

FUMCT WELLNESS MINISTRY

Children's Health at Home Family Activity - Discussing Self-talk

All adults and children have several internal voices that fill our minds with comments on daily life. Kids need help learning to recognize the one voice that they can control – the voice of their own inner commentator. **Explain to your kids that self-talk is what they think or say to themselves about themselves. Tell them that self-talk is powerful, and it may or may not speak the truth about who we are and what we can do.** It can be helpful - motivating, encouraging, and challenging us – or it can be harmful – hurting us with constant criticism and paralyzing us with fear and self-doubt.

Self-talk usually repeats the words we hear from our parents and other family members as we are growing up. **Make sure that your kids are receiving the messages that you intend to send. Ask them to summarize some of your typical responses – such as what you say when they make a mistake or disobey.** Self-talk is stubborn. It often overlooks growth and clings to old labels that no longer apply. Or it reflects the attitudes and expectations of peers, social media, and “people” in general even when those attitudes are not understood or relevant.

Managing negative self-talk starts with recognizing and acknowledging it. **Ask your children what they think or say to themselves when they are upset, disappointed, or angry.** Emotions are never right or wrong, but the ways we interpret and respond to them may or may not be healthy. **Help your kids learn how to process their feelings and thoughts. Teach them that we might notice our feelings first through changes in our bodies – tight shoulders, clenched jaws, tense muscles, upset stomachs, shallow breathing.** These physical signs can warn us that we need to examine our thought patterns.

Once we recognize self-talk through mindfulness, we can question it by asking:

Am I making this personal? Am I assuming that this situation is specifically focused on me? For example, when a friend cancels plans, do I assume that they don't want to spend time with me?

Am I generalizing? Am I considering one mistake to be a sign of complete failure? When I make a mistake on the field or court, do I tell myself that I am a horrible athlete? When one person criticizes me, do I assume that everybody shares that opinion?

Am I seeing this as pervasive? For example, after doing poorly on a test, do I think, “I will never make good grades”?

Am I seeing this as long-term or permanent when it is temporary? When I struggle to learn something new, do I think “I will **never** be able to do this”?