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to yourself leads and aggravates self-esteem issues, but the good news is that it's not an unsolvable problem. Challenging negative self-speech is a basic technique in cognitive behavioral therapy (TCC), a type of therapy that has been shown to be effective in helping a wide range of conditions, diagnoses and problems. CBT helps clients discover some of their most entrenched, often unconscious beliefs, allowing them to evaluate these beliefs and challenge those that are not useful. This reformulation worksheet opens with an explanation of negative self-speech and how you can identify and confront it. The tool is described below. It includes two main steps to help you understand where your critical thoughts come from and how they feel or sound. Increase awareness of self-criticism conversation: To start taking advantage of your self-awareness, take a deep breath. When you realize that your internal critic is talking inside your head, maybe when you're not successful in something, pay attention to what that self-speech sounds like. Are there specific basic phrases you tend to tell yourself? How does that negative voice sound? Take steps to soften your self-critical voice: Once you've realized when you're criticizing yourself, it's time to try self-pity instead. In these cases, the worksheet suggests, consider what you might tell someone who cares if you were in the same scenario. Try changing the mental tone you're using and face a more positive one you could use when you feel good about who you are. Finally, try to come to terms with what exactly you're being self-critical about. Is there anything you could learn from this criticism if you presented yourself more constructively instead? This proven technique will help you or your client recognize self-directed criticism and challenge it on the spot, leading to greater self-esteem and peace with yourself. If one of your customers is having trouble finding positive answers to their self-critical thoughts, encourage them to what they would say to a dear friend or loved one who was struggling with these thoughts, as the leaf suggests. Sheet. It's easier to be kind to others than to ourselves, but that's something that can be remedied over time and practice. Click here to view or download this worksheet. Identifying and challenging basic beliefs Similar to challenging negative thoughts can be an extremely effective therapeutic technique for discovering, identifying and challenging your basic beliefs. We often carry unconscious or semi-conscious negative or false beliefs, never stopping to recognize the values and norms we buy on a daily basis. This exercise will help you or your client explore and define deeply rooted beliefs that guide thoughts and behavior. The worksheet begins with an explanation of what the basic beliefs are: Basic beliefs can be defined as the very essence of how people see themselves, others, the world, and the future. It then explains how basic beliefs can influence thinking and emotions through an example interaction. Interaction: You're attending an interview for a job you really want. In this situation, you must choose between three briefcases to take to work, each representing a different central belief: Purple Briefcase—I am talented Associate Inner Thinking: I am naturally an expert with a lot of experience in this field. I deserve this role. Your reaction: You feel safe entering the interview, and then landing the job. Orange briefcase: I'm not sure if I'm talented. Associated internal thinking: I have a lot of experience and I think I'm good, but someone else will probably get the job on me. Your reaction: You don't feel very well on the way to the interview. You are relatively positive, but you do not land the paper. Green briefcase: I have no talent. Associated internal thinking: There's no way I'm getting this job. Other candidates are much more capable than I am. Your reaction: You don't get the job. These examples show that the thoughts we carry with us, wherever we go, can have a profound impact on our feelings, behavior, and associated results. Finally, the worksheet presents an opportunity to apply what you have learned from these examples to your own life. You are asked to identify three negative fundamental beliefs and three reasons why each belief is not true. It can be difficult to identify the first central belief, especially if you have several very deep-rooted negative beliefs that you've never considered challenging before. However, once you get the ball rolling with the first belief, it should be easier as you go. To test this Basic Suitcase Demands worksheet, follow the Assertive Communication Worksheet Low self-esteem and poor or underdeveloped communication skills often go hand in hand (Blood & Blood, 2004). It can be difficult to share feelings with others if you don't feel that your feelings have value, a low self-esteem. Learning to communicate assertively will not only help you build better relationships and find new opportunities, but can also facilitate a change in the way you think about yourself (Law & Sivyer, 2003). The word assertive can make people with low self-esteem hesitant. Being assertive may sound too aggressive, insistent, or too out of character. The worksheet addresses this immediately with an explanation of how three common communication styles differ: Aggressive communication defined by speaking in a medium, hard or sarcastic way, taking instead of compromising, maintaining bright eye contact and speaking in loud or menacing tones, putting others down, being inappropriately honest, and intimidating or trampling others. Assertive communication defined by being firm but educated, compromising, maintaining warm and friendly eye contact and a conversational tone, building others and yourself, being appropriately honest, and defending yourself. Passive communication defined by being too pleasant or weak, being too obedient, avoiding eye contact, speaking softly, crouching down, being emotionally dishonest and allowing others to trample you in conversation. When presented in this way, it is clear that being an assertive communicator is nothing like being an aggressive communicator. Assertive communication is simply expressing yourself honestly and directly while being polite and open. The worksheet provides space and instructions for recording three scenarios in which it was assertively communicated and to list the emotions you felt afterwards. If you can't think of an instance that has been assertively communicated, don't worry! You can make that a goal for yourself in the coming week. You can view this assertive communication worksheet by yourself and start developing your communication skills. Tips for overcoming low self-esteem and low self-esteem Apart from these worksheets and activities, there are plenty of tips for building self-esteem and self-esteem. Dr. John M. Grohol (2011) offers these six tips: Take an inventory of self-esteem to give yourself a baseline. This can be as simple as scoring 10 of your strengths and 10 of your weaknesses. This will help you begin to develop an honest and realistic conception of your being. Set realistic expectations. It is important to set small, achievable goals that are within reach. For example, setting an extremely high expectation or an expectation that someone else will change their behavior is virtually guaranteed to make you feel like a failure. Stop being a perfectionist and recognize your accomplishments and mistakes. No one is perfect, and trying to be will only lead to disappointment. Recognize your and recognizing your mistakes is the way to maintain a positive perspective as you learn and grow from your mistakes. Errors. Yourself. The importance of knowing yourself and being at peace with who you are cannot be overstated. This may take some rehearsal and error, but it is a lifetime journey that must be carried out with purpose and zeal. Be willing to adjust your self-image. We all change as we age and grow, and we must keep up with our constant changes if we are to set ourselves and achieve meaningful goals. Stop comparing yourself to the others. Comparing ourselves to others is a trap in which it is extremely easy to fall, especially with social networks and the ability to project a polished and perfected (and false) appearance. The only person you should compare yourself to is you. Henrik Edberg (2017) offers a similar set of tips to improve your self-esteem: Stop your internal critic; Use healthier motivational habits; Take a two-minute self-appreciation break; Each night, write down three things you can appreciate about yourself; Do the right thing; Fight perfectionism; Handle errors and errors in a more positive way; Be nicer to others; Try something new; Stop falling into the comparison trap; Spend more time with support people (and less time with destructive people); Remember why high self-esteem. To read these tips in more detail, you can visit Edberg's blog post on how to improve self-esteem here and read more about positive body image here. Ten days to improve self-esteem: An action plan While it can take time to build a strong sense of self-esteem, it's possible to get the process going. For guidance on quick ways to get the process going, check out the book Ten Days to the Self-Esteem of Psychiatrist and Author David Burns. While self-help books are often beaten or lost, Burns has an impressive track record of success with his patients and readers. At least it can't hurt to try. This book helps the reader identify the causes of low self-esteem and provides activities and exercises to begin boosting self-esteem. It is written in English, not psychiatric jargon, and has earned an impressive four-star rating on Amazon. If you don't have the patience to review an entire book, there are a few simple things you can do now to start your journey of self-esteem: Think a lot about the root causes of your insecurities. The first step in defeating formidable enemies is to learn about them, and this situation is no different. Identifying events that led to a low sense of self-esteem can provide valuable information to challenge these negative beliefs. Use the Auto-Talk Negative worksheets and Identify and Challenge Basic Beliefs (available in the Sheets section of adults in this article) to help you identify negative thoughts and start replacing them with alternative thoughts. Be nice to yourself. If you find yourself overly negative for yourself, stop consider how you'd feel if someone said such things about a close friend or family member. Extend the same compassion you would give a friend or family member to yourself. Make a plan. Set achievable and realistic short-term goals for you to complete in the coming week or so. Achieving something, however small, can be an excellent boost to your motivation. Celebrate your success. When you achieve a goal, successfully challenge a negative thought, or catch yourself extending kindness to yourself, mark the achievement with a celebration! Taking the time to revel in your success and enjoying the moment can give you the inspiration you need to continue your journey towards self-improvement. A message to take home We hope this piece has helped you find useful ways to start or continue to improve your self-esteem, but if you only leave with a lesson learned, we hope it's this: You can improve. You can get better. You can reach your goals. You may not feel like you're feeling right now, but know that no matter how low you feel, there's always room for growth and improvement. What techniques have you used to improve your self-esteem? Were they effective? Please share your experience with us in the comments section. We hope you enjoyed reading this article. Don't forget to download our 3 free self-pity exercises. 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