

Anxiety and low self-esteem are the products not only of our past and present experiences, but what we tell ourselves. They often are the accumulation of negative self-talk. To change them, we must first identify what our negative self-messages are and the feelings and behaviors they lead to. Then we challenge or "debunk" them. Finally, we create new messages and behaviors and practice them. The first table shows an example of how to challenge negative thoughts.

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
Activating event. Describe the event in which you had a negative, unpleasant reaction.	Beliefs about that you can identify in the situation. List them.	Consequences of those beliefs. Describe or list behavioral, cognitive, or emotional.	Dispute or "debunk" the negative beliefs (Column B). You may need to list more than one for each belief.	E = Create new realistic beliefs and behaviors and practice them until they become natural to you.
Margaret said she would call me last, but she didn't.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I must have done something wrong, or Margaret would have called me.</li> <li>2. I deserve to be treated well by Margaret and everyone else.</li> <li>3. Margaret should have called me.</li> <li>4. I am hurt because Margaret didn't call. Therefore my week is ruined.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I do not call Margaret and see how she is.</li> <li>2. I saw Margaret and my tone and voice were stiff and angry.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There could be many reasons that Margaret did not call, i.e., she was sick, she forgot, something came up, or she tried but could not reach me.</li> <li>2. Why do I "deserve" to be treated well by Margaret or anyone else? We hope for courtesy from others, but we are not guaranteed it. Human beings often do things we do not like. But I am in control of myself and my emotions, no one else's.</li> <li>3. Friends do try to call other friends if they have said that they will. However, I do not know what came up. When I look back at Margaret's past behavior, she has usually been very good about calling me. In fact, I can only remember 1-2 times when she did not. So Margaret is usually trustworthy. Maybe something came up, but even if it did not, this is one minor incident. Let me put it into perspective.</li> <li>4. If I had forgotten to call her, I would want to be forgiven. So I will forgive her, if she forgot.</li> <li>5. I am hurt, but I can pick up the phone and tell her about my feelings in a calm way and see what happened.</li> </ol>	<p>My moods are not dependent upon another's reactions.</p> <p>I will call Margaret and talk to her about the incident.</p> <p>I will also change my thinking so that I do not get my happiness solely from others' behavior.</p>

Now practice with your own experiences using the blank table on the next page.

<p><b>A</b></p> <p>Describe the activating event. The event in which you had a negative, unpleasant reaction.</p>	<p><b>B</b></p> <p>List the beliefs about that you can identify in the situation. Determine if they are rational (logical) or irrational (illogical).</p>		<p><b>C</b></p> <p>Describe the consequences of those beliefs.</p>	<p><b>D</b></p> <p>Dispute or "debunk" the irrational beliefs (Column B). You may need to list more than one for each belief.</p>	<p><b>E</b></p> <p>Create new realistic beliefs and behaviors and practice them until they become natural to you.</p>
	<p>Rational</p>	<p>Irrational</p>			

