Positive Self-Talk

Tips for Teachers

The Main Event

This month our topic is **Positive Self-Talk**. In this issue, Kim LaCasse, a middle school teacher, is our guest author; she has written The Main Event.

Good ideas for teaching students to better understand these social concepts include:

- Ask you students if they have ever had a bad thought about themselves. Have each student write the bad thought down. Now have them answer the following questions:
    – Is this a true statement, one you think is true sometimes or a false statement?
    – What proof do you have that this is true?
    – How does this statement make you feel about yourself?

- In a follow-up exercise, ask students who put down that their statement made them feel bad questions such as the following:
    – Do you know that these are self-defeating statements?
    – Are you willing to share your bad thought so that the whole class can argue against it? If so, have fellow students offer "proof" that the bad thought is not 100% true. Be sure to keep the proof positive.

- Discuss this psychological theory: "How you *think* about something determines how you *feel* about it (Adlerian Psychology). Use political debates or discussion about religion as examples; that is, people can hear or watch the same thing and feel differently about it.

- Have your students think about things that make them worry. Write it down. Now think of ways to "rethink" that worry thought so that it isn't so bad.

- As a group, generate a list of thoughts people might have about themselves ("I am pretty," "I am smart," "I am stupid," "I have no friends"). Now have the class rethink these statements as they might apply to anyone (sometimes using characters like SpongeBob makes this an easier exercise). The goal is to demonstrate that absolute thinking statements are rarely all the way true.

- The term "awfulizing" refers to thinking words like "can't," "horrible," and "never." When you awfulize, your thoughts make the problem much bigger than it usually is. Discuss this with your group.

I am Kari Dunn Buron, a teacher from Minnesota, and I just love this magazine!

You betcha.

Departments

I Second That Emotion!:

This issue addresses degrees of anger. The hope is that students can identify and differentiate a little bit of anger from a whole lot of anger.

- Have the group think about that psychological theory "How we think about something determines how we feel about it." Designing an anger scale can help people to stop and think about their anger.

- Discuss the truth about this statement: "Even if you are not angry, your actions could scare someone else."

- Some people confuse disappointment with anger and over-react to many everyday situations. Read through this scale together and add thoughts to each level.

Coming to Our Senses:

This topic is Getting Organized and was submitted by Jennifer Veenendall, an occupational therapist.

- Ask your students if they use a daily planner. If all the students in your school use planners, check to be sure they are clear regarding how to use it and that they are actually using it.

- Ask the parents of each of your students what the main issues are regarding homework, assignments, projects, and time management. Plan to talk about these issues in a more generic (nonpersonal way) in your group.

Gets-It Knows!:

- Have the group generate some good cell phone rules.

- Discuss this question: Why is taking a call during a conversation like interrupting? Include discussion about how it "feels."

Something to Talk About:

- Ask your students if they have ever had a problem like this.

- Ask your group what they think of Claire's solution to the problem.

- Ask your students if they think that Claire was lucky to have such an understanding principal?

- Consider having your principal talk to the group about options they might be able to consider if they have anger management issues. Getting to know the principal on positive terms is important for students to feel comfortable asking for help.

The Cartoon:

(NOTE: The abstract nature of the cartoon is purposeful. Social rules and faux pas are subtle, and this activity gives students and opportunity to analyze the social information, point by point. It is expected that the teacher or group leader will support the discussion using the following prompt questions.):

• Discuss what is funny about this cartoon.

• Ask your students why it might be difficult to tell someone he has bad body odor.

• Ask members of your class if they would want to be told if they had bad body odor.

• Remind students that the rule of thumb is to wash every day – when students reach puberty, their bodies begin to smell stronger when they are dirty. This is confusing because nobody complained about how they smelled when they were little, but now their bodies just need more attention. This is true for everyone.

Contributors to This Issue

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Jennifer Veenendall is a school-based occupational therapist in West St. Paul, Minnesota. Working with students with a wide range of abilities, she is especially passionate about creating learning environments that meet students' sensory processing needs. Jennifer received her occupational therapy degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her master's degree in human development from St. Mary's University of Minnesota. She lives in Hudson, Wisconsin, with her husband, Scott, and their two children, Anna and Benjamin. When she is not working, Jennifer enjoys spending time with her family at their cabin as well as drawing and painting. Jennifer is the author of *Arnie and His School Tools, Sensory Solutions That Build Success* and *Why Does Izzy Cover Her Ears? Dealing with Sensory Overload.*
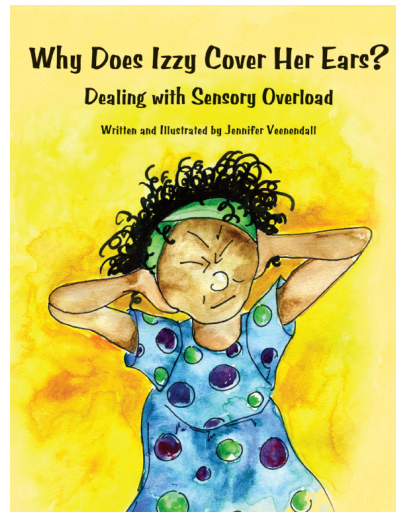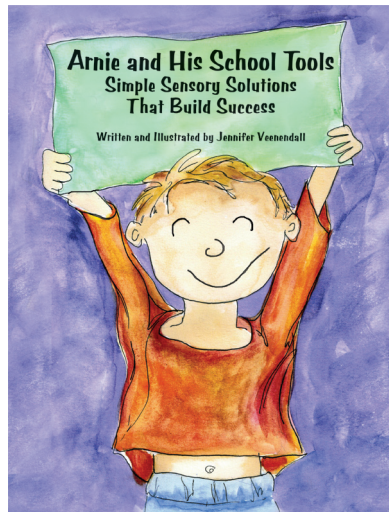
Teacher Handout

Understanding and addressing problems of *positive self-talk* in students with social cognitive problems:

How we *think* about something affects how we *feel* about it. If you think something is terrible, you are more likely to feel terrible about it. If someone else thinks the same thing is no big deal, they are more likely to have few feelings about it at all. This is very clear in politics, for example. How people *think* about what a politician is saying often dictates how they *feel* about the politician as a person.

We are constantly talking to ourselves about what is going on around us. If we tell ourselves that things are horrible, we will probably feel horrible. If we tell ourselves that things are unfortunate, we might not feel quite so bad. People with social cognitive problems often engage in negative self-talk or black-and-white thinking. This means that if something unfortunate happens (like the field trip being canceled), they are more likely to think it is horrible and unfair rather than unfortunateanddisappointing.
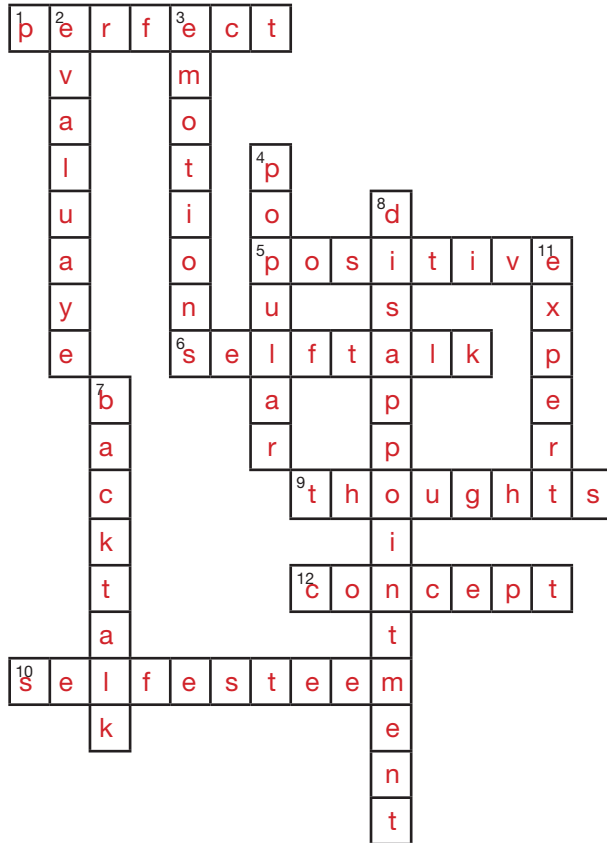
- **If a student verbalizes negative thoughts about himself, like "I am stupid" or "I will never have any friends," encourage him to argue with himself.** Is he really 100% stupid? Didn't he get a B on the last homework assignment?

- **Point out to students who judge themselves or others harshly that they can actually cause themselves to feel bad by thinking in such rigid and harsh ways**. Maybe the person sitting next to him isn't all bad.

- **Tell students that negative thinking is sometimes called "awfulizing."** This can help them understand how their thinking can impact their feelings. For example, when talking about injustice, some students with negative thinking might get very upset about a past or a historical injustice. This is most likely because they are using self-talk words like "shouldn't," "can't," or "never" rather than words like "tragic" or "misguided." Awfulizing can create intense and sometimes irrational feelings. It is helpful to let your student understand this in a kind and supportive way.

Positive Self-Talk – Word Search Answers

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A Y G M Q P X G B W H V K B V G J S M L E L Z W D W K S D C
Q Z W I E F W V T Q I R A L U P O P N M H B Q C G Y N R H Z
W B H K M H S R X O N F U Y R P T I M S J O X P O T D F J P
F G N X A W A X H R G K S M Q I A Z W W P N F V Q F Z X Z K
K N B Z T R A X A E R K Y S S G N I L E E F F I E W I O G E
P V V F H Y O P R V U E Q I W L B B W U J K K V B L O I H W
E Y Y X Y B W I S V G A N Y L K C H F H A Z D V Z E U G Y J
B K P U A I I S V H F Q Z C L H M A A A W U I S O T T S K U
K F D A H F R K F A G B R Z F X T I C K L A T F L E S T O Y
K B V N K E P R W O H L Q E S Q B X B N B M V H I B M R M Z
O U V U L N A Z O A N E M F I U Y F Z P E E H Z H G J O Q Z
T L Y B G A T R M F H P B T A J O M O H Q M Y T V E G U N W
I C A W V B H F T P L B I N L O E U Q U S G H U V V F B X R
B I E G C R Y F C S F Z B X P C V T I M U N W C D M Q L K I
V D N F T B X J T U S O R U U T I P E O Y A I E I F A E R S
C J T C R J Y Z N X L P A B V Q T R I E G I O A R Y I I D H
M A H W M E T S U R T E K F E F I G T A P V D E R G D P X C
D K O O Z O P Y H V A Z C S Y F S T W K O X D Q M B T L C Q
R O D X Y N C R C X F M H S U A O P C U O X O K U R E T H M
Z C C B S B G S M L N J B F P Q P B M S G Z A X C X W F M G
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Word Bank: BEHAVIOR, BRAINS, FEELINGS, HEARTS, MATH, PERFECT, POPULAR, POSITIVE, SELFTALK, TROUBLE, TRUST

Positive Self-Talk – Crossword Answers

The crossword grid contains the following answers:

- 1 Across: perfect
- 5 Across: positive
- 6 Across: selftalk
- 9 Across: thoughts
- 10 Across: selfesteem
- 12 Across: concept
- 2 Down: evaluaye
- 3 Down: emotion
- 4 Down: popuular
- 7 Down: backtalk
- 8 Down: dissappoitment
- 11 Down: exper

ACROSS

1) absolutely flawless
5) good, not negative
6) having word bubbles in our talk bubbles
9) words or ideas in your head
10) two words; how we feel about ourself
12) an idea rather than a thing

DOWN

2) think through carefully
3) our thoughts can affect our _____.
4) being well liked by many people
7) two words; like sassing; speaking negatively in response to something said to you
8) when you are expecting one thing and another thing happens that you don't like as well
11) someone with a lot of knowledge about something

Positive Self-Talk – Quiz

Name: _____

1) True or False? Self-Talk can help us or hurt us.

   A) True
   B) False

2) True or False? Some scientists believe that how we think affects how we feel.

   A) True
   B) False

3) True or False? Self-talk means talking about ourselves.

   A) True
   B) False

4) Which of the following would be considered helpful self-talk?

   A) I am so stupid.
   B) I am ugly.
   C) Oh well, tomorrow I can try again.
   D) Forget it. I will never learn math.

5) True or False? Positive self talk can help fight off worries.

   A) True
   B) False

6) Can you think of 3 positive things you can say about yourself to yourself? This is self-talk when you just say it in your head.

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   There are many acceptable answers but be sure the student's statements are positive. If someone has negative statements, help him reword the statement or help him challenge the negative statement.