

Tip Sheet



Challenging negative self-talk with six questions

How we interpret life events has a huge bearing on how much stress we experience. Part of this interpreting is how we think and what we say to ourselves in our heads; this self-talk can be constructive or self-defeating. Here are questions to support realistic thinking:

- 1) What is the evidence for or against this belief? Am I exaggerating?
- 2) Are there other possible interpretations of, or explanations for, this situation?
- 3) Even if this is true (or partly true), will this make a big difference to me in a week, a month, or a year? Will I be okay if this is the case?
- 4) What are the odds? How likely is it that this will really happen?
- 5) What would happen if I didn't believe this anymore? What would change?
- 6) How useful is it for me to think this? Is this getting me what I want?

The questions above are often part of talk therapy, along with enhancing problem-solving and coping skills and knowledge. Healthy youth practicing these activities make it possible to meet goal MHMD-4.1 of the Surgeon General, which is to reduce by 10% the cases of depression occurring by 2018, which requires dropping the incidence from 8.3% of adolescents down to 7.4% in our age 12-17 population. (National Prevention Strategy June, 2011)

(Six questions re-printed with permission from William Beardslee, M.D. and Tracy Gladstone, Ph.D.)