



Firefly Counseling NC
Community, Creativity, Education, Empowerment

The SHOULDs

"Should" thoughts are actually shame based language

I should _____ I have to _____.

These type of self-talk phrases **deplete** our motivation and **decrease** our self-esteem.

A quick 3 step process helps us transition from **I Should** to **I Choose** which is a transition into choice and empowerment instead of the weight of expectations and shame. Saying "I choose" **increases** motivation and empowerment through choice, instead of speaking to self using shame based language.

STEPS: When you say to yourself "I should":

1	Pause and ask yourself:	"Who made up the rule?"
2	Ask yourself:	"Do I want to keep following this rule?"
3a	If NO	Change the expectation.
3b	If YES	Shift to I choose (not I should).

Below are 3 examples:

	Thought	My house should always be clean.
1	Who made up this rule?	My mom said this, and society expects this from me due to gender norming since I identify as female.
2	Do I want to keep following this rule?	
3a.	No. And processing:	I want to create attainable goals of chores and not put pressure on myself that my house has to be pristine all the time. I want to remember I am accepted even when my house isn't perfect by other's standards.
	New phrase.	I choose to care for my home weekly in a way that brings balance for myself.

Example:

	Thought	I should exercise 3x a week.
1	Who made up this rule?	I don't know, but I want more movement in my life. I think nutrition videos.
2	Do I want to keep following this rule?	Yes.
3b.	Yes. Processing.	I want to have more stamina, but I don't want to judge myself. I want to be more flexible in my thoughts and include self-kindness.
	New phrase.	I choose to care for myself with some type of movement 3x a week.

Example:

	Thought	I have to do everything perfectly at work.
1	Who made up this rule?	Being taught perfectionism in childhood through trauma history.
2	Do I want to keep following this rule?	No.
3a.	No. Processing.	I want to do well but not be full of fear and self-judgement. I am worried of being fired and scolded. I am also a complex human being.
	New phrase.	I choose to remember I am learning and growing. I choose to advocate for myself and ask questions when needed.