

Challenging negative thoughts



Investigation questions...

Is the thought true?

What is the evidence to support this thought?

What's the worst that could happen?

What's the best that could happen?

Could there be something else I'm not happy about?

What advice would I give my friend if they thought this?

Will it matter in 6 months from now?



Can we change the negative thought to something different?

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Isle Listen is a trading name of MCH Psychological Services, a registered charity on the Isle of Man number 1024 and a registered organisational member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Negative thoughts

A reflective activity to help young people question unhelpful thoughts and develop more balanced thinking.

Overview

Our 'Challenging Negative Thoughts' worksheet supports students in recognising and exploring negative thoughts. Young people are invited to write down a negative thought that they have experienced or currently having before being guided through a series of 'investigative questions' designed to gently challenge and examine that thought. At the end, young people are asked to reflect on whether they can change this negative thought into something more helpful.

The aim is to build awareness of thinking patterns and support young people in developing more positive ways of thinking.

Benefits:

- Encourages awareness of negative thoughts
- Develops critical thinking and reflection skills
- Builds confidence in managing difficult thoughts

How to use this worksheet

1. Give young person a 'Challenging Negative Thoughts' worksheet
2. Explain what negative thoughts are in an age-appropriate way
3. Ask students to write a negative thought in the top box
4. Guide them through the investigative questions, allowing time for reflections
5. Support students in thinking about alternative positive thoughts
6. Remind them that thoughts are not always facts and can be challenged

Estimated time: 15-20 minutes

Materials needed: Worksheet and pen or pencil

Conversation Starters/Reflection Questions

- Are our thoughts always true?
- What can we do when a thought makes us feel upset?
- How can we look at situations in a different way?
- What would you say to a friend with the same thought?
- Can changing a thought change how we feel?
- What is a more helpful way to think about this situation?

Parents/Carers

The 'Challenging Negative Thoughts' activity helps children understand that thoughts are not always accurate and therefore can be explored and changed.

At home, you can:

- Talk through worries or negative thoughts together
- Ask questions to help your child reflect on their thinking
- Encourage your child to look at situations from different perspectives

After the activity, you can ask:

- Did the questions help you think differently?
- Was the thought completely true?
- How do you feel after changing the thought?

Teachers/Education Settings

The 'Challenging Negative Thoughts' worksheet is a valuable tool within PSHE sessions, supporting emotional resilience.

You can:

- Introduce it as a reflective activity
- Work through an example together before setting the activity individually
- Offer additional support for students who may find this challenging

Additional Considerations:

- Some students may share sensitive or personal thoughts
- Follow safeguarding procedures if necessary
- Provide reassurance that sharing is optional

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