

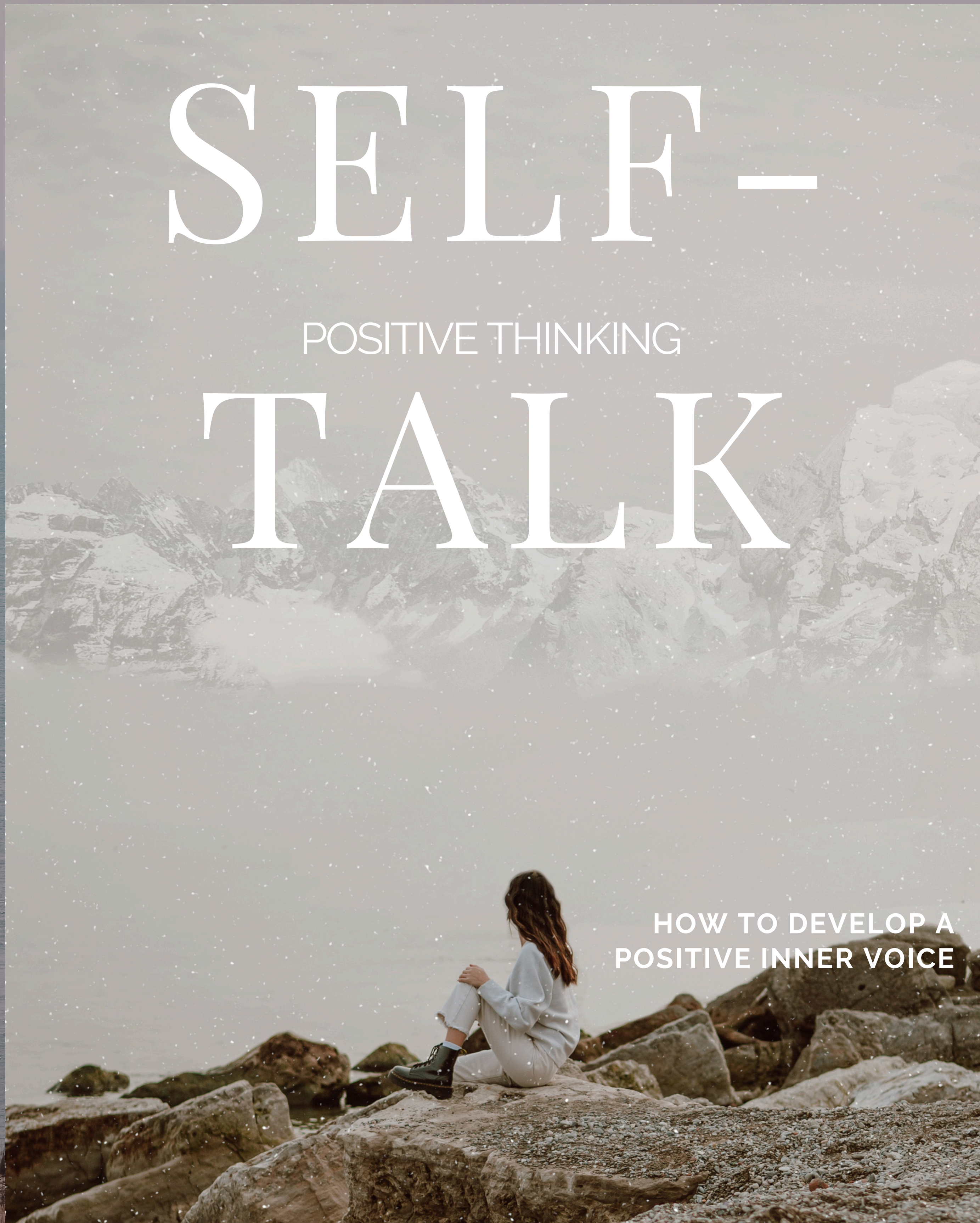
AUGUST 2024

SELF-

POSITIVE THINKING

TALK

HOW TO DEVELOP A  
POSITIVE INNER VOICE






# CONTROLLING NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

2024

AUGUST

WHEN UNDERGOING A STRESSFUL LIFE EVENT OR A PERSONAL TRANSITION, VULNERABILITY TO NEGATIVE SELF-TALK INCREASES.



Don't beat yourself up! That's what we tell our friends and loved ones when they've done something they're embarrassed or ashamed about, but do we tell ourselves the same thing? Rarely. It's important to generate a kind inner voice as studies reflect people who are self-compassionate show increased happiness, social connectedness and optimism, and have lower levels of anxiety, fear of failure and depression. So how can you develop this inner voice?

The first step is recognizing flawed self-talk and replacing the errors with more rational and appropriate thinking. See if you can interrupt your thoughts if they go in these directions:

- **All-or-nothing thinking:** Seeing things in black-or-white categories. If a situation is anything less than perfect, you see it as a total failure. E.g. labeling/name calling - instead of saying, "I made a mistake", attaching a negative label to yourself, "I'm a loser."
- **Filtering out the positive:** Rejecting positive experiences, insisting they do not count, or dwelling only on criticism and ignoring praise. E.g. if you do a good job, you tell yourself it was luck or that anyone could have done the same.
- **Jumping to conclusions:** Interpreting things negatively, when there are no facts to support your conclusion. E.g. mind-reading, where you arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you, or fortune-telling, where you assume and predict that things will turn out badly.

POSITIVE SELF-TALK CAN HAVE A POWERFUL IMPACT ON YOUR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND MOTIVATION.

- **Should statements:** Telling yourself that things should be the way you hoped or expected them to be. Many people try to motivate themselves with should and should not's. E.g. the expectation that by age 30 you should have your dream job.



# SELF-TALK & JOURNALING

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Positive self-talk is like self-coaching. It can help you control your moods, repeat your successes, minimize feelings of discouragement, and give you the confidence to use your talents to the fullest. Remember your positive traits/skills and refer to them in situations where your thoughts are negative.

For example,

- *Review your previous successes.*
- *Construct challenging arguments to your erroneous assumptions and beliefs.*
- *Adopt the perspective of someone on your side, a best friend or a counselor, when you are least able to be rational and objective.*

Research has shown that journal writing about difficulties or obstacles in your life can help you work through emotional or psychological pain more quickly. Individuals who express their feelings and difficulties on paper are better able to confront their negative feelings and adopt a more positive attitude. Not only can the process of journal writing be very therapeutic in itself, it is also helpful in combination with counselling.



## HOW TO START JOURNALING:

- **Forget about the rules of writing.** There are no mistakes. You can write ungrammatically, misspell, exaggerate, curse, pray or brag.
- **Write about your present situation.** Focus on a feeling, an image or a description. What are you feeling, thinking or experiencing? What do you want? What do you fear? What is changing?
- **Write spontaneously without judging yourself.** Say whatever you need to say without criticizing or censoring. The depth and openness with which you can express yourself will allow emotional release.
- **Enhance your journal.** Include photographs, clippings, quotes, poetry, drawings or whatever gives meaning to your life at the time.

Change does not happen overnight. It takes time, effort, and understanding to be able to find and use your kind inner voice. If you are having difficulties with self-esteem or self-compassion, contact your EFAP counselor.



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