



Support and Education: Handout 7

Introduction: At each follow-up visit the D2d study will provide you with a handout on the lifestyle changes you can make to reduce your risk for diabetes. Research shows that losing 5% to 7% of your body weight (about 10 to 14 pounds for a 200-pound person) and getting at least 150 minutes each week of physical activity can help you prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. We hope you find the information in these handouts helpful.

Talk Back to Negative Thoughts

Studies show that personality traits like optimism and pessimism can affect many areas of your health and well-being. The positive thinking that typically comes with optimism is a key part of effective stress management and behavior change. And these can lead to many health benefits. But if you tend to be pessimistic, don't despair — you can learn positive thinking skills.

Understanding Positive Thinking and Self-Talk

Positive thinking doesn't mean that you keep your head in the sand and ignore life's less pleasant situations. Positive thinking just means that you approach unpleasantness in a more positive and productive way. You think the best is going to happen, not the worst.

Positive thinking often starts with self-talk. Self-talk is the endless stream of unspoken thoughts that run through your head. These automatic thoughts can be positive or negative. Some of your self-talk comes from logic and reason. Other self-talk may arise from assumptions or misconceptions that you create because of lack of information.

The Negative Spiral

A chain of negative thoughts can lead to negative actions, which in turn can lead to even more negative thinking – creating a “negative spiral”.

Suppose you come home after a hard day at work. You think to yourself, "I am tired of working so hard to lose weight. I can never eat what I want."

This negative thought might lead you to eat too much. And then you think, "I did it again. I will never lose weight." So you go on to eat even more. Does this sound familiar? We've all done this, so please don't give up just because of one or two slip-ups.

If you begin to lose hope because of this chain of thoughts and unhealthy actions, take a deep breath and start again. ***You are worth it!***



The Habit of Negative Thoughts

Negative thinking can become a habit. For many of us, negative thoughts occur automatically. We tend to believe and act on our negative thoughts without being aware that we are doing so. One goal of this is to help you recognize negative thoughts as they occur and to teach you to talk back to them.

Identifying Negative Thinking

Here are some common forms of negative self-talk:



- You magnify the negative aspects of a situation and filter out all the positive ones.
- When something bad occurs, you automatically blame yourself.
- You automatically anticipate the worst.
- You see things only as either good or bad. There is no middle ground. You feel that you have to be perfect or you're a total failure.
- You catch yourself using words like "never" and "always"

Everyone has negative thoughts. This table helps explain some of the different types of negative thoughts:

Type of Negative Thought		Example
Good or Bad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divides the world into good or bad • Sees self as a success or failure 	"I missed two of my workout classes this week. I knew I wouldn't be able to keep up an exercise program."
Excuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blames others for problems • Claims to not be able to help or control situations 	"No one bothers to communicate with me. How do they expect me to complete this project if they won't tell me what I need to know?"
Should	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expects to always make the right choice • Gets set-up for failure 	"I should have gotten everything done on my to-do list. But I didn't, so now I feel like a failure."
Not As Good As	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compares self to someone else • Blames self for not doing as well as someone else 	"Martin lost two pounds this week, and I only lost one."
Give Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of futility or hopelessness • Often follows the other kinds of negative thoughts 	"Losing weight is too hard. I'll never lose weight. I might as well give up and forget it."

Self-awareness

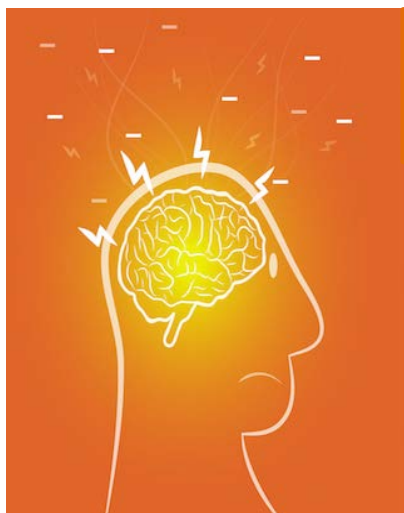
The more you are aware of negative self-talk when it starts, the more choices you have to deal with it.

You have the ability to remove yourself from an emotional reaction, and you can consciously choose to react with objectivity and interest instead. Step outside of it instead of giving in to it. Adopt an air of curiosity and become a detective: resolve to learn more about negative self-talk and how it creeps in.

- **Start by following one simple rule:** Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to a friend. Be gentle and encouraging with yourself. If a negative thought enters your mind, evaluate it rationally and respond with affirmations of what is good about you!

Talking Back

You can learn to turn negative thinking into positive thinking. The process is simple, but it does take time and practice — you're creating a new habit, after all.








Talking back to negative thoughts means that you must first catch yourself having the negative thought. Imagine saying "Stop!" to yourself, and picture a huge, red stop sign.



Then, talk back with a positive thought. An example of a positive thought would be to praise yourself for what you've already accomplished.

Doing so will help stop the cycle of negative thinking we all experience.

1. Catch yourself. Think, "I am being negative about myself."
2. Say "Stop!" to yourself. Say it out loud. Picture a huge, red stop sign.

Negative thought	STOP!	Positive thought
<p>Things are either good or bad</p> <p>"I missed two of my workout classes this week. I knew I wouldn't be able to keep up an exercise program."</p>		<p>Work toward balance</p> <p>"I did take two classes this week. One slip-up is not the end of the world. I can get back on track. Any exercise is still helping me even if I'm not perfect."</p>
<p>Excuses</p> <p>"No one bothers to communicate with me. How do they expect me to complete this project if they won't tell me what I need to know?"</p>		<p>It's worth a try</p> <p>"I will do the best I can and I will just have to seek out the information I need myself."</p>
<p>I Should Have</p> <p>"I should have gotten everything done on my to-do list. But I didn't, so now I feel like a failure."</p>		<p>I Did</p> <p>"I did accomplish some important things today. I feel good about that and will build on them tomorrow."</p>
<p>Not good enough</p> <p>"Martin lost two pounds this week, and I only lost one."</p>		<p>One step at a time</p> <p>"Everybody is different. Losing one pound is still good. I'll stay focused on myself and my own goals."</p>
<p>Give up</p> <p>"Losing weight is too hard. I'll never lose weight. I might as well give up and forget it."</p>		<p>Keep at it</p> <p>"I've learned something about what is hard for me. I've faced other challenges and have overcome them. I will keep at it."</p>

- ✓ Practice positive self-talk
- ✓ Avoid absolutes and exaggerations
- ✓ Focus on what's possible

When your state of mind is optimistic, you're better able to handle everyday stress in a more constructive way – and this may contribute to the widely observed health benefits of positive thinking!