

## **CBT self-talk mantras to regulate anxiety in the style of Dr Albert Ellis**

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Dr Albert Ellis was a pioneer and founding father of CBT – he is known for his original ‘rational emotive behavioural therapy’ (REBT) psychology models, which focussed on working with the client to uncover and examine and challenge ‘irrational beliefs’ (cognitive distortions), replacing them with rational evidence based thinking.

This handout shows ideas for short CBT self-talk mantras inspired by the Dr Ellis style – when you feel the sizzle of physical and emotional anxiety, you can thought-stop and recite one or more of these to yourself (pick your favourites). They can help you regulate by changing the way you think about and respond to anxious situations. Think different. Feel different. Behave different. With CBT.

- “I can tolerate discomfort; I’d prefer if I never had any, but it’s not the end of the world.”
- “Anxiety is uncomfortable, not unbearable.”
- “I don’t need to be overly dramatic; I can handle this situation when I look at it clearly.”
- “I am not my anxiety; it’s just a trippy nervous system and feelings, not my ‘identity’.”
- “What’s the evidence that this situation is as bad as I ‘feel and fear’ – feelings are not facts, what are the facts?”
- “Challenging irrational thoughts helps me stay calm and regulated.”
- “I don’t need others’ approval to feel okay about myself – I’m doing my best and that’s all anybody can do.”
- “I am resilient; I can cope with adversity, I’ve faced challenges before and come out the other side.”

- “I accept uncertainty as a part of life; it doesn’t have to paralyze me, I can accept facts.”
- “I am in control of my response to anxiety; I choose to intentionally observe and design different responses wherever I can.”
- “I’m not responsible for everything; it’s okay to let go of unnecessary burdens, and to define healthy expectations and boundaries.”
- “Self-compassion is a strength; I’m human and allowed to make mistakes, and to learn from them.”
- “I can’t control everything, but I can decide how I will react to stressors.”
- “I can challenge my unrealistic ‘musts’ and ‘shoulds’ and ‘oughts’; they’re old ideas and opinions – I am better off changing them to new realistic preferences instead.”
- “I can manage my anxiety by controlling my breathing – 4 seconds in through the nose, hold for a few beats, four seconds slowly out through the mouth... I am regulating my trippy nervous system with intention – I’m ok, it’s ok...”
- “Every day, I’m getting better at understanding and managing my anxiety.”
- “I can learn from my anxious moments and build skills to understand and manage patterns in the future.”
- “I choose to focus on what is in my control, and to accept and manage what is not in my control.”
- “I am not defined by my anxiety; I am more defined by my intentions and actions -and they are organic and can change.”
- “I embrace and accept discomfort and stress hormone surges as a human condition.”
- “Even if my body feels anxious, I can handle it and still live a fulfilling life.”

- “Irrational fears are just that – irrational. I can choose to focus on reality.”
- “Discomfort is temporary, and I can tolerate it; I’m ok, it’s ok.”
- “Embracing discomfort leads to growth; I can try exposure therapy and collect evidence of what actually happens, and get better at living my best life.”
- “Anxiety’s irrationality weakens as I face it head-on with rational thoughts.”
- “Uncomfortable sensations don’t have to ruin my day.”
- “I refuse to be overly dramatic today; I’ll deal with whatever comes my way.”
- “Anxious feelings are not threats; they’re just my body’s reaction to stressors.”
- “Feeling anxious won’t control me as I learn to understand and manage it.”
- “Challenging anxious thoughts strengthens my rational pre-frontal cortex and rewires my brain.”
- “My body’s sensations are not dangerous; they’re reminders of my strength as a primal being.”
- “I acknowledge my anxiety, but I won’t let it dictate my actions.”
- “Anxiety can’t harm me physically; it’s just a response to my thoughts.”
- “Each time I face and accept anxiety, I build my tolerance for discomfort.”
- “I can separate myself from my anxious feelings; I am not defined by them, and they’re nobody’s business but mine.”
- “I can choose thoughts that empower me, even when my body feels anxious.”
- “I won’t avoid situations due to anxiety; I’ll confront them with reason.”

- “Challenging irrational beliefs weakens anxiety’s surge.”
- “My body’s response to anxiety is a sign of my vitality, not my weakness.”
- “Accepting and understanding my amazing brain and fight or flight changes its effect on me.”
- “Physical sensations are fleeting; micromanaging my life to hide away from them limits my life experience.”

Remember, Albert Ellis's approach in Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) emphasizes challenging irrational beliefs and replacing them with rational and logical thoughts. The mantras provided reflect this approach by encouraging you to recognise that feelings are not facts, and to separate your identity from your anxious physical and emotional feelings. *You are not your feelings*. Feel free to adapt these mantras to suit your own personal style and your own personal experiences and the specific physical symptoms you may be dealing with.

Key Ideas :

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