

Cumulative Self-Talk

Beginner Diary Session Worksheet

Audio · Video · Text

Light scaffolding, not rules.

This worksheet is for people starting out with Cumulative Self-Talk (CST) who want to make simple audio, video, or text entries and gradually build a practice that actually goes somewhere.

You do not have to fill in every section, every time. Use the bits that help you today and ignore the rest. The work is cumulative: many short, honest sessions beat an occasional heroic effort that wipes you out.

What this worksheet helps you develop

By using this worksheet regularly, you are quietly training several skills:

- **Media skills**

Getting more comfortable talking to a microphone or camera, and shaping text on the page

Learning how audio, video, and text each change how you express yourself

- **Attention and noticing**

Shifting from vague rumination to specific details, scenes, and moments

Catching what you would usually skim past

- **Emotional and narrative literacy**

Hearing the stories you tell about yourself and your life

Spotting small counter-examples that complicate the usual script

- **Pacing and boundaries**

Keeping sessions small and humane rather than overdoing it

Practising saying: this is enough for today

- **Thinking-about-thinking**

Noticing cognitive biases and psychological defences without pathologising yourself

Learning how your mind protects, distorts, and sometimes helps you

- **A healthier relationship with technology**

Turning everyday devices into instruments that serve you, rather than sources of constant noise

Short-term, this means leaving each session with a clear entry, a better sense of today, and a bit more breathing space.

Long-term, you are building:

- An archive you can search and learn from
- A stronger, more relaxed voice on audio, video, and text
- More ballast, less confusion, and enough clarity to make life a little easier

1. Session snapshot

Ground the session in time, place, and format. CST is a craft over time, not a one-off event.

- **Date:**

- **Time:**

- **Where are you?**

Home · outdoors · public place · other

- **Session number or phase**

(for example: first attempt · getting going again · part of a steady run)

- **Main format for today**

☐ Audio

☐ Video

☐ Text

☐ Mixed

- **Planned length**

(keep it modest: for example, 5–10 minutes, one page, one short clip)

- **Actual length**

(fill in afterwards)

2. Before – setting up today's diary session

2.1 A tiny, realistic plan

CST favours small, repeatable units over heroic marathons.

- What is the briefest realistic unit for today?

(for example: five minutes audio · one page text · a single video clip)

- Where does this session sit in your broader CST practice?

(for example: first experiment · re-starting after a gap · continuing a theme)

2.2 Intention and limits

Intention is a light lens, not a target. Limits stop you trying to fix your entire life in one sitting.

- In one or two lines, what is today's intention?
(for example: notice a mood · think aloud about one decision · capture a memory)

- What are you **not** doing today?
(for example: no total life review · no deep dive into a raw topic · no solving everything)

2.3 Choosing medium and audience

Who you imagine listening or reading alters what feels sayable.

- Which medium are you using and why today?
 - [] Audio – faster, closer to thought, less pressure on appearance
 - [] Video – body, face, tone all present; more performative, but richer
 - [] Text – slower, more structured; easier to edit and cut

A note on why this fits today:

- Who is the imagined audience for this entry?
 - ☐ Future self only (private archive)
 - ☐ Self plus a small trusted circle
 - ☐ Might one day be made public
 - ☐ Not sure yet
 - How does that audience choice shape tone and content?
(for example: more candid · more careful about names · more playful)
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2.4 Devices and environment

Reduce technical friction so your attention can go into the diary, not the settings.

- Is the environment good enough?
 - ☐ Quiet enough
 - ☐ Comfortable enough posture
 - ☐ Privacy good enough for what you plan to say
 - ☐ Light and air acceptable
 - Have you set your devices to serve the task?
 - ☐ Do Not Disturb on
 - ☐ Recording or document set up and named
 - ☐ Mic and camera roughly checked
 - ☐ Battery and storage not about to die
 - Any notes about environment or tech that might shape today's entry?
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2.5 Biases and defences – gentle expectations

Cognitive biases and psychological defences are ordinary human kit. The aim here is light noticing, not self-attack.

- Which thinking patterns are likely to show up today?
 - ☐ Cherry-picking evidence that proves what you already believe
 - ☐ Catastrophising or globalising from one event

☐ Single-cause explanations where life is probably messier

☐ All-or-nothing thinking

☐ Other: _____

- Which self-protection habits might appear?

☐ Intellectualising (staying in clever talk rather than feeling)

☐ Minimising (saying it is nothing when it clearly bothers you)

☐ Avoidance or topic-jumping

☐ Joking to dodge discomfort

☐ Other: _____

- How will you respond when these show up?

(for example: name it briefly · take a breath · slow down · change medium next time)

3. During – noticing while you go (or just after)

You can glance at this section during natural pauses, or fill it in straight after your entry while it is still fresh.

3.1 Concrete details

Details anchor memory and keep you out of vague fog.

- What one or two concrete details showed up?
(objects, phrases, scenes, body signals, weather, sounds, etc.)

- If this session had to be pinned to a single scene or image, what would it be?

3.2 Flow, structure, and language

CST usually moves between free flow and gentle shaping.

- Where did today sit on the flow–structure dial?
 - ☐ Mostly flow (loose, exploratory)
 - ☐ Mixed
 - ☐ Mostly structure (focused, shaped)
 - What sort of language dominated?
 - ☐ Everyday, plain
 - ☐ System or clinical language
 - ☐ Poetic or metaphorical
 - ☐ Jargon-heavy
 - ☐ Other: _____
 - What did that language choice do to the session?
(for example: opened things up · created distance · intensified feelings)
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3.3 Storylines and small exceptions

We all have default stories; CST is interested in both the story and the bits that do not quite fit it.

- What was the main storyline today?
(for example: always failing · nobody cares · I have to do everything · I always cope)
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- Did any small counter-example appear, even briefly?
(a moment when things were different, less bleak, more hopeful, more complicated)
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- Did you manage to notice or highlight that counter-example in the moment?
How?
-
-

3.4 Power, platforms, and feel

Power and platforms shape what gets said.

- Were there any power arrangements in the background?
(for example: employers, services, family expectations, social media norms)
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- How did the chosen medium steer pace and feel?
 - ☐ Audio nudged you into flow and spontaneity
 - ☐ Text slowed things down and made them more precise
 - ☐ Video increased self-awareness or performance
 - ☐ Other: _____
 - Did any imagined audience or platform expectation limit or expand what you felt able to say?
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3.5 Biases and defences in action

- Which biases actually showed up?
 - ☐ Cherry-picking
 - ☐ Globalising from one episode
 - ☐ Single-cause explanations
 - ☐ All-or-nothing thinking
 - ☐ Other: _____

- Which defences actually appeared?
☐ Intellectualising
☐ Minimising
☐ Avoidance or topic-jumping
☐ Joking to deflect
☐ Other: _____
- How did you respond in the moment?
 What seemed to help, even a little?

4. After – title, tags, and tiny next steps

This is where you protect the cumulative side of CST: naming, tagging, and making the entry findable and useful later.

4.1 Title and one-line context

- Working title for this entry:

- One-line context
 (place · time · why it mattered today)

- If you had to pick one sentence as the spine of this entry, what would it be?

4.2 Tags and retrieval

Pick 3–5 tags so you can find this entry again.

- Tags (people, places, themes, mood, medium):

- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---

4.3 What shifted?

CST is as much about two-percent shifts as big epiphanies.

- What shifted today, even slightly?
(attention, mood, stance, sense of possibility, a decision)

4.4 One micro-commitment

Keep this non-heroic and concrete.

- One small thing you commit to before the next CST session:

- How will you know next time whether this happened or evolved?

4.5 Archiving and ethics

Publishing is optional. Self-respect and privacy come first.

- Archiving decision for this entry:
 - ☐ Private only
 - ☐ Private for now, possible future sharing
 - ☐ Share selectively with context
 - ☐ Do not keep
 - Why does that feel like the right decision today?
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- Are you aware of privacy considerations around other people mentioned?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ Not today – note why:
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4.6 Closing the session

End deliberately rather than snapping the laptop shut or jabbing stop.

- How did you close or how will you close the session?
 - ☐ Brief spoken or written summary in your own words
 - ☐ One slow breath and a stretch
 - ☐ Short walk or simple movement
 - ☐ Glass of water or snack
 - ☐ Other: _____
 - Date-stamped and backed up?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ To do shortly
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5. Short-term and long-term: what you get from using this

Short-term

Each time you use this worksheet, you are likely to leave with:

- A concrete audio, video, or text entry rather than just good intentions
- A named intention, a clear end, and a sense of completion
- Slightly sharper awareness of your own stories, moods, and habits
- A small action to carry into the next few days

Long-term

Used regularly, this worksheet contributes to:

- **An evolving archive**
A body of entries with titles, tags, and contexts that you can revisit, sift, and learn from
- **A stronger, more flexible voice**
More ease in speaking, writing, and recording yourself
Less fear of the mic, the camera, and the blank page
- **Better pattern recognition**
A clearer sense of what repeats, what changes, and what you want more or less of
- **A different relationship with devices and media**
Your phone and laptop become instruments in a reflective practice, not just sources of distraction
- **Incremental life adjustments**
Not grand reinventions, but steady tweaks in how you spend time, where your attention goes, and how you respond to the texts and pressures of your life

Taken together, this worksheet is less about ticking boxes and more about building a habit: voice first, then shape; flow, then structure; over years, not weeks. You are learning to make your own media ecology work for you, one modest session at a time.