CATCH, CHECK, AND CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS

PART 1
WE ALL HAVE THOUGHTS THAT MAKE US FEEL UPSET FROM TIME TO TIME. SOMETIMES THESE THOUGHTS REALLY GET IN OUR WAY AND AREN'T HELPFUL. 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 TERRY WHO IS LEARNING HOW TO CATCH, CHECK, AND CHANGE THEIR THOUGHTS. FOLLOW ALONG SO YOU CAN LEARN TOO!
It's a school night, and Terry is working on a school project they've been putting off.

Terry's focus is interrupted when they receive a text message from their best friend, Ash.

Ash wants to pick me up in 10 minutes to go hang out.

Hmm, Grandma and Grandpa have been so strict and overprotective lately. I wonder if they'll let me go.
Hey Grandma and Grandpa, can I go out with Ash for a little bit? I won't be long.

Terry, no. Didn't you just see Ash earlier today? It's nearly 8:00!


You need to work on your school project that's due soon. Sorry, Terry, you're not going out tonight.

Although Terry is close with their grandparents, there's been a lot of conflict with them lately, making Terry feel really frustrated.
THIS IS SO UNFAIR! YOU'RE ALWAYS NAGGING ME ABOUT DOING MY CHORES, HOW MUCH TIME I SPEND ON MY PHONE, AND NOW YOU WON'T LET ME HANG OUT WITH MY FRIEND!

TERRY STOMPS BACK TO THEIR BEDROOM AND SLAMS THE DOOR.

LIKE TERRY, EVERYONE HAS THOUGHTS THAT MAKE THEM FEEL SAD, ANGRY, OR FRUSTRATED SOMETIMES. IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL.

I'M NEVER ALLOWED TO DO WHAT I WANT!

THOUGHTS GO THROUGH OUR MINDS ALL THE TIME. SOME THOUGHTS ARE HELPFUL, BUT SOME AREN'T, CAUSING US TO ONLY SEE THE DOWNSIDE OF A SITUATION.

UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS CAN AFFECT HOW WE FEEL AND HOW WE BEHAVE, AND THEY CAN AFFECT WHETHER OUR DAY-TO-DAY LIVES GO THE WAY WE WANT THEM TO.
Also, we often tend to believe that everything we think is fact, but sometimes it’s not.

In other words, the thoughts you have about a situation may be very different from the thoughts someone else has about it. We all see things differently.

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

So, the first time we look at a situation, we might not see the full picture.

Even when you can’t actually change what is happening around you, there is a way you can change how you think about it. It’s called catch it, check it, change it.

Catch it. Check it. Change it.
IT HELPS YOU
RECOGNIZE HOW
YOUR THOUGHTS
IMPACT YOUR
FEELINGS AND
ACTIONS. AS A
RESULT, YOU'LL
DEVELOP A MORE
BALANCED AND
HELPFUL WAY OF
THINKING, WHICH
WILL HELP YOU
FEEL BETTER.

WALK THROUGH
THE STEPS WITH
TERRY AND THEIR
GRANDMOTHER TO
LEARN HOW CATCH
IT, CHECK IT,
CHANGE 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.

AFTER GETTING UPSET WITH THEIR GRANDPA, TERRY
CATCHES THEIR UNHELPFUL THOUGHT.

NEXT, CHECK IT. ASK YOURSELF WHETHER THE
THOUGHT YOU'RE HAVING IS HELPFUL OR NOT.

TERRY, IS IT HELPFUL FOR YOU TO
THINK THAT GRANDPA AND I NEVER
LET YOU DO WHAT YOU WANT?
Like Terry, if you find that your thought isn't helpful, move onto the third step: change it.

No, Grandma. Thinking that just makes me get frustrated, yell, and slam my door. Then, I feel sad for acting this way. I know you're both just looking out for me.

So Terry, what's another way you could look at this situation?

Well, I am spending a lot of time with my friends. Maybe if I can show you that I can get my schoolwork done too, you'll be less strict with other things.

You may not have control over what's happened, but you can control your thinking. You can take that unhelpful thought and change it to one that's more helpful.

That's a more balanced way of thinking about it! It's not easy to change your unhelpful thoughts around, but by consistently practicing catch it, check it, change it, you can do it!
IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THIS SKILL WON'T GET RID OF UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS COMPLETELY, BUT IF YOU KEEP PRACTICING, THEY'LL BE LESS OF A PROBLEM FOR YOU OVER TIME.

YOU'LL ALSO NOTICE THAT THE MORE YOU PRACTICE CATCHING UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, CHECKING THEM, AND CHANGING THEM TO HELPFUL THOUGHTS, YOU'LL FEEL BETTER AND MORE IN CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE.

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.

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*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 (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 “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.