

Changing Negative Labels

1. Make a list of labels or descriptors that you use to describe yourself.
2. Include what you have heard others use to describe you.
3. Highlight or circle each label/descriptor that is positive.
4. Underline each label that you perceive as negative, unhelpful, and provokes feelings of defensiveness and/or inadequacy.
5. Next to each unhelpful label, write a new statement that more positively describes you. Begin each statement with "I am . . .".

Examples of changing unhelpful labels:

- Pain sufferer → I am not pain; I am a person who experiences pain.
 - Chronic pain patient → I am a person who sees a doctor to assist me with the experience of pain.
 - Noncompliant patient → I am a person who prefers to try different, more helpful coping strategies.
 - Lazy → I am someone who does a good job balancing between activity and rest, listening to my body's needs and resting when it needs to recuperate.
 - Cripple → I am someone who has difficulty walking at this moment. (Notice that stating "at this moment" does not take away from future possibilities.)
6. How do these new, more positive descriptors make you feel?
 7. When you or another person use a negative label, correct yourself or that person with a more positive descriptor.

| Negative Labels/Descriptors | Empowering Descriptors |
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| | <i>I AM...</i> |
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