**Language of Responsibility**

***Objective:*** *To learn the differences between self-sabotaging and creator language to better understand the impact language has on academic performance*

“The way you use words has a tremendous impact on the quality of your life. Certain words are destructive;

others are empowering” (Susan Jeffers).

Translating self-sabotaging statements into the responsibility language of Creators moves you from stagnant judgments to dynamic actions. When inner conversations are self-sabotaging and judgmental, they reduce your control over your academic success. Creator language is characterized by the acceptance of responsibility and incorporates plans and actions to improve the situation.

When **self-sabotaging** individuals complain, blame and make excuses, they have little energy left over to solve their problems. As a result, they typically remain stuck where they are. Through ongoing complaining and blaming, they exhaust not only their own energy but often drain the energy of those around them.

**Creators** use language and thoughts to improve a bad situation. They accept responsibility for their part in creating their present outcomes and experiences and use language that reflects that ownership. Next they plan and take positive actions to improve their lives. They energize themselves and those around them.

*The following examples present self-sabotaging**statements and ways to transform statements into creator language.*

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| **People who Self-Sabotage** | **People who use Creator Language** |
| **Focus on Weaknesses**  “I’m terrible in this subject.” | **Focus on How to Improve**  “I find this course challenging, so I’ll start a study group and ask more questions in class.” |
| **Make Excuses**  “The instructor is so boring he puts me to sleep.” | **Seek Solutions**  “I’m going to sit in the front of the room and try to predict the exam questions as he is talking.” |
| **Complain**  “This course is a stupid requirement.” | **Turn Complaints into Requests**  “I don’t understand why this course is required. I’m going to see if the instructor can explain how this will benefit me in the future.” |
| **Compare Themselves Unfavorably to Others**  “I’ll never do as well as John – he is a genius.” | **Seek Help from those more Skilled**  “I need help in this course. I’m going to ask John if he’ll help me study for the exams in here.” |
| **Blame**  “The tests are ridiculous. The professor gave me an ‘F’ on the first one.” | **Accept Responsibility**  “I earned an “F” on the first test because I didn’t read the text very carefully. I’m going to read more actively, make notes in the margins, and see if I can better predict the exam questions.” |
| **See Problems as Permanent**  “It’s impossible to post comments on our class’s internet discussion board. I’ll never understand how to do this.” | **Treat Problems as Temporary**  “I’ve been trying to post comments on the class discussion board without success. I’m going to re-read the directions more carefully, and if that doesn’t work, get help from a classmate or the teacher.” |
| **Repeat Ineffective Behaviors**  “Going to the tutoring center is of no help. There aren’t enough tutors.” | **Do Something New**  “I’ve been going to the tutoring center right after lunch and it’s really busy. I’m going to start going in the morning to see if more tutors are available then.” |
| **Try**  “I’ll try to do better.” | **Do**  “In order to do better, I’m going to go to every class, actively participate, take good notes, put time into the course, and meet with the teacher when I get confused. If that doesn’t work, I’ll try something else.” |
| **Predict Defeat and Give Up**  “I’ll probably fail. There’s nothing I can do. I can’t… I have to… I should… I give up….” | **Think Positively and Look for a Better Choice**  “I’ll find a way. There’s always something I can do. I choose to… I will…” |

*Translate the following self-sabotaging statements into creator statements. Use first person language (e.g., I will…)*

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| **SELF-SABOTAGING LANGUAGE** | **CREATOR LANGUAGE** |
| 1. If they would do something about the parking, I wouldn’t be late for class |  |
| 1. I couldn’t make it to class because I had to go to the doctor. |  |
| 1. She’s a lousy instructor. That’s why I failed the first test |  |
| 1. I hate group projects. People are so lazy. I always end up doing most of the work. |  |
| 1. I tried contacting my academic coach, but she never got back to me, so I never made it to my first appointment. |  |
| 1. I missed my appointment with you yesterday because my math teacher made me take a makeup test. |  |
| 1. I work nights, so I didn’t have any time to do the assignment that was due today. |  |
| 1. I wish I could write better, but I just can’t. |  |
| 1. The financial aid forms are way too complicated to fill out correctly. |  |
| 1. My friend made me so angry that I couldn’t even study for my exam. |  |

*Look at the factors your group identified as having an impact on learning in college during class last week. Write them in both self-sabotaging language and creator talk. Use the first person.*

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| **SELF-SABATOGING LANGUAGE** | **CREATOR LANGUAGE** |
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Downing, S. (2011) ON COURSE (6th ed.) Wadsworth.