

Activity to Evaluate Inner Thoughts

Our inner voices are constantly telling us what we think we can do. This internal dialogue may be sending us messages that confirm a fixed mindset. With practice, students can begin to identify their negative thoughts and learn ways to turn them into positive messages. This activity can help students distinguish between three types of common inner voices so they will be able to evaluate whether their own inner thoughts reflect a fixed mindset or a growth mindset.

1. **Stuck-up:** An inner stuck-up voice also sends fixed-mindset messages, but these messages emphasize one's current capabilities. This confident, know-it-all attitude often keeps a person from even considering putting in more effort or trying to improve: "I've done this before; I don't have to prove myself," "This is so easy that I'm not even going to try," "It's not *my* fault it didn't work out; it's someone else's fault," and "My parents say I'm the best player on the team."
2. **Stuck-down:** An inner stuck-down voice sends fixed-mindset messages that seem to confirm someone isn't smart or talented and shouldn't even try to improve: "I'm not smart," "I'm a loser," "Why should I even try? I always mess up," "Nobody in my family is good at this," and "If my team loses, my teammates will probably blame me because I'm not a very good player."
3. **Coach:** Coach's motto is "With effort, you can do it!" An inner coach voice always says encouraging statements that promote a growth mindset, such as, "Keep trying," "Give it another shot," "Think about what you can do better next time," "You can learn from this," and "Stick with it."

This activity has two parts. For part 1, select four students to role-play the following scenarios. One student sits in a chair and reads out loud the scenario description. The other three students stand behind the chair and act as the seated student's potential inner voices, offering their thoughts about the scenario task. Encourage them to really add gestures and tone to emphasize their points of view.

After the four students have role-played, part 2 of this activity involves opening up a class discussion about each character's statements. Ask students to give examples of times they've experienced similar inner voices. Then, ask all students in the class to write their own scenarios, whether they're made-up scenarios or situations that the students have encountered. Invite students to share and act out new dialogues.

Scenario 1

This scene is about trying new things. The assignment is that I must give a Power-Point presentation to the class.

1. **Stuck-up:** "This is a stupid assignment. I've been making and posting viral videos online for years. I did PowerPoint presentations back in second grade! Forget it!"
2. **Stuck-down:** "Oh, great! I know that my presentation will suck. There will probably be technical problems, and I'll look like an idiot. I'll never have enough time to get it finished. I don't have anybody to help me anyway."
3. **Coach:** "Yikes! This could be a little scary, but I've always wanted to learn how to do a PowerPoint presentation. I wonder who I could ask to help me. I guess I'd better not wait till the last minute for this. I might actually learn something!"

Scenario 2

This scene is about sticking with something. I have just joined a soccer team, and I'm thinking of quitting.

1. **Stuck-up:** "I don't know why I should keep going to practice. I'm one of the best players on the team, and I really don't feel challenged. Most of the other players are real losers. I'm way above this level of play."
2. **Stuck-down:** "Ugh! This is so hard! I've never even played this level of soccer before. These players have all played way more than me. My ankle's been bothering me, so that would be a good excuse. I think I'd rather be at home playing video games."
3. **Coach:** "Even though I don't really look forward to practice, I still always end up having a great time. I've been watching a few of the other players to see what they do. I think my running is getting better, and I'm definitely playing better with my teammates. I'm actually having some fun out there."

Scenario 3

This scene is about setbacks and failures. I just got my grade on the mathematics test—I got a D!

1. **Stuck-up:** "This was a ridiculous test! There were hardly any problems on it. I'm used to way harder tests than this. The problems weren't even like the ones I've had before. I could have easily passed this if there had been more time."
2. **Stuck-down:** "Here we go again—another chance to show everyone how bad I am at mathematics! Everyone saw my grade. I give up! Mathematics is hard for my brother too, so I think it runs in the family. I'm going to act like I don't even care."
3. **Coach:** "Darn! I was hoping that my grade was a little better than this. I guess I will have to study more next time. Maybe I can ask my classmate who sits in front of me if she could help me learn."