



# **POSITIVE SELF-TALK**

Countering Negative Thoughts and Language

# Positive self-talk is a key component of healthy self-esteem.

- Self-talk is the inner voice that goes on inside our heads throughout our waking hours.
- Positive self-talk is when we talk to ourselves in a reassuring, kind, and more optimistic way.
- It's the difference from saying to yourself:
  - “I’m an idiot, I can’t believe I failed this math test” and
  - “I’m disappointed in how I did on the math test but I’m going to talk to the teacher and study more next time”.



If the video does not play, click this link:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wd4t2isoO\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wd4t2isoO_c)



# Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs)



- Automatic negative thoughts (ANTs) are fleeting thoughts that can be conscious or almost at the edge of our awareness. They form an internal monologue that can negatively influence how we automatically interpret situations and react to feelings.
- Negative thoughts tend to be sweeping, all-or-nothing statements that jump to conclusions. There are certain words that are flags for negative self-talk: all, always, nothing, no one, never.
- When we hear students voice negative thoughts, it's very important to pause and address those negative thoughts in the moment. Sometimes, though, it can be challenging to frame these conversations at a level our early elementary students can understand.



# Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs)

Dr. Daniel Amen, a child psychologist, wrote a children's book to help kids learn and talk about automatic negative thoughts. Let's watch him do a read-aloud of *Captain Snout and the Superpower Questions* to help us think about how to talk about this issue with kids.

- What is your biggest takeaway about automatic negative thoughts?
- What kinds of ANTs have you heard your students say during tutoring? How did you respond? How did your student react to your response?



If the video does not play, click this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ES82qvxjVdY>



# Responding to Negative Self-Talk or ANTs

- One term we can use when talking to students about automatic negative thoughts (ANTs) is “negative self-talk.”
- A popular approach to addressing negative self-talk is called Catch It, Check It, Change It.
- Let’s go through these steps in the context of a tutoring session to see how you might apply this approach.



# Catch It, Check It, Change It

**Say: “Wait a minute! That sounds like negative self-talk.”**

- Instead of arguing with the student (Yes you can! or But you *are* smart!) or shutting them down (Don’t say that!), it’s okay to call out the negative thoughts for what they are.
- In fact, it’s really important to call out negative self-talk so that we can help our students begin to recognize when they are experiencing ANTs.
- When you call it what it is, you give your student language to describe what’s going on in their head, and that’s a crucial component of social-emotional learning.



# Catch It, **Check It**, Change It

**Say: “Is that really true? Let’s do a quick feelings check – how are you feeling right now?”**

- If a student is feeling bad – frustrated, annoyed, anxious, sad, discouraged, confused, etc. – during a tutoring session, it can negatively impact their ability to concentrate and their motivation to learn. However, helping a child name an emotion can help them understand *what* they are feeling, *why* they feel that way, and *how* to respond.
- Be aware that in early elementary, kids’ language for feelings is pretty limited – sometimes it’s just happy, sad, mad. That’s okay. You can work with what they know, and you can also teach them the words for feelings as they describe them. For example, let’s say a student says they’re mad because they keep trying to read a word and can’t get it right. You can say “Yeah, I definitely see how that can make you mad. And sometimes we can call that feeling frustrated – when you want something to work and it just won’t work. That’s called feeling frustrated.”
- And remember – emotions are also positive. It’s good to ask about and to name positive emotions too.



# Catch It, Check It, **Change It**

**Say: “How can we change that into positive self-talk? What can you say instead that is kind to yourself?”**

This is where you help your student build up that self-esteem, confidence, and resilience that they can carry with them through life. Sometimes it’s helpful to have some ready-to-go positive thoughts that you can help your students say. Here are some examples.

- I can do hard things.
- It’s okay to make mistakes. I will try again.
- I will keep working hard until I get it right.
- I am good at ...
- I can do this.



# Applying Catch It, Check It, Change It

Take some time to reflect on the following questions:

- How do you feel about using positive self-talk in your tutoring sessions? What are you excited about? What challenges do you anticipate?
- What are some strategies you can use to embed positive self-talk in your tutoring session so that you don't have to wait until you're countering ANTs to bring it up?
- What are some examples of positive self-talk that you use for yourself that you might be able to teach your students?

