CATCH, CHECK, AND CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS

PART 1
We all have thoughts that make us feel worried or upset from time to time. But sometimes these thoughts really get in our way and aren't helpful. There is a skill you can learn to help turn those upsetting thoughts around. It's called Catch It, Check It, Change It. It's a bit like being a detective investigating your own thinking. In this story, you'll meet Ren who is learning how to catch, check, and change their thoughts. Follow along so you can learn too!
THE END OF SUMMER IS NEAR. REN HAS JUST A FEW WEEKS LEFT BEFORE STARTING MIDDLE SCHOOL!

WOW, I CAN'T BELIEVE I WON'T BE GOING BACK TO MAGNOLIA ELEMENTARY. I'M GOING TO MISS MR. LARSON SO MUCH!

MIDDLE SCHOOL JUST WON'T BE THE SAME WITHOUT HIM.

REN'S THOUGHTS ARE INTERRUPTED BY THE SOUND OF A MAIL TRUCK STOPPING IN FRONT OF REN'S APARTMENT BUILDING.

I WONDER WHO'S GETTING A PACKAGE TODAY.
A few minutes later, Ren's grandmother comes into Ren's room with a box.

Ren!
I have a surprise for you!

For me? What is it?

Let's open it together!

They open the box together and Ren's grandmother pulls out a bunch of school supplies and a new backpack.

Look Ren! You're all set for school!

I don't even want to think about school!!
I understand you’re sad and worried about not having Mr. Larson around next year. He was a very special teacher to you.

Like Ren, everyone has upsetting thoughts from time to time. That’s normal! These thoughts can make us feel sad, angry, or frustrated. They can also affect how we behave.

Thoughts go through our minds all the time. Some of our thoughts are helpful, but some aren’t.
Fact?

Instead, think of your thoughts as one of many possibilities. You'll see that there are many ways to view a situation.

We also often believe that everything we think is fact, but sometimes it's not.

Also keep in mind that the way you see your situation...

...may be very different from the way someone else sees it.

For example, in this image, you might see a duck but someone else might see a bunny.
There's a way you can turn your upsetting thoughts around to be more helpful. It's called Catch It, Check It, Change It. Let's learn how it works.

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

Without Mr. Larson, I'll never enjoy school again!

Ren catches themself having the following thought.

Next, Check It. Ask yourself whether the thought you're having is helpful or not. Thoughts that cause you to feel really worried or upset usually aren't helpful.

Ren, is it helpful to think that without Mr. Larson, you'll never enjoy school again?

No... it makes me not want to give the new school a chance.
Like Ren, if your thought is not helpful, move on to the last step: change it.

You can have control over the way you think. You can take that upsetting thought that makes you feel bad and change it to one that’s more helpful.

Ren, what’s another way you could look at this situation?

Maybe Mr. Larson can come with me to my new school.

Oh honey, Mr. Larson has to stay and help the kids at your old school. What if you think about the teachers at your new school?

Hmmmm... maybe I’ll meet a teacher at my new school I really like.

That’s a better way of thinking. It’s not easy to change your thoughts around. Catch it, check it, change it. It takes practice.
Also, it probably won't get rid of your upsetting thoughts completely, but it might make you feel a little better.

If you practice catch it, check it, change it regularly, you'll start to notice the unhelpful thoughts more quickly so you can turn them around.

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
PROMOTING EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS FAQs

1. WHY AND HOW WERE THESE TOOLS DEVELOPED?

WHY? MANY CHILDREN AND TEENS STRUGGLE WITH FEELINGS OF STRESS, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION, PARTICULARLY DURING THE PANDEMIC. THESE TOOLS WERE CREATED TO PROMOTE THE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH — DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS AND BEYOND.

HOW? THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF SCIENCES, ENGINEERING, AND MEDICINE (NASM) MADE THIS PROJECT POSSIBLE WITH FUNDING FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC). NASM 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 “THEIR” AS A GENDER NEUTRAL PRONOUN. IN SPANISH, GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IS SOMETIMES CREATED USING AN –E, RATHER THAN A FEMININE –A OR A MASCUINE –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.