Affirmations for Academic Success

You can train your students to replace their negative self-talk with positive affirmations. Ask your students to write positive statements (see example below) and post them on the wall, fridge or keep them on their phones as a background or screensaver.

Students will report that they feel and study better; and they will be calmer during the exams. Just bringing up the topic of challenging negative self-talk and opening up about it will shift the uneasiness the students feel about their abilities to perform and succeed in maths tests.

You can model it and reinstate it during maths lessons and in formative assessments making positive affirmations a normality for maths classroom. Reinforcement of the positive statements during maths lessons will establish connections with ability and positive self- appreciation in maths abilities.

To keep the dialogue going here are some examples of positive statements

I am a good student

I am learning more each day

I am capable

My memory is improving each day

My mind is clear and alert

I see myself accomplishing my goals

I am a talented person

I have confidence in myself

I have good concentration

I am managing my studies well

I am getting better each day

I have studied hard and I know maths material well

I am good at problem solving

I am motivated

I remain calm and focused on my maths exam

I remain capable and confident in my maths exam

Teachers may find this practice helpful for their personal use as well. We all know how easy it is for us, maths teachers, to be overwhelmed with feelings of worry about the delivery of maths, such as not having covered the curriculum in full, nor had enough exam practice. We may also find that we develop negative self-talk about our own teaching abilities or negative expectations of student outcomes. Positive counterstatements may come in helpful as our own anxiety and worry would otherwise eventually have its impact on our delivery and could also be passed onto the students in a way that is not obvious to us.

Another danger for us is to focus on the cognitive aspect of learning mathematics and underestimate the role that emotions and confidence have on students' ability to do well in maths. Historically, maths pedagogy was driven by the 'teach more and teach faster' approach, recent studies have concluded that affective factors, such as students' self-beliefs and safety in mathematics learning have a significant impact on the working memory and ability of the brain to build neuron connections linked to performance.