self Talk” from the podcast *This Teenage Life*, available on [Spotify](#) and [Apple Music](#).

**Episode Summary:** Self talk describes thoughts that your mind generates about yourself, which can sometimes come from your inner critic. Your inner critic can be helpful if it tells you to avoid situations where you might get injured, but tends to be hurtful in everyday situations. Some ways of identifying negative self talk are through reflection, journalism, and listening to music, all of which can help you shift negative self talk into positive self talk. Not all positive self talk is effective, though. Effortful self talk, or self talk where you commend yourself for your effort, is more beneficial than ability-based self talk, or self talk where you expect yourself to be the best at something. Effortful self talk can be implemented by considering that you did your best regardless of the result, and by thinking about what you would say to a younger version of yourself in the same situation.

### Activities

Select 1-4 activities about overthinking and self talk to do with your students. *Note: adapt and modify activities based on the specific needs of your students and resources available to you.*

**Reflection and Journaling:** Have students spend 5-10 minutes journaling about their experiences with overthinking and self-talk. You can provide the following prompts to help guide their journaling:

- Reflect on a recent situation where you observed someone overthinking. This could be in your own life, in television, movies, video games, books, or other media.
- What kinds of things do you say to yourself in your head while you're at sports practice/at rehearsal/engaging in a hobby of yours? What type of self talk is this?
- If you were a superhero and your inner critic were a supervillain, how would you respond to your inner critic? What superpowers would you use to 'defeat' it?
- Imagine your inner dialogue as a soundtrack to your daily life. What genre would it be? Are there any specific lyrics or phrases that stand out?

**Group Discussion:** Facilitate a 15-20 minute discussion amongst students discussing the impact of overthinking and self talk on their self-esteem and overall well-being. Discussion topics you can propose are:

- Future aspirations and goals and the self talk that comes up when thinking about them
- Media and social media's positive and negative impact on self talk
- How self talk changes based on your relationships with friends, family, and others
- Self-care practices that prioritize your well-being

**Creating Positive Affirmations:** Have students form groups of 2-3 to create and spend 10-15 minutes sharing positive self talk with each other to use in different situations. Examples you can provide are:

- Before an exam you studied for but are still worried about: "I'm a hard worker. It's okay if I make a mistake."
- When faced with making an important decision affecting your future: "I trust in my ability to make good decisions."
- While navigating rough patches in friendships and relationships: "I am worthy of love and respect."

**Creative Expression:**

Have students choose at least one creative avenue and spend 10-20 minutes expressing their internal dialogue and self talk creatively. You can provide the following options or allow students to choose their own form of expression:

- Draw a personification of your inner critic talking with you.
- Write a short story about how your inner critic interacts with you.
- Create a playlist of songs that align with the self talk you hear from yourself.
- Create a digital mood board or collage of images reflecting your inner dialogue.
- Write a script of your inner dialogue as characters from a TV show or movie you enjoy.

**Additional Resources**

[This Teenage Life](#): visit the podcast's website for additional episodes and resources for educators.

[Child Mind Institute](#): discover more ways to support mental health in young people.

[Acceptance and Commitment Therapy](#): learn more about the therapeutic approach mentioned in the episode.