

## Use of Coping Self-Statements

People frequently believe that they do not have sufficient time during the course of their daily activities to practise disputation with themselves. Some have found that an effective substitute for the long-winded process of disputation is to rely on well-rehearsed coping statements which can be used quickly and briefly.

The use of powerful self-repeated statements such as 'I do not need what I want!' and 'I am a fallible individual who will often fail in important tasks!', allows people to short-circuit the longer, but more elegant, solution to emotional problems.

People can easily teach themselves rational, coping statements to replace the irrational ideas they invent. Some people prefer to write coping statements on small cards to carry with them. They become easy to remember with practice. What also makes them easy to remember is that each relates to one of the three major self-defeating attitudes: demanding, awfulising and damning.

- Demanding** that we, others and the world's condition should be, ought to be, must be a certain way and if conditions are not the way they should be  
*and this leads to*
- 'Awfulising'** about this state of affairs  
*and*
- Damning** ourselves, others or the world for this situation.

Once these are recognised as destructive it is a simple process to invent personal coping statements. For maximum effect it is a good idea to start with about ten and add to them if desired. The themes involved become clear very quickly. It is left to individuals to apply them.

On the following page are some typical examples of destructive self-talk and their more constructive replacements.

## **Destructive versus constructive self-talk:**

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|---|--|
| 1. It is awful                          | 1. It is unfortunate                   |
| 2. I have to/must...                    | 2. I had better do...                  |
| 3. You have to/must...                  | 3. You had better do...                |
| 4. I am a worthless person              | 4. I am a person who behaved poorly    |
| 5. I can't do...                        | 5. I won't do...                       |
| 6. It is impossible to do               | 6. It is difficult to do               |
| 7. It/you made me angry                 | 7. I made myself angry                 |
| 8. Who am I?                            | 8. What do I enjoy/want?               |
| 9. I am a failure                       | 9. I am failing at this task           |
| 10. He/she is crazy                     | 10. He/she is behaving crazily         |
| 11. I am a better person                | 11. I have behaved better              |
| 12. I hate myself                       | 12. I don't like some of my traits     |
| 13. I need ...                          | 13. I want ...                         |
| 14. I am this deed                      | 14. I do misdeeds                      |
| 15. He/she is a shit                    | 15. He /she does shitty things ...     |
| 16. I should be rewarded                | 16. I have earned this reward          |
| 17. I can't stand failure               | 17. I don't like to fail               |
| 18. He/she should have performed better | 18. I wish he/she had performed better |
| 19. I will never master this            | 19. I have not mastered this yet       |
| 20. I like you                          | 20. I like your (list traits)          |