

Role Models. Often people are not consciously aware of their self-critical thoughts. This exercise is designed to help you become more aware of what you tell yourself when things get tough. It will also give you some ideas of alternative arguments you could use to combat your own self-defeating thoughts.

- **Document.** Carry a notebook with you for a week. Whenever you are feeling discouraged or unsuccessful, write down your immediate thoughts. Make sure you include the DATE and TIME, a brief description of the SITUATION, and you're most prominent THOUGHTS.
- **Review.** At the end of the week, choose the event that was most upsetting. Write the 3 main thoughts you had at the time on the left. Then draw a line to connect each thought to the thinking style(s) it seems most like on the right. Circle each of these thinking styles.

Thought 1: _____

Thought 2: _____

Thought 3: _____

Personalizing
Overgeneralizing
Fortune-telling
All-or-nothing thinking
Filtering
Mind reading
Disqualifying
Magnifying
Emotional reasoning
Obligating
Labeling
Comparing

- **Strategize.** For each style of thought you circled above, look at the alternative arguments suggested in the list on the next 2 pages. Using these suggestions, think of some statements you can use to argue with yourself the next time you are thinking that way again.

Argument 1: _____

Argument 2: _____

Argument 3: _____

Style of Thought	Alternative Argument
<p><i>Personalizing:</i> Blaming yourself completely for problems. You see yourself as primarily responsible rather than considering the impact of the situation, chance events, or other people's actions.</p>	<p><i>Contextualizing:</i> Acknowledge to yourself that many things have contributed to this problem. Think of everything that may have played a role, including others' actions, chance events, the time of day, and what happened yesterday.</p>
<p><i>Overgeneralizing:</i> Seeing problems in all aspects of your life that are your fault. You ignore examples of your own success and focus on only those instances that fit your "pattern of failure."</p>	<p><i>Specifying:</i> Think through times you have been able to successfully handle challenges. Recognize that there are many times when you are capable and successful.</p>
<p><i>Fortune-telling:</i> Believing your problems will never get better, and they will always be your fault. You will never be able to change or improve your situation. Furthermore, you know all about Murphy's law. Anything that can go wrong will.</p>	<p><i>Delimiting:</i> Acknowledge to yourself that the circumstances that created this problem are unique. They will never occur again exactly like this. There may be similarities in challenges that come up in the future, but what you have learned now can help you deal with those future challenges.</p>
<p><i>All-or-nothing thinking:</i> Frequently using words such as always and never. Judging your own successes and failures in terms of all or nothing. Things either turned out exactly as you wanted or you totally blew it.</p>	<p><i>Balancing:</i> Realistically estimate what percentage of the situation is going poorly and what is still okay. Force yourself to acknowledge what you have done well despite what you could have done better.</p>
<p><i>Filtering:</i> Focusing mostly on the negative aspects of the situation even though there may be many good things about it as well.</p>	<p><i>Problem solving:</i> Try not to focus on the things that are going wrong. Instead, focus on the opportunities you have to make the situation better.</p>
<p><i>Mind reading:</i> Worrying about the hidden reasons why people say what they say and do what they do. You immediately assume, for example, that they are thinking poorly of you without even asking them for clarification.</p>	<p><i>Trusting:</i> Accept what other people tell you about why they do what they do. Do not second guess them. If you are really concerned about what they are thinking, ask them about it.</p>
<p><i>Disqualifying:</i> Discounting your successes and others' encouragement or compliments and finding a way to interpret even these good things in a negative light.</p>	<p><i>Appreciating:</i> Take time to think about your successes and value them. Remind yourself of your strengths and talents.</p>

Style of Thought	Alternative Argument
<p><i>Magnifying:</i> Noticing every little mistake or problem and overestimating their importance. Small problems or criticisms really affect your feelings and you worry about them a lot.</p>	<p><i>Perspective taking:</i> Go over all of the positive facts about the situation in your mind. You may have some challenges, but you can deal with them.</p>
<p><i>Emotional reasoning:</i> Judging things based on how you feel, not on the facts. Even though everything appears fine, if you are feeling worried, then there must be a problem.</p>	<p><i>Grounding:</i> Remind yourself of the facts of the situation. Consider whether there may be any factors that have nothing to do with the situation that are influencing your feelings.</p>
<p><i>Obligating:</i> Feeling obligated to live up to a lot of “shoulds.” These may be things you believe you need to do or they may be things you believe other people expect you to live up to.</p>	<p><i>Gauging:</i> Be flexible and recognize that perfection is not the goal. Remember that your best is good enough.</p>
<p><i>Labeling:</i> Quickly judging and labeling yourself in a negative way (eg, personal name-calling).</p>	<p><i>Acknowledging:</i> Think of all the different things about yourself that a single label could never capture. Remind yourself how inaccurate and unfair it is to pigeon-hole anyone like that.</p>
<p><i>Comparing:</i> Measuring how well you are doing by comparing yourself with other people you know. Thinking about how much better they are at everything in comparison with you.</p>	<p><i>Admiring:</i> If you know someone else who is good at handling problems, admire them for that. Think about what you have learned from them and how that can help you deal with things.</p> <p><i>Self-respecting:</i> Only compete against yourself. Think of ways you have been able to handle problems better now than you have in the past.</p>