**Let’s Talk: Unhelpful thinking and Positive Mindset**

**Primary**

This resource is part of our self-care suite of resources and has been co-produced, with children and young people living in Essex, for children and young people. They have also been developed and quality assured by the following stakeholders:

* Essex Educational Psychology Service
* Health Watch Essex
* Essex Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) NELFT NHS Foundation Trust
* Essex Multi-schools Council
* Essex Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) strategy team
* Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service, HCRG Care Group in partnership with Barnardos
* NELFT NHS Trust Southend, Essex, and Thurrock (SET) Child, Adolescent and Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
* Professionals in schools and settings can access all these resources via the [Essex info link SEMH portal](https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/social_emotional_mental_health_portal_for_schools/Pages/Self-care-for-CYP-Library.aspx). Children and young people (CYP), parents/carers and professionals can also access these resources via the SET CAMHS website. Our self-care content can also be accessed via SET CAMHS Instagram account:



The resources are intended to be accessed by CYP independently or trusted adults use these resources with CYP through 1:1 conversation, whole school/group discussion and assemblies.

Please note: some of the content within our self-care resources may be emotive for CYP. We recommend that you make use of the ‘signposting to support’ section of this document should any of the content be triggering.

   

 

**Introduction**

Unhelpful thoughts are thoughts that we can have which can have a negative impact on our wellbeing. Unhelpful thoughts include always expecting the worst outcome from any situation, ignoring the good sides of a situation, and only focusing on the bad; seeing things as either only good or only bad, with nothing in between (black and white thinking); or considering yourself the sole cause of negative situations. Everyone experiences unhelpful thoughts now and again and sometimes these unhelpful thoughts can cause us to feel down, anxious and worried. It is important to think about why we have these unhelpful thoughts and, as emotion detectives, look at the evidence to see if they are really 100% true. For example, one unhelpful thought may be “I am going to fail my spelling test”- as an emotions detective you could look at the evidence and ask yourself “How do I know that I am going to fail the test? Is there a chance that I could do well?”. Unless you have a superpower that can see into the future you won’t actually know for sure if you will pass or fail. Having checked the evidence as emotions detectives our next task is to challenge them! For example, “why would I fail my spelling test when I have been practicing them at home?” By challenging our unhelpful thoughts, it can help us to change the way we think about the situation and turn a negative thought into a positive one! So, instead of thinking “I am going to fail my spelling test” we can turn that unhelpful thought into a positive one “I am going to try my best on my spelling test and it’s okay if I make some mistakes”. Turning unhelpful thoughts into positive ones is super important for our mental health and emotional wellbeing, so essential that we practice this technique every time negative thoughts creep in.

**Facts**

Unhelpful thinking may include:

* Always expecting that things won’t go well for you.
* Not seeing what is going well and focusing on what is not going so well.
* Thinking that good things never happen.
* Blaming yourself when things go wrong.

A positive mindset is:

* Accepting that things don’t always turn out how you want them to but learning from your mistakes.
* Bouncing back from disappointment and failure instead of giving up.
* Appreciating the good things in your life.
* Feeling hopeful that things will work out well in the end.

How to challenge unhelpful thoughts:

If you can learn to take a step back and challenge unhelpful thoughts by thinking about what evidence really exists to support them, over time you can succeed in changing them into more positive ones. We call this the "catch it, check it, challenge it, change it" technique or The 4 C’s:

**CATCH IT** Notice that it is an unhelpful thought.

**CHECK IT** Why do I have this unhelpful thought?

**CHALLENGE IT** As emotions detectives, is there any evidence this thought is 100% true?

**CHANGE IT** How can I turn this unhelpful thought into a positive one?

**Myth Buster**

Unhelpful thinking and positive mindset:

* Unhelpful thinking cannot be changed X
* It is not possible to turn unhelpful thoughts into positive ones if bad things have happened in the past X

**Video clips**

Check out this video about unhelpful thinking and a positive mindset:

[Automatic Negative Thoughts - Meet the ANT Buddies! (youtube.com)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVT2vUQMKUc)

Using the concept of any buddies this video explains how unhelpful thinking occurs and what we can do to stop it (Ks2).

[Mindfulness for Kids - Learning about our thoughts (youtube.com)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHm5DzlU9as)

Discusses what thoughts are and why we experience them (Ks1 and Ks2)

[Preston's Positive Thoughts - Read Aloud! Books encouraging positive thinking for kids | Minty Kidz - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIHEswZGcQg)

An animated audiobook about a boy called Preston who turned his negative thoughts into positive ones (Ks1).

[💡 Positive Thinking for Kids | Top Tips for Thinking Positively | Twinkl USA (youtube.com)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOV5O31kMp4)

Top tips for children to think with a positive mindset (Ks2).



**Resources**

* [Reframing unhelpful thoughts - Every Mind Matters - NHS (www.nhs.uk)](https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/self-help-cbt-techniques/reframing-unhelpful-thoughts/)

Explains the cycle of unhelpful thoughts and discusses thoughts and strategies to help you to reframe them (Upper Ks2).

* [KS2 Positive and Negative Thinking Chain Reaction Activity (twinkl.co.uk)](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/ks2-positive-and-negative-thinking-chain-reaction-activity-t-lf-1655205476)

Twinkl activity which explores thinking chains (Ks2)

* [PSHE Thoughts Are Not Facts Lesson Pack UKS2 Think Positive (twinkl.co.uk)](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/pshe-and-citizenship-uks2-think-positive-lesson-2-thoughts-are-not-facts-lesson-pack-t-lf-2549286)

Twinkl resources exploring thoughts (Ks2)

* Local groups and communities:
* [Youth Service](https://youth.essex.gov.uk/)

Essex Youth Service Essex – helping young people in Essex to get the most out of school, work and life through community groups.

* [Essex Outdoors](https://www.essexoutdoors.com/groups/youth-groups/)

Bringing the out the best in young people through the great outdoors through a number of community groups.

**Reflective questions**

(Try exploring these reflective questions with a CYP)

* Can you think about a time when you have experienced unhelpful thoughts?
* What do you think caused you to think in a negative way?
* Was there any evidence to suggest that this thought was 100% true?
* How did this unhelpful thought make you feel?
* How could you reframe this thought into a positive one?



**Quiz**

Once you’ve gone through this resource with a CYP try this quiz questions with them:

* What are unhelpful thinking patterns?
* What are some examples of unhelpful thinking?
* Can you give some examples of positive thinking?
* What are the four ways to challenge unhelpful thoughts (The 4 C’s)?
* Is it possible to develop a positive mindset if bad things have happened in the past?

**Signposting to Support**

For additional support we recommend you take a look at the following links with the support of an adult:

* [Getting help for your child: where to start](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/getting-help-for-your-child/)
* [Childline](https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/mental-health/?&&&&gclsrc=aw.ds&&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIqryktIeP_wIVicPtCh3QZQs6EAAYASAAEgJr5vD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds) - 0800 1111 – [when contacting ChildLine what to expect](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_KNtMOKwTco)
* [Hopeline 0800 068 41 41](https://www.papyrus-uk.org/papyrus-HOPELINE247/) offering confidential support and practical advice
* [Text ‘SHOUT’ to 85258](https://giveusashout.org/get-help/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA6vaqBhCbARIsACF9M6nG--bxZCnflhd5C3jT-d9dS48o5t6XTTTidI0MLTgwjjRAlxszRT8aAnvvEALw_wcB) for free, confidential, anonymous text support service
* [NHS 111](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/)
* [Southend, Essex & Thurrock Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (SET CAMHS)](https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/set-camhs/)
* [Explore counselling/therapy](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling/counselling/)
* [Where to get urgent mental health support from: Advice from NHS](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/)



* SET CAMHS Instagram account

**How to help a friend**

* Start a conversation about unhelpful thinking. Describe to them what it is and why it’s important to challenge unhelpful thinking for your mental health.
* Explore with your friend how you can challenge negative thoughts and think of positive thoughts about a situation instead.
* Share this resource with your friend.





**The adult box** (for professionals and parent/carers to read)

# [Catch it, check it, challenge it, change it: CBT technique: Mentally Healthy Schools](https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/catch-it-check-it-challenge-it-change-it-cbt-technique/)

Discusses the Catch it, Check it, Challenge it, Change it CBT technique.

* [Parents' Guide to Looking After Your Mental Health | YoungMinds](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-guide-to-looking-after-yourself/)

A-Z mental health guide for parents: how to talk to your child about mental health, getting help for your child, parent support groups, parent helplines, webchats and blogs.

* [Supporting others - Every Mind Matters - NHS (www.nhs.uk)](https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/supporting-others/)

Advice on how best to support children and young people with their mental health.

* [Resources for Parents & Caregivers - The Kids Mental Health Foundation](https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/parents)

You care about the kids in your life, and you want to help them be safe, healthy and happy. We have tools that can help you talk about their mental health.

* [Resources for Teachers and Coaches - The Kids Mental Health Foundation](https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/teachers)

You play an important role in kids’ lives. We have tools and resources to help you talk with them about their mental health.

* [46 Top “Negative Thoughts” Teaching Resources curated for you (twinkl.co.uk)](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/search?q=negative+thoughts)

Twinkl offer 46 resources to explore negative thinking.



   

 