CATCH, CHECK, AND CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS

PART 2
We all have thoughts that make us feel upset from time to time. But sometimes these thoughts aren't helpful, and they can affect how we feel and respond to a situation. There are steps you can take to help turn those upsetting thoughts around. It's called catch it, check it, change it. In this story, you'll meet Addison, who is learning how to catch, check, and change their thoughts. Follow along so you can learn too!
It's Friday! While most kids look forward to the weekend break, Addison isn't feeling very happy or excited about much of anything these days.

Kennedy wants me to go to his house tonight to play video games. I'll just tell him I'm not up to it.

Hey, sweetheart. Is everything OK?

Everything's fine, mom. Please leave me alone.

And Addison is pushing family members away too.

In fact, Addison is making excuses to not hang out with friends.

And dating seems to be all they ever talk about these days.

Hayden and I have been talking for like a month!

OMG! Well, me and Dani have been going out since October.

Ever since high school began, it seems like all of Addison's friends have begun dating or have a boyfriend, girlfriend, or someone special.
Addison is feeling left out, disappointed, and really sad. Addison is even having trouble concentrating at school, and their grades are starting to slip.

Hey Addison, have you seen my water bottle?

Get out! I don't have your water bottle!

Addison's sadness is also affecting their mood and causing them to lash out.

No one wants to go out with me and probably never will. I'm unlovable.

Addison can't understand why they haven't had any romantic relationships and comes to a conclusion.

Can you relate to Addison? Thoughts run through our minds all the time. Some thoughts are helpful, while some aren't.
When we don’t meet our expectations, we often put ourselves down in a harsh or critical way, like “I’m a failure,” “I’m stupid,” or, in Addison’s case, “I’m unlovable.”

Those thoughts are common! However, not everything we think is true. If we treat our thoughts as facts, it can be a problem when they’re based on incomplete information or when they’re not helpful.

Unhelpful thoughts can affect our mood and make us feel sad, angry, frustrated, or depressed.

They can also affect how we act. In this example, Addison’s grades start to slip, and Addison pulls away from friends and family.

Instead, think of your thoughts as one of many possibilities. You’ll see that there are many ways to view a situation. In other words, the way you see your situation may be different from how someone else sees it. You might not be seeing the full picture.
There is a way you can turn your unhelpful thoughts around to be more realistic and helpful. It's called Catch It, Check It, Change It. Let's learn how it works.

**Catch It**

First, Catch It. When you're sad, angry, frustrated, or depressed, stop and ask yourself, "What was I just thinking?" This can be hard at first but will get easier with practice.

**Check It**

Addison catches their thought about themselves.

I'm unlovable.

**Change It**

Next, Check It. Ask yourself whether the thought you're having is helpful or not.

Addison, is it helpful to think that you're unlovable?

Not really. It makes me feel more upset and lonely.
Like Addison, if your thought is not helpful, move on to the last step: change it. You can have control over the way you think. Once you notice that your thought is upsetting you, you can change it by looking for another that's more helpful.

What's another way you could think about this situation?

...I can't think of anything.

Well, what would you say to a friend going through the same thing? Sometimes, it's easier to think of helpful thoughts for others than for ourselves.
I’d say, just because you’re not dating anyone right now doesn’t mean you never will or that you’re unlovable. Your family and friends love you. Try to focus on enjoying the relationships you have right now.

You’ve got it! That’s a better way of thinking about the situation.

It’s not easy to change your thoughts. Catch it, check it, change it takes daily practice. But practicing this skill will help you develop more balanced and helpful ways of thinking.

You might still have unhelpful thoughts, but you’ll be better able to manage them when they do happen.
Now that you've learned the steps for CATCH IT, CHECK IT, CHANGE IT, explore other skills in this series that can be helpful to you.
THIS RESOURCE WAS DEVELOPED BY ICF, AN INDEPENDENT THIRD-PARTY CONTRACTOR, WITH OVERSIGHT FROM A GROUP OF EXPERTS* ACTING IN THEIR INDIVIDUAL CAPACITIES CONVENE BY THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF SCIENCES, ENGINEERING, AND MEDICINE AND WITH FUNDING FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC, 200-2011-38807/75D30120F00087). ANY FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, OR CONCLUSIONS IN THIS RESOURCE ARE NOT NECESSARILY ENDORSED OR ADOPTED BY THE EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS, THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES, THE CDC, OR ICF.

THESE TOOLS ARE NOT INTENDED TO BE A SUBSTITUTE FOR PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL ADVICE, DIAGNOSIS, OR TREATMENT. ALWAYS SEEK THE ADVICE OF YOUR PHYSICIAN OR OTHER QUALIFIED HEALTH PROVIDER WITH ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE REGARDING A MEDICAL CONDITION. NEVER DISREGARD PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL ADVICE OR DELAY IN SEEKING IT BECAUSE OF SOMETHING YOU HAVE READ ON THIS WEBSITE.

*FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE GROUP OF EXPERTS, GO TO HTTPS://WWW.NATIONALACADEMIES.ORG/OUR-WORK/PROMOTING-EMOTIONAL-WELL-BEING-AND-RESILIENCE
1. WHY AND HOW WERE THESE TOOLS DEVELOPED?


HOW? THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF SCIENCES, ENGINEERING, AND MEDICINE (NASEM) MADE THIS PROJECT POSSIBLE WITH FUNDING FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC). NASEM BROUGHT TOGETHER A GROUP OF EXPERTS TO DEVELOP WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH DIFFICULTIES THEY FACE EVERY DAY. TOGETHER WITH EXPERTS AT ICF, THEY CREATED TOOLS, BASED ON COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT), TO HELP REDUCE STRESS, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION. THE TOOLS ARE MEANT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH DIRECTLY, AND FOR PARENTS TO HELP CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH STRESS, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION. TEACHERS AND OTHER CAREGIVERS MAY ALSO BE ABLE TO USE THESE RESOURCES.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PROJECT AND THE GROUP OF EXPERTS IS AVAILABLE ON THE PROJECT WEBPAGE:
HTTPS://WWW.NATIONALACADEMIES.ORG/OUR-WORK/PROMOTING-EMOTIONAL-WELL-BEING-AND-RESILIENCE.

2. WHAT IS COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)?

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT) WORKS BY HELPING A PERSON NOTICE HOW THEIR THOUGHTS AFFECT HOW THEY FEEL AND BEHAVE. CBT HELPS THEM TURN UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS AROUND TO MORE HELPFUL THOUGHTS SO THEY FEEL BETTER. EXPERTS TELL US THAT CBT IS THE GOLD STANDARD OF THERAPY FOR CHILDREN, TEENS, AND ADULTS WHO ARE EXPERIENCING STRESS, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION.

THE WORD “COGNITIVE” REFERS TO WHAT WE THINK, AND THE WORD “BEHAVIORAL” TO WHAT WE DO. CBT CAN HELP CHILDREN AND TEENS...

• “CATCH” THOUGHTS THAT ARE NOT HELPFUL, “CHECK” THEM, AND “CHANGE” THEM TO FEEL BETTER.

• LEARN TO NOTICE AND DO THE THINGS THAT HELP THEM FEEL BETTER.

• LEARN HELPFUL SKILLS LIKE DEEP BELLY BREATHING AND MINDFULNESS.

CBT WON’T BE ABLE TO FIX ALL THE THINGS THAT MAKE SOMEONE FEEL STRESSED, ANXIOUS, OR DEPRESSED, BUT IT CAN HELP THEM COPE WITH THOSE FEELINGS AND FEEL BETTER.

THESE TOOLS DON’T TEACH EVERY PART OF CBT, ONLY SOME OF THE MOST TESTED AND EASY-TO-USE SKILLS. ALTHOUGH THESE TOOLS CAN’T TAKE THE PLACE OF A MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER, THEY CAN HELP CHILDREN AND TEENS LEARN HOW TO BETTER COPE WITH EVERYDAY STRESS AND ANXIETY.

NOTE: IT TAKES TIME TO LEARN A NEW HABIT, USUALLY 30 TO 60 DAYS, SO IT’S IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS TO KEEP PRACTICING THESE SKILLS REGULARLY. THEY WILL NOT ONLY BENEFIT TODAY, BUT WILL BUILD RESILIENCE AND HELP MANAGE FUTURE STRESS THROUGHOUT LIFE’S JOURNEY.
3. WHY ARE THE PRONOUNS “THEY,” “THEM,” OR “THEIRS” USED TO REFER TO A SINGLE PERSON IN THESE TOOLS?
The language we use to describe people and experiences is important. It signifies how we express ourselves and how other people see us. Many times, in English or Spanish, we use different forms of nouns, pronouns, or adjectives that are based on assumptions about a person’s gender. Many people may not view this as a problem, but, for some people, assumptions about gender are not accurate, and can be harmful. Gender inclusive language is used throughout the modules to ensure that all children and teens can connect to our scenarios. They, them, and theirs are pronouns frequently used to refer to a single person when we are not aware of the person’s gender, and/or when a person does not identify as a boy/man or a girl/woman. For example, if a person notices that someone left an item in a classroom but the person does not know who it belongs to, the person might say “Oh no, someone left their water bottle” using “theirs” as a gender neutral pronoun. In Spanish, gender inclusive language is sometimes created using an -e, rather than a feminine -a or a masculine -o.

4. WHERE SHOULD I GO IF I NEED ADDITIONAL RESOURCES OR HELP?
If you or your child or teen are in need of immediate support, the Lifeline network is available 24/7 across the United States. You can call (800) 273-8255 or text 741741.

If you are looking to find a provider who can support you or your child’s mental health, you can call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s National Helpline at (800) 662-HELP (4357) or visit their website: https://www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment.


For additional help, visit our resources page.