

Cumulative Self-Talk (CST)

Beginner Session Worksheet – Audio, Video, Text

Cumulative Self-Talk (CST) is a slow, steady, creative practice: you speak, write, or record yourself regularly and build an archive over time. This worksheet is light scaffolding for a single CST session – not a set of rules.

You do not have to fill in every section every time. Pick what helps today. Leave the rest. The point is to make short, honest audio, video, or text entries that add up.

What this worksheet is for

This worksheet helps you:

- Set up a small, realistic CST session
- Match mode to mood (audio, video, text)
- Notice how language, devices, and surroundings shape what you say
- Capture what shifted and what to do next in a non-heroic way

Think of it as a rehearsal room for your life, rather than a performance for anyone else.

What you develop over time

Short-term (this week to a few weeks)

By using this worksheet with your audio, video, or written entries, you will start to:

- Get more comfortable hearing and seeing yourself
- Pace yourself instead of trying to fix your life in one sitting
- Frame each session with a simple intention instead of drifting

- Notice storylines you repeat about yourself and your situation
- Spot small exceptions and counter-examples that do not fit the usual script
- Match the medium to what you need:
- Audio for intimacy and flow
- Text for detail and structure
- Video for presence and connection

Long-term (months to years)

Used regularly, this same worksheet supports:

- Building a living archive of your own thinking, feeling, and experimenting
- A more fluid, adaptable sense of identity – not fixed in plaster
- Better self-knowledge about your habits, triggers, and strengths
- A stronger critical sense: seeing where your stories are narrowed by fear, habit, or other people's expectations
- More ease with everyday technology, so devices work for you rather than the other way round
- A craft mindset: you become someone who knows how to set up, run, and close a reflective session, rather than relying only on one-off breakthroughs

CST is personal practice, not a substitute for medical or psychological care. If you are in crisis or at risk of harm, seek appropriate support alongside any diarying.

1. Session Snapshot

Use this to root the session in time, place, and format. It turns one-off entries into part of a cumulative project.

Date:

Time started:

Session number or phase

(e.g. first try, rebuilding momentum, checking in on a theme)

Main format for this entry (tick or circle)

- Audio
- Video
- Text
- Mixed

Where are you doing this?

- Home
- Outdoors
- Public space (café, park, etc.)
- Online space (platform, app)
- Other:

Planned length for this entry

(e.g. five minutes audio, one page, one short video)

Actual length (afterwards):

2. Before – setting pace, intent, and medium

The aim here is modest, realistic framing. CST works better as five honest minutes, repeated often, than as a heroic one-hour monologue you never repeat.

2.1 Small, realistic plan

What is the smallest, doable unit for today?

(e.g. five minutes audio, half a page, a single video scene)

Where does this session sit in your wider CST practice?

- First experiment
- Getting going again after a gap
- Carrying on a long-running theme
- Testing a new angle or topic
- Other: _____

2.2 Intention for today

Intention is a lens, not a target. It steers what you notice.

In one or two lines, what is this session broadly for?

(e.g. notice a mood, test an idea, talk through a decision, log a day)

What are you not trying to do today?

(e.g. no total life overhaul, no forced closure, no deep dive into fresh wounds)

Keeping a clear 'not today' list protects you from overload and drama.

2.3 Audience, context, and boundaries

Who you imagine listening or reading shapes what feels sayable.

For this entry, who is it mainly for?

- Just me, in a private archive
- Me plus one or two trusted people

- Maybe public later, if it seems right
- Not sure yet / shifting

How does that choice affect your tone today?

(does it make you more open, guarded, performative, playful, cautious?)

Boundaries for this session

(what you will not dwell on, or will only touch lightly)

- Topics to avoid or only glance at:

- People you will not describe in detail:

- Time limit or energy limit you want to respect:

2.4 Tricky habits of mind – gentle anticipation

We all have biases and psychological defences. The job is not to get rid of them, but to spot them and carry on.

Which habits are likely to turn up today?

(tick or add your own)

- Confirmation bias (only noticing what proves your point)
- Catastrophising (turning one worry into a whole disaster)
- All-or-nothing thinking
- Telling the story as if there is only one cause
- Minimising (saying it is nothing when it clearly matters)
- Joking to dodge discomfort
- Avoiding certain topics or jumping away from them
- Other:

How will you respond when you notice one of these?

(e.g. name it gently, slow down, switch to text, breathe, carry on)

2.5 Devices and environment

CST uses everyday tech, but tech can get in the way if you do not set it up.

Is the environment good enough for this entry?

- Quiet enough to think or speak
- Comfortable enough posture
- Light and air OK
- Privacy acceptable for what you want to say

Have you set your device to serve the task?

- Do Not Disturb on / notifications off
- Recording app or document open and named
- Mic level or camera angle checked
- Charger or battery level OK

Anything about the space or tech that might shape this entry?

(e.g. rushing on a bus, speaking softly at night, using earphones)

3. During – staying with what is actually there

During the entry, your main job is to stay with what is concretely happening, rather than disappearing into vague worry. You can glance at this section in pauses or fill it in straight after, from memory.

3.1 Concrete details

Details anchor memory and stop you floating off into mist.

One or two concrete details you touched today

(objects, phrases, scenes, body signals, weather, sounds)

If the entry had to be pinned to a single scene or image, what would it be?

3.2 Flow, structure, and language

CST moves between freestyle and structure. Both have their uses.

Where did this entry sit on the flow–structure dial?

- Mostly flow (loose, exploratory, following the thread)
- Mixed
- Mostly structure (focused questions, clear sections)

What kind of language dominated?

- Everyday, plain speech
- System or clinical talk (services, diagnoses, labels)
- Poetic or metaphorical language
- Jargon-heavy
- Other:

What did that language do to the session?

(did it open things up, close them down, distance you, sharpen things?)

3.3 Storylines and small exceptions

We all have default stories about ourselves and our lives.

What was the dominant storyline in this entry?

(e.g. stuck, always messing up, lone hero, constant crisis, slow growth, cautious hope)

What small counter-example or exception appeared, even briefly?

(a moment that does not quite fit the main story)

Did you notice it at the time, or only now? What happens when you give it a little more attention?

3.4 Power, medium, and surroundings

CST is done inside real power arrangements and media environments.

In this entry, what were the key pressures or power arrangements?

(people, institutions, platforms, imagined audiences)

How did the chosen medium steer pace and texture?

- Audio pushed immediacy and flow
- Text slowed things down and allowed more editing

- Video heightened awareness of how you come across
- Other: _____

Did any platform norms or expectations limit or expand what you felt able to say?

3.5 Biases and defences in action

Quick, non-judgemental scan.

Which habits actually turned up?

(tick or list)

How did you respond in the moment? What seemed to help, even a little?

4. After – title, context, and next step

Once the entry is done, you protect the work by naming it, giving it context, and deciding what happens next.

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 choose one sentence as the spine of this entry, what would it be?

4.2 Tags and retrieval

Tags help future you find patterns across time.

Three to five tags for this entry

(people, places, themes, mood, medium)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

4.3 Shifts and micro-action

CST is about small changes as much as big ones.

What shifted, even by two percent?

(attention, mood, stance, decision, sense of possibility)

One micro-commitment before your next CST entry

(non-heroic, specific, doable)

How will you know, next time, whether this micro-commitment has happened or evolved?

4.4 Archiving and ethics

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

Archiving decision for this entry

- Keep private only
- Keep private for now; maybe share later with context
- Share selectively with someone you trust
- Do not keep this one

Why is this the right decision for today?

Are you aware of privacy considerations around other people you mentioned?

- Yes
- Not today – note why:

4.5 Closing the session

Endings matter. Abrupt stops can leave you jangly.

How did you close, or how will you close, this session?

- Brief spoken or written summary in your own words
- One slow breath and stretch

- Short walk or bit of movement
- Glass of water or snack
- Other: _____

Date-stamped and backed up?

- Yes
- To do shortly

5. Mini-scan for ongoing CST practice

Use this occasionally, not every time, to keep an eye on the bigger arc.

5.1 Message • Medium • Milieu • Me

Message – what were you most trying to get across today?

Medium – how did audio, video, or text shape pace, tone, and depth?

Milieu – what background norms were quietly present?

(services, family expectations, online culture, local environment)

Me – what is ‘normal’ for you in CST that you might experiment with altering?

(e.g. always late at night, always audio, always talking about certain themes)

5.2 Safety and boundaries

CST is a personal, non-clinical practice, but you still need to look after yourself.

Did any of your own red lines feel close or crossed today?

If yes, what gentle repair or follow-up can you plan?

(e.g. slower session next time, a supportive conversation, a break from a topic)

Are there topics that need to be parked for a better-resourced future session?

If you are also in formal treatment, keep CST within its lane: a self-directed media practice that can sit alongside other care, not replace it.

6. Notes for the longer arc

Space for anything that does not fit elsewhere but matters over time: themes that keep returning, technical tweaks that help, or experiments you want to try in future entries.

By returning to this worksheet across audio, video, and text sessions, you steadily build:

- A record of who you have been, who you are becoming, and the environments shaping you
- A craft for working with your own attention, rather than leaving it to chance
- A practice that can quietly support you for years, not just in quick bursts

Slow, cumulative work beats perfection. Keep it small, keep it honest, and keep going.