

Externalization of Voices by yourself or with a friend!

This handout is to be used in conjunction with Dr. David Burns books, app, or a trained TEAM professional. If you don't know what a Mood Log is, you are jumping the gun with this handout. Learn more about a Mood Log on the TEAMCBT YouTube Channel then download one for free on David's website. (DML on YouTube: https://youtu.be/aObpLd9KyqU?si=XNq68_FTR-EYhEUe) (DML download: <https://feelinggood.com/daily-mood-journal/>)

First, what is Externalization of Voices?

Externalization of Voices was developed by Dr. David Burns because many of the classic CBT techniques, like Examine the Evidence and Socratic questioning, can be helpful but also a bit dry and cerebral. By having the negative voice literally speak out loud and engaging your brain in an active role-play, you create a powerful experiential shift. This makes irrational self-criticism obvious and empowers you to defeat it dynamically. The goal isn't just to understand a thought intellectually but to *crush it* in a way that feels real and visceral, helping produce genuine, rapid change at the gut level.

This can be very powerful when done with a skilled coach or therapist, but you can give it a go on your own too. Here are two ways to try EOv on your own but first get out your Mood Log. Get that filled out and then come back. I'll wait. :-)

Option 1 – Get a Partner:

You and another person will take turns playing the role of your negative thoughts and positive counter thoughts from your Mood Log. The person playing the negative thoughts attacks, and the person playing the positive thoughts defends. Use role-reversals when you get stuck.

4 Ways to Crush a thought:

- Acceptance Paradox: Instead of defending against your own self-criticisms, you can find truth in them and accept your shortcomings with humility and/or humor.
- Self-Defense: You can argue against the thought and counter the distortions.
- CAT - Counterattack Technique: You can talk back to the negative voice itself, "I'm not listening to your baloney anymore!!!!" Spiritual version depending on belief system: Resist the Devil / Bad Angel / Critical Self / Evil.
- Use a combo of any of the above.

Record the session so you can go back over all your HUGE wins!

Between rounds you'll see who won, then how much you won (more on this in the example script below): Small / Big / Huge

If you or your partner wins huge, ask yourself, "What was big/huge about it?"

You can write out the positive counter thought now or do it after you've crushed all your Negative Thoughts on the Mood Log.

Example Script & How to do it:

First give your partner this handout and explain what you want help with. Then hand them your Mood Log. You might say something like, "I'd like help using a role play tool I heard about from Dr David

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Burns. You'll have an easy part. I need you to be the negative voice in my head out loud so I can try to talk back to it and defeat it. You'll read one of my negative thoughts from my Mood Log in second person, YOU, then wait for me to try to defeat you. Once I respond ask me who won. If I win ask, Was it Small, Big, or Huge. If I don't win Huge, hit me again! If I win Huge, we go to the next thought. If you are up to it we could try role reversals but if that feels too much we don't have to. Would you be willing to give it a try? I have a sample script here to help us."

Script is written for two parts. The partner or helper and you, the individual. It is imperative you record this so you capture all the good stuff. You might find you have a few laughs along the way, or you may find yourself shed tears of relief. That's all ok!

- **Partner starts:** "Negative Voice speaking. I wonder if you have a couple minutes to have a chat. I don't want to be mean, but I just wanted to tell you _____ (First Negative Thought on the Mood Log - word for word, NO embellishing, ONLY one thought!)
 - **Individual:** Respond with a positive/counter/realistic thought based on the 4 ways to defeat the negative voice. _____
- **Partner:** "Who won? me or you?"
 - **Individual:** "I did"
- **Partner:** "Small, Big, or Huge?"
- **Partner (if they didn't win at all or if they didn't win huge):** "Ok, would you like to do a role reversal or try it again?"
 - **Individual:** "role reversal" (or hit me again if you want)
- **Partner (if ask for role reversal):** "Ok, you hit me with the Negative Thought (NT)."
 - **Individual:** Read the NT from Mood Log with You instead of I _____
- **Partner:** Give an example of a positive thought you think might be helpful. Try a combo of the 4 ways to crush it. See page one of this handout. It's ok if you don't win or know what to say, just give it a go. _____ After you say the Positive Thought ask "Who won"
- **Partner:** "What part was helpful?"
 - **Individual:** Responds _____
- **Partner:** "Ok, you can try that. Here we go again. This is your negative voice talking, I just wanted to tell you _____ (say individual's NT in second person You).
 - **Individual:** Responds _____
- **Partner:** "Who won? me or you?"
- REPEAT back and forth until the individual gets to huge on their own. Once you get to huge repeat with one more Negative Thought from the Mood Log and so on.
- Listen to the recording and write out the huge wins in the Positive Counter Thought column of the Mood Log then rate how much you believe the Negative Thought.

I know this seems complicated and maybe a little scary. You can listen to an example of this in action first here: [Podcast 83](#) & [Podcast #93](#) near the end of 49 minutes Among many, many other podcasts.

Once you do it a couple times, it won't feel so strange or hard. In fact, most people find it fun. The first couple thoughts tend to be sticky but then you get on a role and find you'll be winning huge most of the time.

Option 2 – The Alone EOV:

Instructions. In the Negative Thought column, write down the first negative thought from your Mood Log. Read this thought out loud to yourself and try one of the four ways from page 1 to defeat the voice. Record your verbal response then write it in the second column.

If you didn't win Huge you can try again. You can record all the negative thoughts ahead of time and play them to yourself pausing the recording to answer. Often it takes several rounds to win the first time. That's ok. And sometimes this tool doesn't work on paper or alone. You might have to try option 1 or reach out to a TEAMCBT therapist or coach. Here are a few questions to help strengthen your positive voice if you don't win huge the first time:

Is there some grain of truth you can accept with humility, self-compassion, and/or humor?

Why isn't the NT true? What is distorted and erroneous about it?

Would you say this to a clone of you who is a good friend going through the exact same experience, why or why not?

How could you attack the Negative Voice itself, what might you say? E.G. "I don't need to listen to you baloney." Or "That's a crock!"

Negative Thought (NT)	Acceptance, Defense, CAT, or Combo	Who Won?	I Won...
		I Won! NT Did	Small Big Huge
If not Huge, try again below or write the next NT down.			
		I Won! NT Did	Small Big Huge
If not Huge, try again below or write the next NT down.			
		I Won! NT Did	Small Big Huge
If not Huge, try again below or write the next NT down.			
		I Won! NT Did	Small Big Huge
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		I Won! NT Did	Small Big Huge