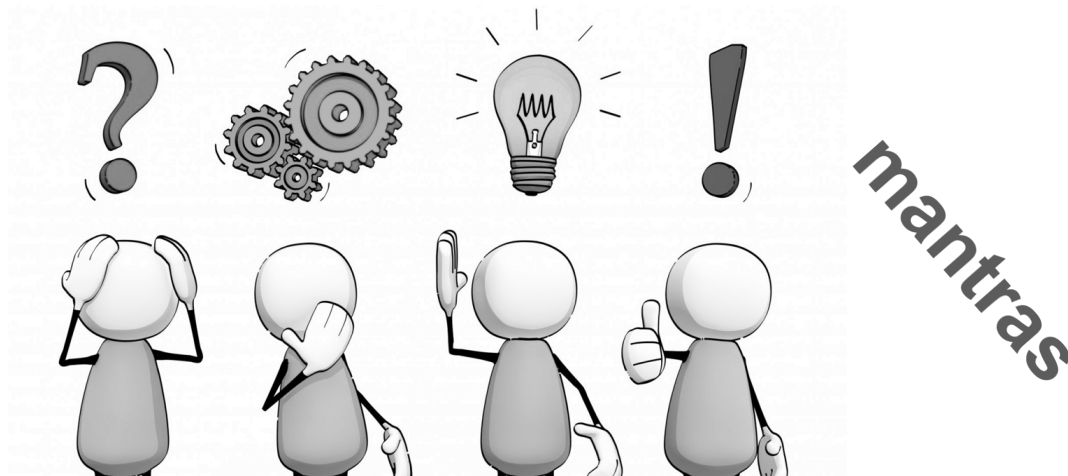


## Visualisation and Mantra examples – for great self-management skills



Visualisation and designing short mantras to use again and again works, your brain loves imagery and associations.

**Top tip** - assign your *irrational-self-talk* an identity – notice when it's yapping and correct it.

### Identity ideas:

- Imagine it as a toddler version of you.
- Or you in adolescence (hormones!).
- Or maybe picture a caveman-woman (cave-person?) or ape version of you.
- Maybe a silent-movie-star version of you with big eyes and big dramatic gestures.
- Maybe see yourself go into Ferrari or Maserati mode, too high, too fast.
- Or imagine you going into a Hulk-Smash-Things mode (anger!).

**Talk back to the distorted self-talk** - correct it, regulate it, dial it down - talk to it gently, use a soothing tone, persuade it the drama is a bit ridiculous, unpack the real facts, be rational. It is a dramatic and negative version of you, but it is not you. It is not evil or bad – it is trying to help you, but is a bit silly and simplistic, and it gets the data wrong. Ask it: “So, how is this kind of thinking working out for you buddy?”

**Breathe it down to regulate your body.** Take a long slow breath in through the nose, hold for a few beats, then a long slow breath out through the mouth, and repeat...

*Make your rational pre-frontal cortex the boss of you, instead of your trippy nervous system and your automatic negative predicting – regulate!*

**Remember to remind it:** 'It's just your trippy nervous system, there's no tiger here, breathe it down, and look again...'

Some of us are not 'calm', and so what. Some of us are always *on*. Some of us are not low-heartbeat people, we're high adrenaline people. We're trippy. We have 'hearts that beat like a hummingbird' - that's how American comic Conan O'Brien delightfully describes himself - with *zero* apology, *and* he doesn't call it anxiety. He jokes that his business partner is the opposite to him, and 'has a heart that beats about 5 times a minute, so he'll live to be 160, like a turtle'. I love that. Use it to remind yourself that: "There are worse things to be. My stress is a disorder, and It's nobody's business but mine. So what if I'm hyper-present and hyper-engaged? That can be a super-power as well as a nuisance". This is the kind of new framing that allows you to be happier, to unconditionally accept yourself, to understand and manage yourself.

**Check out these fast fun and efficient mantra examples to interrupt and edit anxiety self-talk** – take what you like from here, and edit versions of them just for you, in your own style of language, to build your own CBT tool-box. Write them down on flashcards or in your phone notes.

- You're pumped up for danger, but there is no tiger here, we've got this, breathe it down...
- Nope. Not today, you little messer. I know you're trying to help, but you're getting it wrong. That's not true. It's inaccurate. Thinking that way costs me too much.
- There you go, mind-reading again. These are my thoughts not theirs. I'm just guessing, and I'm not very good at it. I do not have mind reading skills. I go for negative guesses but actually I have no idea how they're evaluating me. Or even if they're bothered evaluating me to the extent that I'm imagining. It's just as likely they're caught up with their own stuff and are in their own moment. I could make ten guesses about what people are thinking, but they're just guesses. And, even if somebody does think little of me, I don't have to agree with them.
- If I, as a fallible human, have some distorted thinking and drama, so might others. People are not their behaviours, they can *behave* badly sometimes, but it doesn't literally mean they *are* bad. Let it go. Be present.
- I don't need to seek reassurance and value from others and how they treat me – I am of value and doing my best – and learning how to regulate and reinvent – I'm ok, it's ok.
- Hey, that's a little over-dramatic, don't you think? When I listen to you, I get pumped up. Dial it down, be rational, reason with your thinking mind, not your 'feeling' mind. Feelings aren't facts.

- Oops, here's my trippy nervous system revving up again. I'm ok, it's ok, Breathwork time! breath slowly in, hold, then slowly out. If I regulate the oxygen it will regulate the adrenaline and cortisol.
- I am not my behaviour. My behaviour is something I do sometimes. I can BE Quiet. I can BE uncomfortable. I can BE awkward. Somewhat sometimes. And so what, it's nobody's business but mine. I'm doing my best. I am of value. The anxiety is not literally me. Others don't really know me, and that's ok. They don't have the complete picture. I'm a work in progress. I can reinvent myself any time through *learning and doing*.
- Here she is – the messy bitch who lives for the drama. Look, I love you little one, and I'll call on you if the apocalypse or zombie plague comes, but right now you're not really helpful.
- Oh, here you go - 'comparing and rating' again, knock it off, what other people have or what they do is nothing to do with me, I do my best and have value and my own journey and purpose.
- Uh-oh, here's Hulk. Get lost big guy, you get me into trouble.
- Oy vey, here's Low Frustration Tolerance again. Look, that's ridiculous. It's not helpful to keep thinking 'I cannot, and will not, and should not have to tolerate this thing I find frustrating'. I can because it's just reality. Dial it down. Know what you can control and what you cannot control. Be cool.
- Try an 'abstract rational thinking' exercise - jump into the shoes of somebody who upset you. Objectively riff through a few scenarios where they feel righteous and justified in what they are doing. They have agency - they're allowed to make their own choices. You don't have to like it, you can be sad and disappointed, that's normal, you can be annoyed, that's normal – but it is irrational to demand that they not think and feel and behave the way that they do. And if you have rage you won't be able to communicate effectively - attempt to understand the *other humans*, show them the kindness and patience you would like for yourself...
- Oops, there my sizzling adrenaline goes again, for no reason at all. I'm accidentally in Maserati Mode – too fast, too high... \*breathe it down
- Ah stop it you little busy-body. That's not rational. Stay out of it. \*reframe
- I'm allowed to be sad and disappointed when people don't respond to me the way I'd prefer – but despair and depression and anxiety and anger is a bit over the top. I'm doing my best. I get another shot every day with the other humans!
- What if I work on being present and listening? And give myself a break from what I think are 'rules' for social performance? I'd PREFER it if I was cool and comfortable socially all the time .... but I

don't demand it, because that would be silly and unrealistic. My stress is a disorder, that's not a crime, it's a science thing, and I'm working on it.

- Buddha says 'with our thoughts, we make our world' – I have the power to remake my world, endlessly, as a philosophy for living.
- I can learn to be more present – to focus on what is rewarding and stimulating about any social situation. I am good enough - I don't have to perform – I can be the quiet smiley person if I feel like it. And I can still mindfully enjoy the conversation – the drinks – the food – the music, whatever is going on. I can listen, and if my brain sparks associations with something I might contribute to the conversation -if I feel physically safe and okay, I will contribute. If I'm shaky I probably won't, and that's okay. The experience is still mine either way.
- I've had a bad experience with this person(s) before - but that doesn't have to determine my destiny with them. And it doesn't mean I can't be part of this social group. I can activate my inner buddha and give without demanding to get, I can love without demanding to be loved, for me, for my lived experience, not necessarily for them. I can show respect to everybody simply because we're all humans doing our best in this moment, based on what we're thinking and feeling at time.
- Ok - trippy time - Cool down there little monkey. There is no tiger here. We're ok, we've got this. \*Breathe it down. Focus and listen. Move yourself into a different space.
- Just because I 'feel' bad doesn't make it bad. I have all the feels all the time because my stress is a disorder – I can name and tame my feelings. What is the appropriate emotional response to this situation?
- Feelings are not facts - just because I feel fear doesn't mean it is a bad dangerous situation. It's just my trippy nervous system messing with my data. It will regulate over time as I learn to breathe it down and be present.
- If somebody says, 'oh you're blushing' or 'you're very shy' or 'are you ok, you seem nervous' or 'you don't say much do you?', they are being insensitive and behaving poorly – that's about them not me, and they probably don't even know the effect of what they're saying. I can respond by saying 'oh, thanks for pointing that out buddy' and eyeroll. Or I can say 'yeah, I'm in stress-mode at the moment, I'm malfunctioning a bit, carry on and ignore it' and fake smile. Or I might be surprised in the moment and say nothing – and so what. \* I will aim not to be mortified and scarper and go over and over it endlessly forevermore – that's not rational.
- Be mindful - notice five things: feel the weight of your body on your feet. Rub your hand. Touch your hair. Place a hand on your knee. You are here. Be present.