

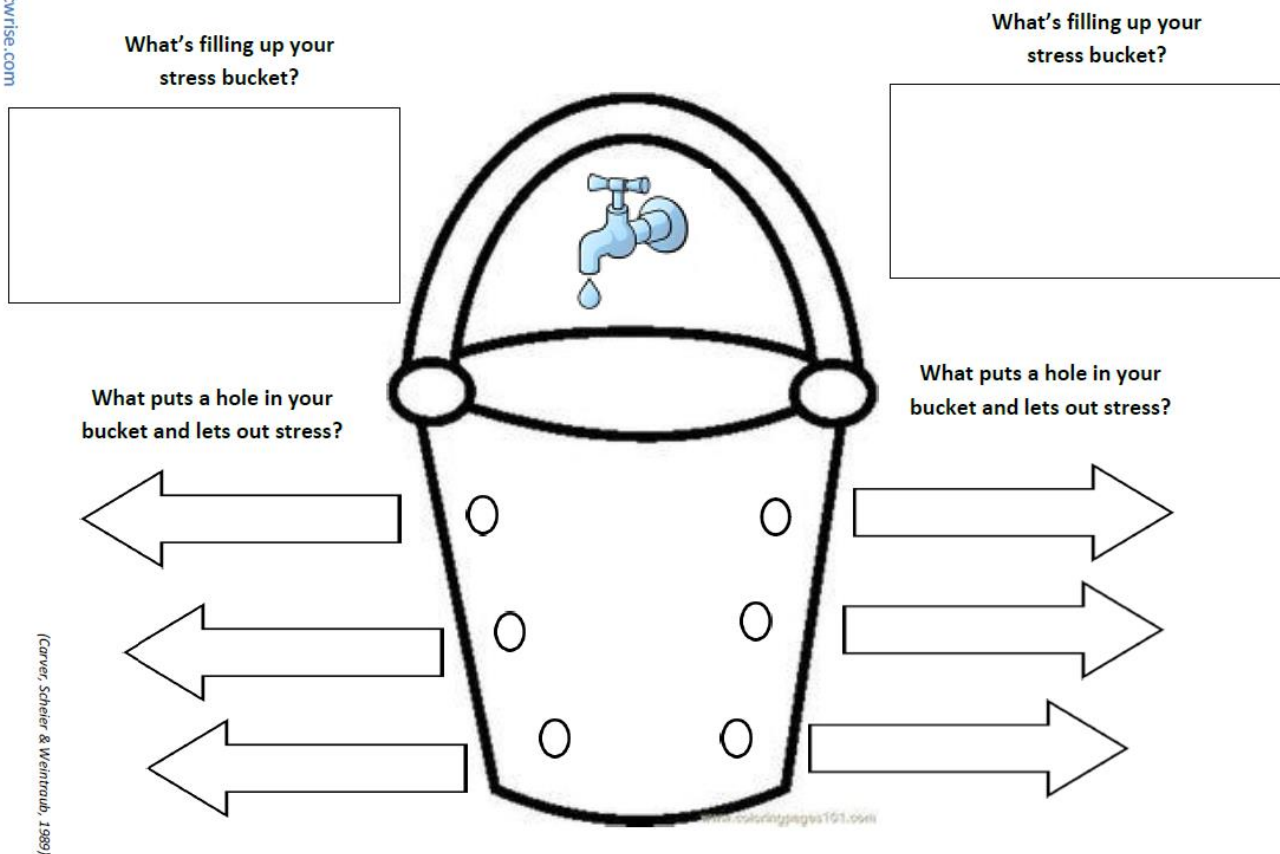
Managing feelings of worry & low mood

Some techniques that can be useful to working with children and young people (CYP) may be:

- Discussing & recording things that cause & relieve stress
- Using a problem solving approach
- Generating alternate thoughts
- Relaxation exercises
- Mood diaries
- Use of the STOPP method (getselfhelp)

www.cwrtise.com

What's in your stress bucket?



Problem solving

The five step approach to solving problems helps CYP to work through a situation with adult support and learn how to effectively problem solve for themselves.

- 1. How do you feel?** Identify feelings, if appropriate use helpful resources like Emojis to help young people identify their feelings in response to being in a certain situation - generate words to name the feeling.
- 2. What's the problem?** Break it down – discuss what the problem is and generate a brief problem statement.
- 3. What could we do?** Generate many solutions and write them down, don't be afraid to put down things that may seem silly, no idea is a bad idea.
- 4. What would happen?** Consider pros and cons for each solution you generated and evaluate your ideas.
- 5. Plan and try** Review the pros/cons and pick out which solution you would try first. Describe the steps involved in putting this plan into action.

(Cresswell, 2012; Gilbert, 2001)

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This technique takes around **20 minutes**. It stretches different muscles in turn and then relaxes them, to release tension from the body and relax your mind. Find a warm, quiet place with no distractions. Get completely comfortable, either sitting or lying down. Close your eyes and begin by focusing on your breathing; breathing slowly and deeply, as described above. You may want to play some soothing music to help relaxation. As with all relaxation techniques, deep muscle relaxation will require a bit of practice before you start feeling its benefits. If you have pain in certain muscles, or if there are muscles that you find it difficult to focus on, spend more time on relaxing other parts. For each exercise, hold the stretch for a few seconds, then relax. Repeat it a couple of times. It's useful to keep to the same order as you work through the muscle groups:

Face: push the eyebrows together, as though frowning, then release.

Neck: gently tilt the head forwards, pushing chin down towards chest, then slowly lift again.

Shoulders: pull them up towards the ears (shrug), then relax them down towards the feet.

Chest: breathe slowly and deeply into the diaphragm (below your bottom rib) so that you're using the whole of the lungs. Then breathe slowly out, allowing the belly to deflate as all the air is exhaled.

Arms: stretch the arms away from the body, reach, then relax.

Legs: push the toes away from the body, then pull them towards body, then relax.

Wrists and hands: stretch the wrist by pulling the hand up towards you, and stretch out the fingers and thumbs, then relax.

Spend some time lying quietly after your relaxation with your eyes closed. When you feel ready, stretch and get up slowly.

Relaxed Breathing

Practice this relaxed breathing for **three to five minutes**, two to three times a day (or whenever you feel stressed) in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Make yourself feel completely comfortable.

Sit in a comfy chair which supports your head or lie on the floor or a bed. Place your arms on the chair arms, or flat on the floor or bed, a little bit away from the side of your body with the palms up. If you're lying down, stretch out your legs, keeping them hip-width apart or slightly wider. If you're sitting in a chair, don't cross your legs.

Good relaxation always starts with focusing on your breathing. The way to do it is to breathe in and out slowly and in a regular rhythm as this will help you to calm down.

Fill up the whole of your lungs with air, without forcing. Imagine you're filling up a bottle, so that your lungs fill from the bottom.

Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Breathe in slowly and regularly counting from one to five (don't worry if you can't reach five at first).

Then let the breath escape slowly, counting from one to five.

Keep doing this until you feel calm. Breathe without pausing or holding your breath.

Mindful Breathing

The primary goal of mindful breathing is simply a calm, non-judging awareness, allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go without getting caught up in them. Sit comfortably, with your eyes closed and your spine reasonably straight.

Bring your attention to your breathing.

Imagine that you have a balloon in your tummy. Every time you breathe in, the balloon inflates. Each time you breathe out, the balloon deflates. Notice the sensations in your abdomen as the balloon inflates and deflates. Notice your abdomen rising with the in-breath, and falling with the out-breath.

Thoughts will come into your mind, and that's okay, because that's just what the human mind does.

Simply notice those thoughts, then bring your attention back to your breathing.

Likewise, you can notice sounds, physical feelings, and emotions, and again, just bring your attention back to your breathing.

You don't have to follow those thoughts or feelings, don't judge yourself for having them, or analyse them in any way. It's okay for the thoughts to be there. Just notice those thoughts, and let them drift on by, bringing your attention back to your breathing.

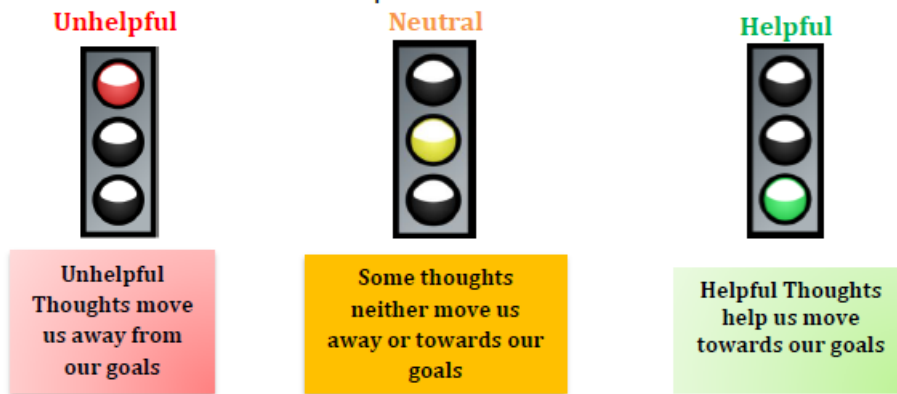
Whenever you notice that your attention has drifted off and is becoming caught up in thoughts or feelings, simply note that the attention has drifted, and then gently bring the attention back to your breathing.

It's okay and natural for thoughts to enter into your awareness, and for your attention to follow them. No matter how many times this happens, just keep bringing your attention back to your breathing.

(Vivyan 2009b)

Generating alternate thoughts

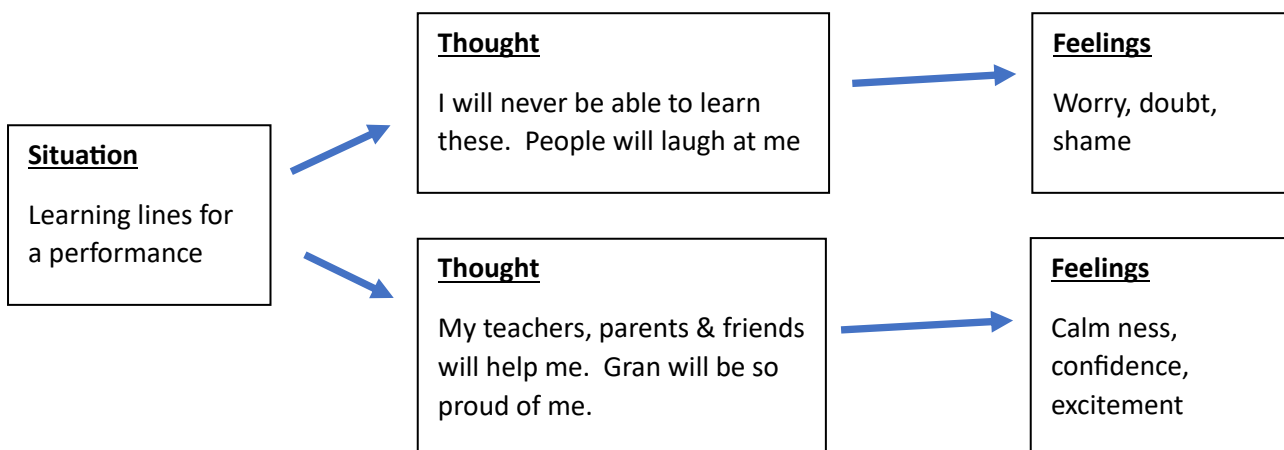
All of us have a tendency to use unhelpful thinking styles at times. If you have noticed when talking to a CYP that they have unhelpful repeated words/pictures in their minds which relate to their worry or low mood, gently help them consider more helpful alternatives using thought generating questions!



Some thoughts stop us from moving forward, and can be worries or fears. Some thoughts, like questions, don't help us move forward or keep us still, and some thoughts are helpful in helping us on our journey. Some questions we could ask ourselves to generate alternate thoughts to unhelpful thoughts might be:

What is the evidence that this is true? Or not true?
 Have I confused a thought with a fact?
 What would I say to a friend feeling like this?
 If it did happen, what could I do to cope with it?
 Am I basing this on feeling, instead of facts?
 Is there another explanation?

However, young children may not have developed the ability to distinguish between thoughts and feelings and if so behavioural interventions may be more appropriate. Don't try to generate alternative thoughts with them! For older children you could try to help them with some 'realistic thinking' – where we try to look at the world with a more balanced approach, rather than in an unhelpful light, before drawing conclusions. One way to do this is through our **self-talk** - how we think to ourselves.



Tip: Remind your child that just because they think something, doesn't mean it's true. For example, just because your child thinks the elevator will get stuck, doesn't mean it actually will (even though it might feel really scary).

Hint: one way to describe the difference between a thought and a feeling to a young child is to explain that a thought comes from your head and that a feeling comes from your heart.

Generating alternative thoughts continued...

One way to encourage helpful thoughts, as opposed to unhelpful, might be to try making coping statement cards, or positive self-statements that can be carried around on coloured card or laminated to look at when you're finding things difficult. These can be worded for young children, or older young people, and decorated to suit.

Instead of...	Try Thinking...
I'm not good at this.	What am I missing?
I'm awesome at this.	I'm on the right track.
I give up.	I'll use some of the strategies we've learned.
This is too hard.	This may take some time and effort.
I can't make this any better.	I can always improve, so I'll keep trying.
I just can't do math.	I'm going to train my brain in math.
I made a mistake.	Mistakes help me to learn better.
He/she is so smart. I will never be that smart.	I'm going to figure out how he/she does it, so I can try.
It's good enough.	Is it really my best work?
Plan "A" didn't work.	Good thing the alphabet has 25 more letters.
I don't get it.	I don't get it, YET.

Reframe the what ifs

what if i fail?

what if i excel?

what if i go and have a terrible time?

what if i'll have the time of my life?

what if none of this is worth it?

what if i can create my own purpose?

what if they'll hate me?

what if they'll be my new friends?

what if i'll never be good enough?

what if i already am?

what if i never achieve this goal?

what if trying my best is good enough?

Replace	For
I am not good enough; a failure; a loser; an incompetent. / Everyone is better than me. / I will never succeed.	I am worthy. / I am always learning to become better and I do my best to do so.
I am bad. / I don't deserve anything. / Everything I do is wrong.	I am good. / I can be good. / I want to be good. / It's my right to deserve everything. / Several times I do what's right.
I am unlovable; undesirable; unattractive; ugly.	I am lovable just the way I am. / By loving myself, others will love me too.
Everything is my fault. / I never get it right.	Sometimes I get it right.
I will be hurt if I get close to someone. / People cannot be trusted.	Sometimes I will make a good friend if I get close to someone. / Some people can be trusted.
There is no point in life. / The world is unfair.	I am powerful and can influence my life. / The world can be a fair place for me.

Managing Worry: STOPP

The STOPP method takes practice, and a reminder can be really helpful – these cards are to be cut out and carried as reminders to STOPP when we feel overwhelmed.

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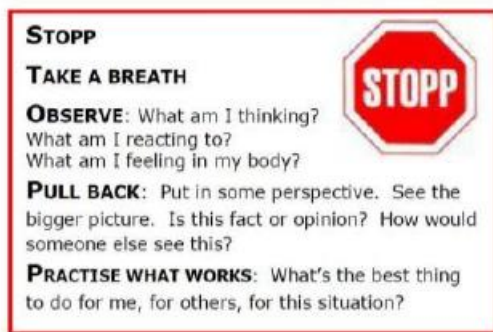
T ake a breath. Slow your breathing down to help you think more clearly.

O bserve what am I thinking and feeling? What am I reacting to? What am I feeling in my body? Is it accurate, or inaccurate? Where is my focus of attention?

P ull back put in some perspective. See the bigger picture. Fact or opinion? How would someone else see this, as an observer? What meaning am I giving this event? Will it change?

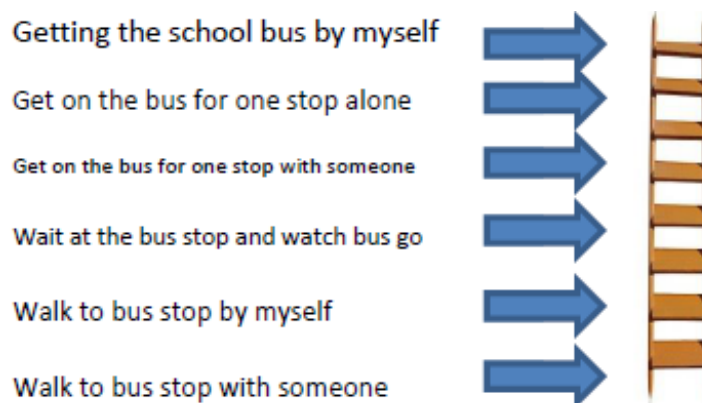
P ractise what works what's best for me, for others, for this situation?

(Vivyan, 2009a)



Anxiety ladder

Often our worries are maintained by avoidance. For example, someone who is worried about going to the shop in the dark might stop going out at night. Avoiding this activity means we never have the opportunity to see that it can be safe, and that nothing bad will happen.



The anxiety ladder is best used when the anxiety is mild and as a collaborative strategy planned with the CYP. The steps up the ladder and the end goal should be realistic and need to be ranked from what the CYP would rate as least anxiety provoking to provoking the most anxiety.

(Cresswell, 2012)

How is anxiety maintained?

Avoidance – this is the act of keeping away from something. A C/YP suffering from anxiety may shy away from confronting stimuli which increases their anxiety, meaning the anxious feelings associated with a stimulus are not addressed and can perpetuate.

Transference - anxiety is more than simply genetic. The behaviour of the parent can perpetuate the child's existing anxieties as the child is permitted to dictate their parenting style (allowing the child to avoid the experiences e.g. keeping child off from school). Alternatively, the child may observe the parent's anxieties and take them on as their own.

Cognitive Behavioural Model - this model has been the focus of NICE (National Institute for Health & Care Excellence) guidelines. The Cognitive-Behavioural model is based on the concept that your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations and actions are interconnected, and that negative thoughts and feelings can trap you in a vicious cycle. See Generating alternative thoughts on earlier pages for supporting strategies to overcome this.

