



### Can you hear your inner voice?

For many of us, an inner voice chimes in during situations that arouse our senses, especially those that perplex us. It may voice a perspective on how we understand our environment, the actions and behaviors of others, and circumstances that we observe. Our inner voice may also express 'opinions' about who we are and our own course of action; we like to call this 'self-talk'. Have you ever 'listened' carefully to your self-talk? This exercise aims to help you do just that.

Why do it? Our self-talk is an instigator of our behaviors and actions. In times, it inspires us to take a leap of faith in ourselves; in other times, it may hinder us from stretching ourselves and perhaps fully reaching our potential. Establishing a practice for checking in with our self-talk provides us with an opportunity to reflect on what that inner voice is really telling us and conduct a little *self-coaching* to encourage the kind of behavior we value and the action we aspire to take. When our self-talk focuses on an attempt to look smart — a mindset that intelligence is static — we have a tendency to avoid challenges, give up easily, see effort as fruitless, and ignore useful negative feedback. Having this set of tendencies is what researcher Carol Dweck calls having a "fixed mindset". Dweck's research has shown that taking on a different mindset — one in which intelligence is not seen as static and there is a desire to learn — promotes the kind of learning agility that helps individuals maximize their potentials. A *growth mindset*, as Dweck calls it, can be reinforced through self-talk — by praising the 'process' and recognizing one's effort rather than focusing solely on the outcome.

Before we get started on the exercise, please watch this lively video which provides a good overview of Dweck's research and what it means to have a growth mindset:

### Challenge time!

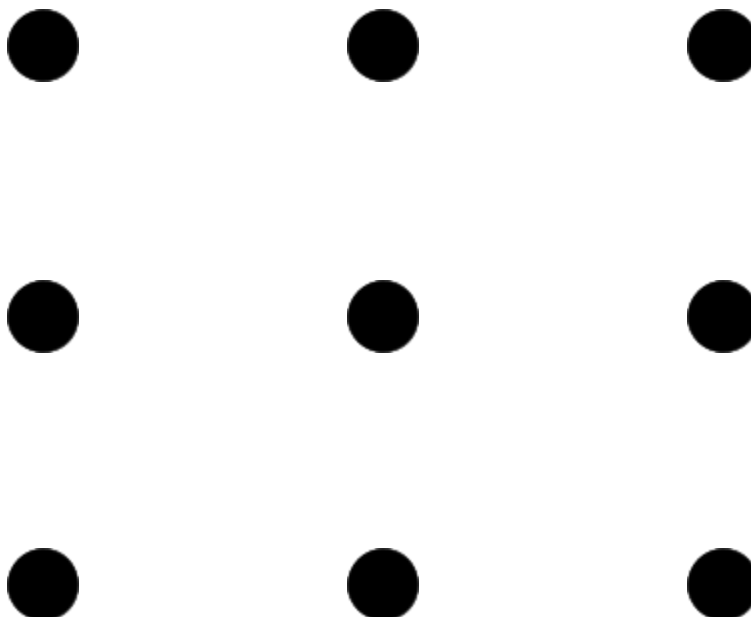
To help you consider how your self-talk may be helping or hindering the pursuit of the SMART goal you're working on with your coach, please complete the 9-dot exercise below. If you're not already familiar with it, we hope this puzzle will provide you with a little mental challenge that will draw out some of your inner dialogue.

**After working on the puzzle for 3-5 minutes, we'll ask you to stop (honest policy) and respond to the prompts that follow.**

---

#### Directions:

Connect the 9 dots with 4 straight lines without lifting the pen from the paper or going back on yourself.



*So, can you hear your inner voice?*

After working on the 9-dot exercise for 3-5 minutes, please answer the following prompts:

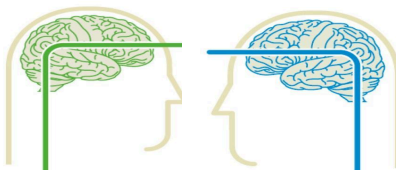
	Your self-talk statement
What was the first thought that popped into your head when you first became aware that you were challenged by this puzzle?	
Describe your attitude about continuing to work through the challenge.	
What feelings came up for you?	
What were you telling yourself that may have encouraged you to persist?	
What were you telling yourself that may have discouraged you?	
Can you list 5 other things that you were saying to yourself while you were working on it?	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

### *Interpret your self-talk*

Using the Fixed versus Growth Mindset graphic below, try to label each of your self-talk statements (the ones that you wrote above) with the description that most closely matches the graphic below. Write in the description in the column to the right of the statement. If no description matches, determine if your statement reflects a Fixed or Growth Mindset and feel free to provide your own description as an additional note.

## **Growth Mindset:**

**Intelligence Can Be Developed**  
Leads to a desire to learn and therefore a tendency to:



## **Fixed Mindset:**

**Intelligence Is Static**  
Leads to a desire to look smart and therefore a tendency to:

... embrace challenges



**Challenges**

... avoid challenges

... persist in the case of setbacks



**Obstacles**

... give up easily

... see effort as a path to mastery



**Effort**

... see effort as fruitless or worse

... learn from criticism



**Criticism**

... ignore useful negative feedback

... finds lessons and inspiration in the success of others



**Success of Others**

... feel threatened by the success of others

**As a result, they reach ever-higher levels of achievement. All this gives them a greater sense of free will.**

**As a result, they may plateau early and achieve less than their full potential. All this confirms a deterministic view of the world.**

*What kind of inner dialogue might you have about your coaching SMART goal?*

To help you consider how your self-talk may be helping or hindering the pursuit of your SMART goal, please complete the reflection exercise below. We hope this exercise will provide you with useful insights about your inner dialogue and serve as a basis for meaningful conversation with your coach during the next session.

Think about a SMART goal you might want your coach's feedback on, then answer the following prompts:

(Alternatively, you can think about something you've tried to do recently — perhaps something new or novel — that challenged you).

	Your self-talk statement
What was the first thought that popped into your head when you first chose this goal?	
Describe your attitude about continuing to work through the challenge.	
What feelings came up for you?	
What were you telling yourself that encouraged you to persist?	
What were you telling yourself that may have discouraged you?	
Can you list 5 other things that you were saying to yourself while you were working on it?	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

*Reflection*

In what ways did your self-talk encourage your effort and in what ways did it hinder? What steps could you take to have less of a fixed mindset and more of a growth mindset?

[illegible]