

RAP with Your Mind: Reflect, Affirm, Problem-Solve

EXERCISE: This exercise has three purposes: (1) to increase your awareness of your self-talk; (2) to increase your understanding of your self-talk; (3) to increase your productive self-talk. At first, you will write out the three steps of the exercise. Later, as you progress, you will complete the three steps of the exercise in your mind several times each day in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Inner dialogue has been recognized as a vital sign of mental health.

STEP ONE: REFLECT. You reflect what you just thought. That is, you paraphrase what you just heard in your mind to see if you heard it correctly. If incorrect, you ask for clarification and then reflect again. You repeat this process until your reflection is accepted as accurate. This is the same practice for what is taught as *active listening* only you are doing it for your self-talk instead of someone else's talk. For more on active listening, please read the classic *PET: Parent Effectiveness Training* by Thomas Gordon.

STEP TWO: AFFIRM. You suggest the feelings that are underlying the thoughts you first accurately reflected. You continue to suggest feelings until either you find agreement or correction. You accept any corrections as accurate for the time being.

STEP THREE: PROBLEM-SOLVE. You help your mind choose to either problem-solve or cope with things as they are. That is, you encourage your mind to either fix it or accept it whatever the "it" is. Please refer to Kevin's *Two Healthy Options* for more on this process.

STEP ONE: Ask a question in a format like one of the following suggestions: "So what you are saying is"; "What I am hearing is"; "What I understood you to say is"; "Do you mean to say ... ?" Get an answer: yes or no. If "no," then ask for clarification and reflect the thinking again. If "yes" then go on to step two.

WRITE OUT THE CORRECTLY RECOGNIZED THINKING: _____

STEP TWO: Ask about the underlying feelings. For instance, ask: "How does thinking that way make you feel?" "You sound as if you are feeling: sad, angry, hurt, lonely, ashamed, anxious, guilty, depressed, prideful, vengeful, regretful, enraged, ego pain, spiteful, contemptuous, jealous, fearful, frustrated, irritated, annoyed, etc." Get an answer: yes or no. If "no," then ask for clarification and reflect the feeling again. If "yes" then go on to step three.

WRITE OUT THE CORRECTLY RECOGNIZED FEELINGS: _____

STEP THREE: Ask for the goal. For instance ask: "What do you want or desire to be different?"

WRITE OUT WHAT IS WANTED: _____

After you have an answer to what is wanted, then ask: "Do you have or can you get the power and authority you need to problem-solve getting what you want?" Get answer: yes or no. If "yes" then problem-solve by asking: "What do you think you can do to get what you want?" "Who or what can help you to get what you want?" "How will you research solutions?"

WRITE OUT MEANS TO PROBLEM-SOLVE: _____

If "no" then cope by asking: "What do you think you can do to cope with things the way they are even if you never get what you want?" "What do you need to tell yourself to accept things the way they are without trying to fix or correct them?" "How can you be okay and at peace with life as it is?" "What do you need to think to accept it as it is?" "What will you think to make you feel the way that you want to feel instead of some very negative or stressful way?"

WRITE OUT MEANS TO COPE: _____