



Exercise: Using Self-Talk to Overcome Barriers

We often stumble in our attempts to deal with negative emotions in the workplace due to fears that we will do or say the wrong thing. Often, managers avoid approaching a worker who is distressed because they feel that they may make the situation worse or say something inappropriate. Instead of taking action, they hope the situation will resolve itself (although this is rarely the case). Often, what we tell ourselves about our skills and abilities, in other words our 'self-talk', is our biggest hurdle in terms of posing barriers to approaching a distressed worker.

Think about an emotionally charged situation that was particularly difficult for you. Identify the thoughts (worries, fears, insecurities) that came to your mind before and during the situation. What was your worst imagined scenario about how things would turn out? How did the situation actually turn out?

Situation: _____

Thoughts that arose: _____

Worst imagined scenario: _____

How the situation actually turned out: _____

When next approaching a distressed worker, use self-talk to your advantage. Remind yourself that our initial thoughts are often inaccurate and somewhat catastrophic, and that the worst imagined scenario rarely occurs. Rather than focusing solely on worst-case scenarios, use positive self-talk to remind yourself of your many successes in challenging situations.