You can use the following simple three-step procedure when you act as your own cognitive therapist: First, you notice your thoughts and identify those that don’t serve you. This means growing aware of your linguistic tricks and understanding what your self-talk actually signifies. Second, you dispute those self-sabotaging thoughts. You say — silently or out loud — “No, I don’t buy that!” Third, you substitute a new, useful thought.

Here is how this process would sound:

**Example One**

“I can’t write if I outline. Outlining kills the creative spark in me.”

“No! It’s just that I’m feeling anxious about outlining my article and want an excuse to run from the task.”

“I can write without an outline, and I can write without an outline. I can even write in the shower with a bar of soap. I can do whatever is necessary, and today what seems necessary is that I quiet my nerves, sit still, and outline.”

**Example Two**

“For some people, writing is easy. For me, it is very hard. Therefore, I must not be a writer.”

“Wow, was that a wonderful excuse!”

“Sometimes writing is easy, and sometimes writing is hard. So sometimes I will have it easy, and sometimes I will have it hard. Welcome to life.”

**Example Three**

“I can’t possibly write before breakfast. My rumbling stomach would distract me.”

“‘Right! Very cute, mind.’

“I can write morning, noon, and night.”