

Positive Self Talk

Telling yourself what you *should* do can be helpful, but it can also be depressing if you get sick and miss class, or skip an assignment while you're working on a big paper for another class, or you work really hard and then get a grade that's lower than you expected. So statements like "I will do... {insert your favorite good study behavior here}" can backfire and make you feel worse.

Positive self-talk statements are statements you can say any time that will encourage you, help you think more freely and get you back on track. Here's some examples:

I can do math. I can do this. I'm good at math. Math is fun.
Math is easy. Math isn't hard. Math isn't that hard.
I am smart. I can conquer this problem.

These work, but some people have a hard time believing them. You need positive self-talk that you believe.

Math is only as hard as I make it out to be. Math isn't hard if I study and try.
Math is only hard at first. Math can be fun. Math is cool.
I am smart enough to learn / understand math. I can be good at math.
I don't have to be "good at math" to do well.

Using words like "easier" or "helps" can change a "I should do this..." to a positive self-talk statement:

Math gets easier when I practice doing the problems / use the MathXL help.
I learn more math when I ask questions/ see a tutor / ask my friend.
Studying helps a lot! Going to class keeps me on track!
If I keep practicing / doing homework / taking notes / seeing a tutor / asking for help, I will get better.
Organization saves me time.

Some people like to remember how they feel:

I really like it when I get a problem right.
I feel good about myself when I get a problem.
I feel better about Math when my notes are neat and organized.
It's easier to study when I do it right away.
I understand math more when I do my homework every day.
This problem is not as difficult as I thought.

Some people like to know what math can do for them:

The more math I learn, the more money I will make.
Learning math makes me smarter.
Hard work pays off. I am responsible for my grade in this class.
Math makes my brain more organized.
I will be a better and smarter student in the end.
Math is making me more systematic / more logical / more analytical.
I will not settle for less. I paid for this class – I will pass it.
Doing my homework will get me out of this class.

Most people can believe that things are improving:

Every time I do my homework, I get better at math.
My hard work in math is paying (or will pay) off.
When I keep breathing, I am calmer while I'm doing my math.
If I keep working, I will do better than I'm doing now.
The secret of getting ahead is getting started.