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

**Secondary**

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. It's natural to feel worried every now and again, but our anxious thoughts can sometimes be unhelpful and make us feel down. It’s important to recognise that unhelpful thoughts are a completely normal human experience. It can be beneficial to step back, examine the evidence for your thoughts and explore other ways of looking at the situation. In time, this can really make a difference to our mental health and wellbeing. The way we think, feel and behave are all linked and continuously affecting one another. Sometimes though we develop patterns of thoughts or behaviours that are unhelpful. And because these can affect how we feel – and how we feel can in turn affect how we think and behave – it's easy to find ourselves in a vicious cycle. But many of us don't realise that we can influence this process ourselves and improve our mental health by doing so. Challenging and learning to replace negative thoughts is one of the best ways to help us deal with stress and anxiety, improve how we sleep and really boost our mood. In time, this can really make a difference to our mental health and wellbeing.

**Facts**

Unhelpful thinking may 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 good or bad with nothing in between (black and white thinking).
* Considering yourself the sole cause of negative situations.

A positive mindset is:

* Acknowledging that things don’t always turn out how you want them to but learning from your mistakes.
* Bouncing back from adversity, disappointment, and failure instead of giving up.
* Actively and continuously appreciating the good things in your life.
* Feeling optimistic 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?

As you practise reflecting on your own thoughts and assessing them, it should get easier. Over time, it may even become automatic and help you to develop a more positive mindset in the future.

**Myth Buster**

Unhelpful thinking and positive mindset:

* Cycles of unhelpful thinking cannot be changed. X
* It is not possible to develop a positive mindset if bad things have happened in the past. X

**Video clips**

Check out these videos about Unhelpful thinking and positive mindset:

<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/self-help-cbt-techniques/reframing-unhelpful-thoughts/>

## Reframing unhelpful thoughts: Check out our short video to get some practical tips on how you can challenge your thoughts and start to break unhelpful cycles.

[Challenge negative feelings | Anna Freud](https://www.annafreud.org/resources/children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing/self-care/challenge-negative-feelings/)

This helpful video provides some simple advice about how you can challenge negative feelings.

[Your brain is wired for negative thoughts. Here’s how to change it. (youtube.com)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ThUrVXz9j0)

Explains why our brains are wired for negative thoughts and how we can change these into positive ones.



**Resources**

[Positive thinking | Anna Freud](https://www.annafreud.org/resources/children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing/self-care/positive-thinking/)

Discusses the importance of positive thinking to help manage wellbeing.

[Self-esteem and Believing in Yourself | Tips and Advice | YoungMinds](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/self-esteem-and-believing-in-yourself/" \l "Tipstoimproveyourselfesteem)

Explains how negative thinking can impact self-esteem and offers tips and advice for changing these patterns

[Challenging negative thinking - MindWell (mindwell-leeds.org.uk)](https://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/myself/exploring-your-mental-health/depression/challenging-negative-thinking/)

Discusses automatic negative thoughts (ANTS’) and how these can feed into a vicious cycle to increase anxiety.

[Understanding negative thoughts and feelings | Anna Freud](https://www.annafreud.org/resources/children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing/self-care/understanding-negative-thoughts-and-feelings/)

Provides insight into negative thoughts and feelings.

* 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?

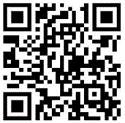
**Quiz**

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 a positive mindset?
* 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:

* [Anna Freud Centre – On My Mind](https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/)
* [Kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com/) (Age 11-25)
* [Togetherall](https://togetherall.com/en-gb/faqs/becoming-a-member-and-managing-your-profile/#:~:text=Togetherall%20is%20only%20for%20adults,is%20only%20available%20to%2018%2B.) (age 16+)
* [Explore counselling/therapy](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling/counselling/)
* [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.
* [Share any concerns about your mental health with your GP](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/seeking-help-for-a-mental-health-problem/talking-to-your-gp/) and [Understanding Confidentiality](https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/your-rights/understanding-confidentiality/)
* [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/)
* [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.