CATCH, CHECK, AND CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS

PART 2
This is the story of Dana who is having some very upsetting thoughts. We all have upsetting thoughts from time to time. But sometimes those thoughts aren't helpful and can make us feel even worse. Dana is learning a new technique to 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. Follow along with Dana so you can learn too.
IT'S MORNING, AND DANA IS WALKING TO THE BUS STOP.

HI KENNEDY! HI BLAKE!

DANA IS OUTGOING, FRIENDLY, AND ENJOYS TALKING WITH OTHER KIDS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND AT SCHOOL.

ON THE BUS RIDE TO SCHOOL, DANA CHATS WITH SEVERAL FRIENDS.

THEN, DANA OVERHEARS SEVERAL OF THE KIDS TALKING ABOUT AN INVITATION THEY RECEIVED TO A CLASSMATE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY.
I CAN'T WAIT FOR JORDAN'S PARTY.

ME TOO! IT SOUNDS FUN!

HMMM. I DIDN'T GET AN INVITE TO JORDAN'S PARTY. I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS.

COULD SOMEONE BE SAYING BAD THINGS ABOUT ME TO JORDAN? MAYBE THAT'S WHY I WASN'T INVITED.

DANA FEELS SAD ALL DAY AT SCHOOL AND DOESN'T TALK TO ANYONE. ON THE BUS RIDE HOME, DANA SITS ALONE.
Dana normally hangs out at their best friend Max's house after school, but today, Dana goes straight home.

Dana sits down on the couch and lets out a big sigh.

I'm sorry, Honey. You must be feeling sad about that.

What's wrong, Honey. Did something happen at school today?

I wasn't invited to Jordan's birthday party.

I know why I wasn't invited. No one likes me because I'm weird!

Sometimes, things happen that you can't control, like a friend making fun of something you said, or in Dana's situation, not being invited to a party.

Nobody likes me. I'm not good enough.

It can cause you to have upsetting thoughts like "nobody likes me" or "I'm not good enough."
THAT'S NORMAL! BUT THESE THOUGHTS CAN MAKE YOU FEEL EVEN MORE SAD, ANGRY, LONELY, OR FRUSTRATED.

THEY CAN ALSO AFFECT HOW YOU BEHAVE. FOR EXAMPLE, DANA SAT ALONE ON THE BUS ON THE WAY HOME AND DIDN'T HANG OUT WITH MAX AFTER SCHOOL.

WE OFTEN ASSUME THAT EVERYTHING WE THINK IS TRUE. BUT, SOMETIMES OUR MIND CAN MAKE US BELIEVE THOUGHTS THAT ARE NOT TRUE OR NOT HELPFUL.
Instead, think of your thoughts as one of many possibilities. You’ll see that there are many ways to view a situation.

Also, the way you see your situation may be different from the way someone else sees it. For example, you might see a duck here, but someone else might see a bunny.

There’s a way you can turn your thoughts around to help you cope better with situations that are out of your control. It’s called catch it, check it, change it. Let’s learn how it works.

Catch it

Check it

Change it

First, catch it. When you’re upset, stop and ask yourself, “What was I just thinking?” This can be hard at first but will get easier with practice.

No one likes me because I’m weird!

Dana catches themself having the following thought.
Next, check it. Ask yourself whether the thought you're having is helpful or not.

Like Dana, if your thought is not helpful, move on to the last step: change it.

Dana, is it helpful to think the reason you weren't invited is because you're weird?

Not really. It just makes me feel really sad and lonely.

Dana, what's another way you could think about this situation?

You can learn to have control over the way you think.

I'm not sure...

What would you tell a friend who had this thought?

I'd tell them that, even though they weren't invited to this party, there'll be others.
That's a better way of thinking about the situation! It's not easy to change your thoughts around. Catch it, check it, change it. It takes practice.

If you practice every day, you'll start to notice the unhelpful thoughts and be able to change them more quickly.

Also, catch it, check it, change it probably won't get rid of your unhelpful thoughts completely, but it might help you feel less upset.

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 convened 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 (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.


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 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.