



# Healthy Minds Lincolnshire

An information and education pack for children

## Overcoming Negative Thinking

### What are thoughts?

They are what we are thinking



They are in our head



Other people can't hear them



We have hundreds and thousands of thoughts that pop into our heads every day, in response to everything that we do and how we feel. They can be happy thoughts or ones that might make us feel angry, worried or sad.

If you are struggling with the way you are feeling, it might be linked to unpleasant thoughts about how you are viewing your situation. We call these automatic negative thoughts or ANTS for short!



### How can challenging our thoughts help us?

If we can notice what our troublesome thoughts are, then we can take a look at them and question whether they are factual or just beliefs that have no evidence.

By doing this, we can also consider whether there are other ways of thinking about a situation, that might be more accurate or helpful and that might make us feel better.

We need to make sure we do this step by step, as we can't start to question and challenge our thoughts if we don't know what they are!





# Identifying ANTs



In order to be able to challenge our negative thoughts or ANTs we first need to be able to identify when we are having them! Here are some examples of ANTs young people may have...

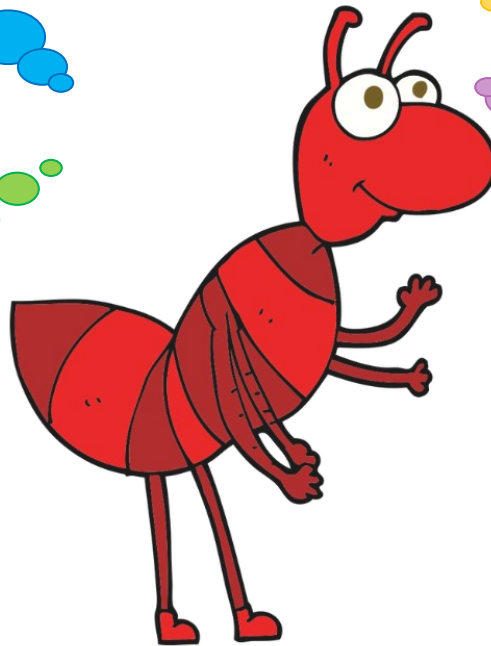
I panicked on the playground. I can't go out to play again because the same thing will happen.

I'm no good at anything!

I won't know the answer and then everyone will laugh at me. I will cry and they will think I'm a baby!

I didn't get all the answers right so I've failed. I'm stupid.

I had a fight with my best friend. She hates me and now I'll never have any friends.



We can't stop the thoughts, but we can catch them and splat them!



Let's play a game to practice...



# Splat the Thought Game

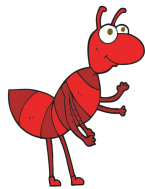


## How to play...

Cut out the cards and fold them along the line, so the picture is on one side and the writing is on the other. Mix them up with the thoughts facing up and the pictures facing down.

SPLAT! The thoughts you think might be ANTS with your hand. Then turn over each card to see if you were right!

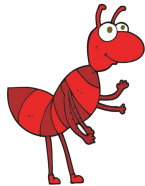
I'm rubbish



I did my best



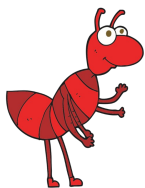
They hate me



They like me



I can't do it



I can try again



Something bad will happen



Something bad probably wont happen



I'm always wrong



I can learn from my mistakes





# Step One: Catching your ANTs



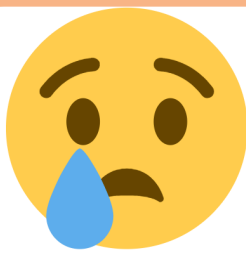
If we can catch these ANTs when they pop into our heads, we can learn to challenge them with kinder ways of seeing things and pay them less attention.

The following diary sheet can be useful in getting you to start to notice your automatic negative thoughts so that we can get ready to challenge them.

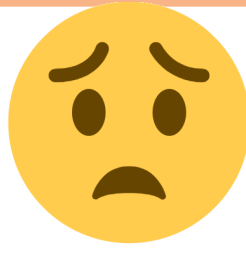
What was happening?



How did this thought make you feel?



Sad



Worried



Scared



Annoyed

I felt something else.....

What were you thinking?



How strong was the feeling? (0=Very Weak, 10= Very Strong)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How much did you believe the thought? (0= Not at all, 10= Very True)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10





# Step Two: Challenging your ANTs

Now we have collected some thoughts, let's learn how to challenge them. These kinds of thoughts are usually beliefs, rather than facts and it can be helpful to find ways of challenging what they are saying.

**This can involve thinking about some questions, like:**

Is there any evidence to say this is definitely true?

Is there any evidence to say this is not totally true?

What would I say to my friend about this thought?

This technique encourages you to question how accurate your belief is, rather than just accepting it as a total truth, before coming up with a new thought that takes everything into consideration. You can see an example of how to do this below...

## What is the thought that is bothering you?

(make sure this is a statement not a question)

Seth doesn't like me

### Why does your low mood or anxiety think this is true?

(is there any evidence?)

He didn't answer my text message about meeting up. On two previous occasions, Seth hasn't responded to text messages I have sent him either.



### What could be a different way of viewing this?

(is there any evidence this is not true?)

Seth apologised for not texting before, saying that he forgot. Seth's phone is really old and often runs out of battery. Seth has to get lots of homework done this weekend. Seth has told me on about 5 different occasions that I am his best mate.

## What new thought could take everything into account?

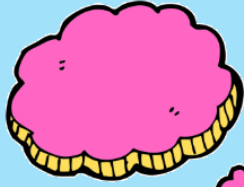
I do not know why Seth has not replied but I do know that he says he likes me, he is busy, rubbish at replying to texts and his phone is dodgy.



# Challenging your ANTs

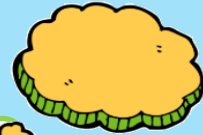


Have a go at challenging your own ANTs...



**What is the thought that is bothering you?**

(make sure this is a statement not a question)



**Why does your low mood or anxiety think this is true?**

(is there any evidence?)



**What could be a different way of viewing this?**

(is there any evidence this is not true?)



**What new thought could take everything into account?**





# Step Three: Finding Evidence



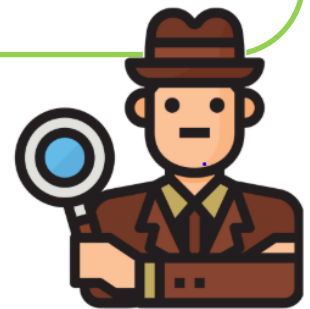
If we can think differently about a situation, this can help us to feel differently and behave in a different way.



Sometimes we can avoid situations and it can then be hard to find evidence you might need to challenge your thoughts. It can be helpful to become a detective and try to find other ways of gathering new evidence to either support or disprove our thoughts.

## Why not have a go at being a detective!

Here are some ideas for gathering evidence...



### Surveying friends and family:

This can be a helpful thing to do if you are worried that you are different to everyone else or want to get an idea about how others view situations. It involves asking them a few of questions and collecting the responses so that you can see different views.



### Noticing the positives:

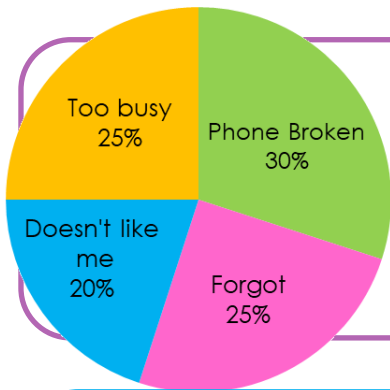
This can be helpful if you tend to focus on the gloomy side of things you're your thinking. It involves keeping a list of things that are positive, that might go against negative thoughts.

For example, someone who thinks no one ever wants to talk to them might keep a written record of every time someone does talk to them so they can check out how accurate their





# Step Three: Finding Evidence



## Using a pie chart:

Don't worry; this doesn't need to be complicated. A pie chart can be a helpful way of looking at the likelihood of different ways of thinking.

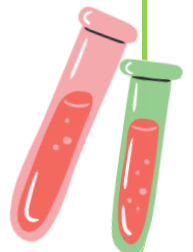
## Looking at what is around you to find evidence:

This might include watching how other people behave and the reactions of others to this. However, it is important that evidence is gathered that considers 'for' and 'against' your beliefs, otherwise it becomes one-sided and biased.



## Testing things out:

Going into situations and facing our fears can seem scary but it is a good way to find out whether your beliefs are true or not. This can be done gradually and it is important for you to notice what happens, so you can add this to your evidence.



## Top Tips for challenging your thoughts

Make sure you write it down. Trying to just do this in your head can cause ideas to be missed or forgotten about.



Try to complete it as near to the time as possible.

Practice this technique with a supportive person to start with as it can be a bit tricky to get the hang of.



The more you practice this technique, the easier it gets and the more it will become an automatic response to negative thoughts.



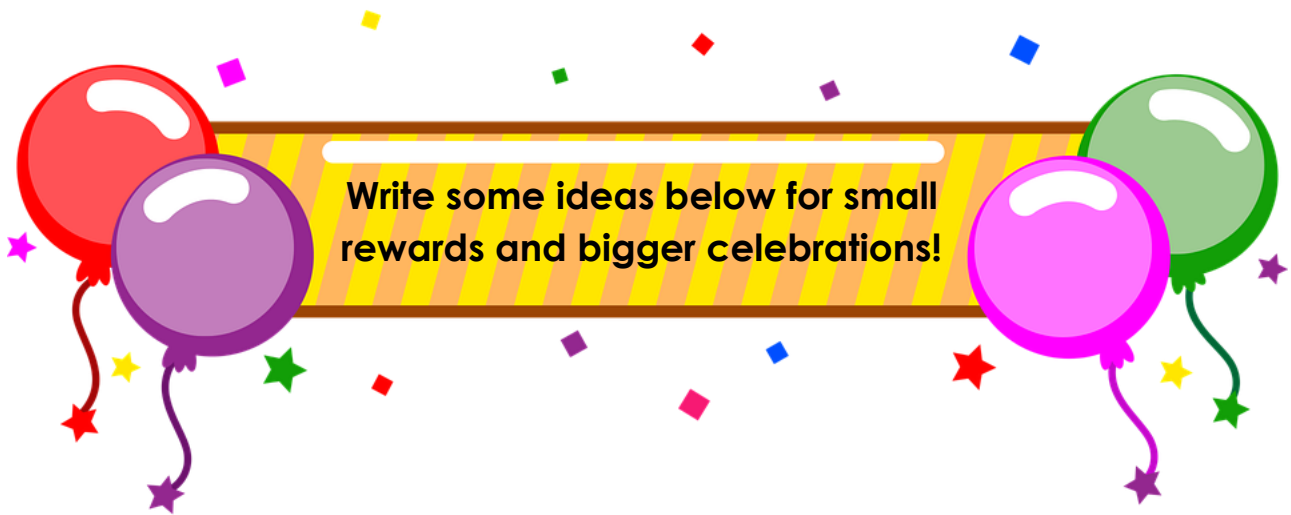


# Celebrate!



As you are learning to overcome your negative thoughts, remember to celebrate your success. Do something nice for yourself, give yourself a treat or just a proverbial pat on the back. Rewards don't have to be very big just something that is meaningful to you!

You could plan a bigger celebration with others such as a nice meal with friends and/or family or a day out. Why not speak to your family/carers to discuss how they could support you through the process, they may be able to help you plan a celebration!





# Useful Websites & Numbers

## Websites:

- **Get self-help**—[www.getselfhelp.co.uk](http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk)
- **Young Minds**—[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- **KOOTH** - [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)
- **LCC Emotional Wellbeing Pathway**—[www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/emotionalwellbeing](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/emotionalwellbeing)
- **Mood Juice**—<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/>



## Numbers:

- **Here4You Advice Line:** 0800 234 63 42 (Healthy Minds & CAMHS)
- **ChildLine:** 0800 1111
- **Samaritans:** 116 123
- **Young Minds Crisis Messenger (Shout);**  
SHOUT to 85258



Don't forget to check out our website, for lots of other useful information; such as our relaxation videos and our useful apps booklet!

<https://www.lpft.nhs.uk/young-people>

