



## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY 2

### GENERATING SELF-INSTRUCTIONS TO DEAL WITH FEAR

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#### OBJECTIVES

Create personalised self-instructions in the form of messages that we can address to ourselves in a self-affirming way and help us to deal with the feared situation of public speaking.

#### TIME REQUIRED

An hour and a half.

#### NUMBER OF PEOPLE

Small groups of 3-4 participants.

#### TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Tables that can be separated, completed self-recording of the previous exercise, small whiteboards (one per group) and marker pens..

#### INSTRUCTIONS

You can start from the previous exercise and recover those thoughts that had arisen in feared situations such as public speaking, in order to re-evaluate the situation from a less negative point of view. You will work with small groups that will allow you to deal with the thoughts of each participant, with the roles rotating (two or three classmates will help to modify the interfering messages of the other participant).

1. Start by writing down the thoughts detected by the first participant through the self-recording exercise (detection of thoughts that generate fear) on the blackboard. Whether any change has occurred as a result of the previous exercise should be recorded (different current evaluations after having distanced oneself or having shared it with other classmates who have similar experiences).
2. Specify the messages that appear in the public speaking situation (inner dialogue as close to reality as possible). Examples:

- ✓ "I'm sure I'll make some mistake".
- ✓ "They will notice that I am very nervous".
- ✓ "I'll draw a blank".
- ✓ "I won't be able to handle my nerves".

3. Help the participant to question the validity of negative thoughts. It is not about questioning what is experienced in the anxiogenic situation, but the objectivity of the messages that appear. Questions that can help us for the reflection:

- ✓ What facts, data, evidence, objective samples... do you have that the feared thing is as you believe it to be?
- ✓ How likely is it that what you think will happen?
- ✓ Are there facts, data, evidence, objective samples... that something other than what is feared could be happening?
- ✓ Have you received comments that go against what you believe?
- ✓ Have there been different (positive) experiences, but which may not be sufficiently valued?

4. Conclude whether the original messages can be reformulated in less negative terms, which participant 1 considers possible (own language and coherent with personal dynamics). Put them in writing on the board, as alternatives next to the initial thoughts, showing the new approaches that are more in line with reality and less anxiogenic.

5. Do the same with the rest of the classmates (about 20 minutes can be allocated for each participant).

6. Finally, share with the large group and have a small discussion about the ability of the new messages to counteract the initial thoughts.

## **SELF-EVALUATION AND REFLECTION GUIDE**

It will depend on the initial thinking and each change will have to be personalised.

Possible examples of how to make the change of instructions:

- ✓ "I'm sure I'll make a mistake" → "It's not about doing it perfectly; it's about trying to do the best I know how. Making mistakes is human." / "Making mistakes doesn't have to define me or give me more or less worth."
- ✓ "You can tell I'm very nervous" → "It's much more the fear I feel than what others see, if they see it at all". / "When it's been a while this will pass, now the important thing is to focus on the script I have prepared".
- ✓ "I will draw a blank." → "If it happens to me, I will pause to calm down; then I will think about how to continue. I can summarise what has already been explained, consult the notes, ask questions to the listeners." / "If I lose track, I

can recognise the gap and share the topic of the talk with the audience, until I get myself back on track.

✓ "I won't be able to stand these nerves." → "The nervousness at the beginning is greater, but it will diminish as I do the talk." / "Everyone has nerves, it's a totally natural reaction. The less you pay attention, the less they will last."

To debate the exercise in the large group, the following issues can be raised:

- Are the new messages credible and realistic?
- What do you think would be the way to automate them?
- How do you think you can start practising them?
- Have you had experiences where you had a change of vision that was then sustained?
- What purpose do you set for your experience with the new self-instructions?