

SESSION 16:

Using self-talk to practice safer sex

Objectives

1. Participants will improve their capacity to be more self-rewarding.
2. Participants will practice identifying the causes of positive and negative events in ways that facilitate functional thinking.
3. Participants will learn how to employ self-talk in preparing and coping with difficult situations.
4. Participants will practice combating negative self-talk.

Rationale

Cognitive skills are essential in maintaining safer sex practices and in dealing with risky situations. If one's self talk is basically negative, depression, helplessness, fatalism, and self-loathing are the result. These characteristics do not lead to the sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy needed to practice safer sex. Furthermore without self rewarding statements, opportunities are missed to reinforce behaviors that enhance health.

How the adolescent assigns responsibility for positive and negative events is also important. Blaming oneself for events over which one has no control reduces thoughts of self-competence. Likewise attributing positive events to chance and negative events to stable aspects of oneself or the world reduces self-efficacy and hopefulness. Certain kinds of attributions will lead the adolescent to not try to practice safer sex or to give up.

Knowing how to prepare oneself for a difficult situation and then to use self-talk to guide one through it has been demonstrated to be a very effective coping mechanism. Adolescents can learn self-talk for the preparation, confrontation, overwhelming, and evaluation phases of a conflict.

Procedures

1. Introduce the day's topic. Have group members give their names and what they would say if someone gave them a compliment. Get feeling levels and check on successes. Review homework on HIV testing facilities and talking with a counselor.
2. Have each person respond to a statement in terms of what self-talk they would use to reward themselves.
3. Explore attributions through either responding to statements or through discussing blackouts in which the actors take credit for positive or negative outcomes.
4. Explain how self-talk can be used as a guide for getting through difficult situations.
5. Practice dealing with tough situations by using self-talk. Employ self-talk practice cards.

6. Deal with negative self-talk by having the boys and girls separately write the second verse of a rap song. The first verse is full of negative self-talk.
7. Build group cohesion through appreciating how group members contributed to the day's session.
8. Assign homework of using self-talk during the week.

Materials

Tokens

Feeling Thermometers

Thoughts About Causes

Blackout scripts (Lisa & Sally, Brian & Ziggy, Rita & Maria)

Examples of Self-Talk

Self-Talk Cards

Boys' Rap

Girls' Rap

Exercise 1: Introducing and reviewing

Leader says

Here we are at Session 16 of "Stay Safe!"

In "Stay Safe!" one of the main goals is to help you cope with all the different things which contribute to your being involved with unsafe sexual behavior.

Today we will be working on how to talk to ourselves in a way that gets us through tough situations.

By the way, would each of you hold up the condom that you carry with you at all times?

Have each person hold up a condom that they have been carrying with them. Give tokens to those group members that produce them.

You see, we don't want you to get HIV.

If you already are HIV-positive, we don't want you to make it worse for yourself by getting re-infected.

We want to slow the spread of HIV and AIDS in ourselves, our friends, and the community.

Also we want you to know your goals and to reach the goals you have set.

Each one of you has plans for the future.

Ask a few group members where they want to be in 3 years. Give tokens.

I am convinced that you will make things better for yourselves.

By being here at Stay Safe you have already started.

Let's go around and introduce ourselves.

Tell your name and tell us what you would say to yourself if someone gave you a compliment.

Just say "I'm Ellen, and I'd say to myself, Thanks. I deserve those kind words."

I'll start. I'm _____ and I'd say _____.

Have everyone give their name and what they would say if given a compliment.

That was great.

How are you feeling right now on the Feeling Thermometer?

Encourage responding and pass out tokens for participation.

Remember how important it is to stay in touch with how much discomfort you are feeling and to label correctly what those feelings are.

At the end of Session 15 I asked you to find a place that did HIV testing and talk to a counselor there about it.

How did that work out?

Encourage sharing of what happened. Give out tokens.

What did you do since we last met to stay safe?

I'm interested in anything you did no matter how important or unimportant it might seem to you.

Every step you take leads you to staying healthy so you can live the kind of life you want.

So what did you do?

Encourage sharing and give out tokens. Catch someone doing something good.

Exercise 2: Giving myself some strokes

You would be surprised how many people put themselves down in their thoughts.

Also many people do not give themselves strokes when they do something positive.

What we say to ourselves counts.

It helps us continue to act in a positive way.

If someone says to me "I've got some crack. Let's go smoke it," and I tell them, "No thanks," then I can say

something positive, neutral or negative to myself.

I say to myself afterwards, "That was pretty good. I refused without any problem."

Because I rewarded myself, I am likely to do it again.

If one of your friends says to you, "I like being with you. I feel real comfortable," what could you say to yourself to give yourself some strokes?

Encourage answers. A desirable answer might be, "That's great. I'm glad I made my friend feel good."

I want us to practice giving ourselves strokes.

So I will read a situation to each of you and you tell me what you might say to yourself to give yourself a stroke.

Read each person one of the situations below. Have them try and give themselves strokes. Let other group members help if they wish and if it is OK with the person.

Situations for Giving Strokes

1. You are usually shy and don't know what to say, but today you talked with this new person for half and hour.
2. You really enjoyed yourself sexually with your partner and didn't have any kind of intercourse.
3. You have been dying to meet this new person. Today the person said "hi" to you, talked with you, and then asked you out.
4. Your friends said you really looked super today.
5. Your friend was in trouble and you spent lots of time listening to what she had to say. Afterwards she said it helped her a lot to talk with you.
6. For three weeks now you have remembered to carry a condom with you all the time.
7. You went out drinking and stopped after two drinks.
8. You caught yourself saying you were a jerk, and you yelled "stop!" the put-down thought went away.
9. You want to wait a couple of years before having intercourse, and so far you are still a virgin.
10. You were really scared, but you stood up in front of the group and gave a three minute talk.

You did very well!

How are you feeling?

Encourage sharing of feeling thermometer levels. Remember to give out tokens as needed.

Exercise 3: Figuring out the causes of what happens

It might surprise you to know that everybody has a system in their heads for figuring out why things happen.

The problem is that the way we understand the causes can lead us to blame ourselves, feel bad about ourselves, and not care about keeping ourselves healthy.

Let's say that I ran away from home.

I was miserable there.

My father was an alcoholic and was always beating me and my mom.

If I told myself, "It is my fault my father is an alcoholic. I used to get in trouble a lot. It probably drove him to drink," would it make sense and would it be helpful to me?

Encourage discussion. Help clarify that blaming myself in this situation is destructive.

Below are two different exercises that you can use to help group members deal with their beliefs about causes. Select one.

(Alternative 1)

Let's use some Blackouts to help us see the difference made according to how we explain causes.

Who will play Lisa and who will play Sally?

Select volunteers. Hand out scripts and have them begin.

Lisa and Sally

LISA: Did you get him to use a condom last night?

SALLY: At least he ended up using one.

LISA: That's great! How did you do it?

SALLY: It wasn't me. He was so tired, he just finally gave in.

THE END

Thanks for the acting.

Do you agree with the way Sally sees it?

Encourage discussion and point out that by giving her boyfriend the credit, she undercuts her own confidence and power.

We'll try another one.

Who will Brian and who will read Ziggy?

Select volunteers, hand out scripts and have them begin.

Brian and Ziggy

BRIAN: I am so stupid!

ZIGGY: What do you mean?

BRIAN: I promised myself I wouldn't smoke crack last night, and I smoked it anyway. All the gang was there doing it and telling me to try some. What an asshole!

ZIGGY: You're not stupid and not an asshole. You made a mistake. You did something dumb. That's all. With all those guys there putting pressure on you it's hard to say "no."

BRIAN: I don't see it that way.

ZIGGY: I know, but a good guy can do a dumb thing.

THE END

Who is right - Brian or Ziggy and why?

Encourage discussion. Make the point that you can separate the person from their actions.

We'll do one more.

Who will play Rita and who will be Maria?

Select volunteers, hand out scripts and have them read.

Rita and Maria

RITA: I'm really in trouble?

MARIA: Why?

RITA: Last night I told Eddie "no condom - no sex." He told me to get lost. I don't do anything right in his eyes.

MARIA: Hey! You been standing up for your rights. A couple of nights ago you got him to use one. You were real tough.

RITA: It wasn't because I was tough. Some times he drinks a lot. He was too drunk to know that I put the condom on him.

MARIA: I think you got this all wrong.

THE END

Has Rita got it all wrong?

If you think so, why?

Encourage discussion. Help the group see that Rita thinks Eddie rejected her because of a global quality - she doesn't do anything right - rather than because she said "no." Also instead of giving herself credit for her characteristic of being tough, she says her success is due to chance or something unstable like Eddie's drinking. Both ways of thinking will reduce her belief that she makes a difference in her life.

All of these examples show that you can separate the person from what the person does.

Remember that you are good people and deserve the credit for the good things you.

If you act in a way you don't like, it doesn't mean you are a bad person.

You can try and do better next time.

(Alternative 2)

I would like you to take a look at some thoughts and see if they make sense.

If you don't think they make sense, why not?

Divide the group into pairs. Pass out "Thoughts About Causes." Assign each pair a thought to work on. Allow three to five minutes to prepare an answer.

Thoughts about Causes

1. I tried crack because I'm such a loser.
2. I was able to refuse crack at the party because my girl friend would have got mad at me if I didn't.
3. I am smart, so I don't use drugs.
4. I used a condom because I was lucky that my date had one.
5. I didn't use a condom because I have such a terrible memory and forget to carry one with me.
6. I refused my boy friend sex. He is mad at me. he must be unhappy with everything I do.

Let's go around and tell us if the thought makes sense and, if not, why?

Have each pair present. Some helpful comments about each thought are as follows: 1) takes all blame on self, showing no recognition of drugs being everywhere and group pressures. 2) gives all credit to girl friend, thus robbing self of his success. 3) gives self credit for a stable quality of his. 4) attributes success totally to chance. 5) blames failure on a fairly stable characteristic. 6) the cause is global - everything - rather than specific - the refusal, and thus it is hard to do anything with it.

Discuss and give out tokens.

Exercise 4: Using self-talk in tough situations

If you could slow down your thoughts, you would see that you talk to yourself all the time.

"Man, look who's coming down the hall. Does he look mean. All pissed. My stomach is jumping. I better get the hell out of here. Come on feet, move."

So we want to take advantage of that self-talk and make it help us.

When you face a tough situation, it can be broken down into three if not four parts.

First, is "Getting Ready" - that's preparing yourself.

Second, is "Face to Face" - that's dealing with it, taking the tough time on, being in the middle of it.

Third, can be "Too Much!" - that's when you feel overwhelmed, like maybe your feelings are out getting out of control.

This phase of the tough time doesn't always happen.

You may handle it without feeling that you are losing it.

Last, is "Afterwards" - analyzing it and giving yourself some strokes.

There are different kinds of self-talk for each of the four parts.

The self talk is designed to make you feel better and to help you fix the situation.

I am going to hand out some examples of self-talk in each of the four parts of the situation: "Getting Ready," "Face to Face," "Too Much," and "Afterwards."

Pass out "examples of self-talk" and go over it.

Examples of Self-talk

Getting ready

This is going to be tough, but I can handle it.

I'll take a few deep breaths before hand.

What is it I have to do?

Here's my plan for how to deal with this.

Don't take it personally.

Don't jump to conclusions.

No matter what other people say or do to me, I am still a good person.

Face to face

Stay cool, and I'll be in control.

Stick to the issues.

Don't let him rattle me.

I don't need to prove my self.

I can handle it.

I have a right to my point of view.

Too much!

I'm getting tight, so I better breathe out deeply.

He wants me to get angry.

Don't let him rattle me.

Let him make a fool of himself.

There's no shame in leaving and coming back later.

It isn't worth getting all stressed out.

It won't last much longer.

I'm not giving the control over to him.

Afterwards

If resolved

It worked out pretty well.

I'll do better next time.

It wasn't as bad as I expected.

I did it!

If unresolved

I can do it differently next time.

Forget about it.

Thinking about it only keeps it alive.

These are tough situations, and they take time to figure out.

Put the self-talk in your own words

Those are just examples of what a person can say to herself or himself.

Have you got the idea?

Now we are going to practice self-talk.

We will use the practice cards.

You will receive a card and pass it as the card says.

The person who gets the card will read you the situation.

Then you tell us what self-talk you will use.

Let's say I have passed the card and the person says to me, "Tonight you are going to a party. If Big Bill is there, he will come over and start pushing you to smoke some crack. He'll start frontin and buggin. He'll say you're a dog if you don't smoke some. What self-talk would you use to get ready for the party?"

I might answer like this: "I'll try to imagine Big Bill coming up to me. I'll take a few deep breaths just before he gets there. When he asks me to smoke, I'll smile, pat him on the back, thank him for the offer, and say 'not now.' If he keeps pushing me, I'll go over to some of my friends who don't smoke. I don't have to prove anything to Big Bill. What he thinks doesn't make any difference to me. If he gets too bugged, I can leave. I'm not letting him play the master and me the slave."

Has everyone got the idea?

Keep the "Examples of Safe Talk" in front of you because you may get some ideas from there.

Here we go.

Pass out the self-talk cards one at a time. When the first person has finished, go on to the next group member until everybody has had a turn.

Self-talk Cards

1,S-talk,S16

Pass to the person who has black on

All week long you have been looking forward to tonight. You plan to have red hot sex with this new partner of yours. You get so turned on with your new partner that you almost go out of your loving mind. You want turned on sex, but you also want to practice safer sex. You are afraid that you'll get so carried away you won't care about using a condom at the last moment.

What self-talk would you use to prepare yourself for tonight?

2,S-talk,S16

Pass to the person who has white on

You can tell that in an hour your lover will want sex. You have been trying to get your lover to use a condom, but it always ends up in a fight. You have made up your mind that tonight is the night. No condom - no sex.

What self-talk would you use to prepare yourself for demanding the condom?

3,S-talk,S16

Pass to the person who has red on

When you feel lonely, you want sex. Tonight you feel very lonely. You are with some people you don't know very well. Everyone is watching a porno video and getting pretty horny. This person keeps looking at you. You are sure that you will be asked for sex soon. You are scared about HIV and will have to try and make sure that it is safer sex.

What self-talk would you use to get ready for being approached?

4,S-talk,S16

Pass to the person who has green on

Your partner turns to you and says, "Come on. Take some crack. It will loosen you up. Sex with you is much better when you get high. Don't let me down now. I'm serious. Let's get it on." You don't want to mix drugs and sex, and you want to practice safer sex.

What self-talk would you use during this discussion with your partner?

5,S-talk,S16

Pass to the person who has yellow on

Your lover has promised you that he would put a condom on before having vaginal intercourse. You are in the middle of making love when you notice that he is getting ready to put it in without a condom. You pull away from him. He has an angry look on his face. He says to you, "Hey, bitch!"

What self-talk would you use during this face to face situation?

6,S-talk,S16

Pass to the person who has blue on

Your partner wants you to give him oral sex. He doesn't want to wear a condom. He says to you, "Wearing a condom is like putting a door between us. Besides I won't cum in your mouth. I promise I'll pull out before then. Go ahead and suck me. I'm telling you it's OK." You want him to put on a condom before you have any oral sex contact. You know he will try to pressure you and that he will get all bent out of shape.

What self-talk would you use to help you in this conversation?

7,S-talk,S16

Pass to the person who has brown on

You have been wanting to join this new group of friends. Finally you are invited to a party of theirs. At the party one of the group's leaders has you cornered and insists that to hang out with them you have to shoot up. The big shot says to you, "Come on out back and shoot some. This is your big chance and your last chance. It is now or never. If you don't come out back, you might as well move to some other town." You don't want to shoot up, but you feel really panicky. You are afraid you might break down and give in.

What self-talk would you use when you feel panicky like this?

8,S-talk,S16

Pass to the person who has purple on

Your partner says that if you don't have unprotected sex, everything is over. The two of you are finished. Your partner tells you, "I'm tired of your running this show. We are going to do it now, and we aren't using a condom. If you don't like it, leave." You don't want to be left alone. You feel like you can't handle this argument.

What self-talk would you use to get you through this?

9,S-talk,S16

Pass to the person who has pink on

You had this big fight with your partner. It made you real nervous. You insisted that your partner use a condom during sex. Your partner screamed and cried and said you didn't love them anymore. It was tough but you stuck to your position and got through it. You did call your partner a few names and you wish you hadn't.

What self-talk would you use in thinking about how you did?

10,S-talk,S16

Pass to the person who has grey on

This friend of yours is always telling people that you are weak because you won't smoke crack. You went to your friend and said, "Cut it out!" your friend got pissed and started calling you a "pussy." Your friend said that the word would get spread that you hung out around toilets so that you sold yourself. You got mad yourself and left.

What self-talk would you use in thinking about how well you did?

That was very good.

How do people feel now?

Check feelings and give out tokens.

What kinds of self-talk would use in addition to what we came up with here?

Encourage discussion.

Exercise 5: Getting rid of negative self-talk

As I mentioned before, we all talk to ourselves, but often what we say is self-defeating.

If I meet someone who is attractive and say to myself, "She's (he's) cute, but there is nothing I could to interest her (him)," my chances of being successful in having a date are reduced.

I am going to give you the beginning of a rap song.

One for the girls and one for the boys.

The rap begins negative - lots of negative self-talk.

Both versions are what a boy or girl are thinking on a date.

I want you to write the rest of it with positive self-talk.

Change the tone so that the person in the rap ends up feeling good about themselves.

So have you got the idea?

Write a second verse with positive self-talk.

Girls= Self-talk Rap

I'm on a date

with a first class mate
but I don't know

how to show

my best side
I'd better hide.
He'd like to ditch
this ugly bitch.
The only way
To make him play
Is to spread my legs.
Won't need to beg.

Boys= Self-talk Rap

This girl I'm with
Is really slamming
but my poor words
are mostly damning.
I'll bet she thinks
that I'm a bore.
Tell her off,
she's just a whore.
With my pimples
I'm like a frog.
She probably says
looks like a dog.
I'll lie and tell her
'bout the boning I've had.
Then she'll think
He's so bad.

Divide the group into a girl's group and a boy's group. Pass out the raps. Allow 10 minutes to write a second verse. Then have them come back and perform their raps.

OK, now let's hear what you came up with.

Perform raps and give out tokens.

That was great.

How do you feel now on the Feeling Thermometer?

Get feeling levels.

We are at the end of the day's session, so let's talk about the good things people did today.

Give out some strokes.

Encourage appreciation of other members of the group.

For homework try using self-talk in a situation that comes up.

I'll see you next time at _____ (time) on _____ (date).

END OF SESSION 16