

# SHORT-CUT METHODS TO DISRUPT NEGATIVE SELF TALK

The purpose of this handout is to offer “on the spot” methods for disrupting negative self-talk. Identifying negative self-talk and writing positive counter statements is the preferred method to overcome long-established beliefs that contribute to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. However, there are some situations where you might have neither the time nor the opportunity to write your thoughts down.

1. **Notice** that you are engaging in negative self-talk. The best time to catch yourself involved in negative self-talk is when you are feeling anxious, depressed, self-critical, or upset in general.
2. **Stop** - Ask yourself challenging questions.
  - “Is this thought true?”
  - “Do I really want to do this to myself?”
  - “Do I really want to stay upset?”
3. **Switch gears** in order to break a train of negative self-talk.
  - a. **Relax** - slow yourself down with deep, abdominal breathing, i.e., the short-cut relaxation exercise.
  - b. **Thought stopping** - Shout “STOP” or “GET OUT”, stomp your foot, snap a rubber band against your wrist, visualize a STOP sign.
  - c. **Distraction** - Physical activity (exercise, walk, dance) to get out of your head and into your body.
4. **Counter** negative self-talk by repeating a positive coping statement or affirmation over and over again.. Use this step by itself or in conjunction with deep breathing if you have not otherwise been able to distract your mind. Continue repeating the statement for a few minutes, if necessary, until you feel more relaxed.

Examples: “I can handle this.”  
“I can leave if I need to.”  
“This will pass.” “Relax.”  
“Let go.”