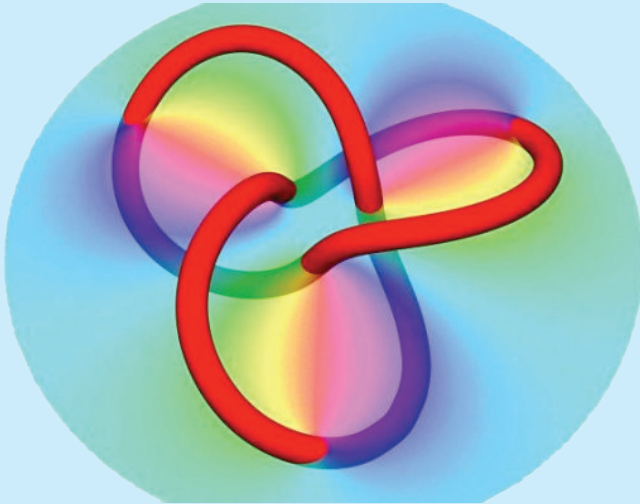


Bend Don't Break



**Building strengths
that build resilience**



In a storm, a palm tree's trunk bends. Their deep roots help them stand in hurricane-force winds. Resilience during tough times is about being like a palm tree.

Bend, don't break!



Bend Don't Break: Building Strengths that Build Resilience



How to get the most from this workbook

New skills don't develop by themselves. You need to practice them. So just reading through this workbook will not be enough.

That is why we are calling this a “workbook”: you are going to have to work at it.

Some suggestions to help you do this are:

- Talk about what you are doing with someone
- Write down your thoughts as you go through the workbook
- Develop a plan. How you are going to practise this stuff?
- Reward yourself for small steps.

What is in this workbook?

1. Building resilience

2. Thinking is one of the best tools we have to cope

3. How to get more control of your thinking

4. Deep core beliefs

5. Feeling positive in the middle of stress

6. Using Support

7. Principles of Coping

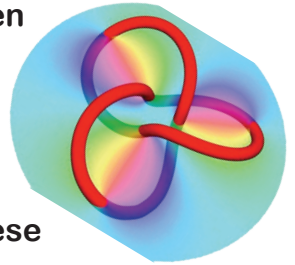
8. Action plan/tool kit



Building resilience

Everybody experiences stress to some extent:-

- We all have unexpected things happen
- Things go wrong
- People let us down
- We make mistakes.



The important thing is how we deal with these and be resilient.

What does resilience mean?

Resilience is being able to “bounce back” from difficult times. This workbook will give you ideas how to do that.

Setting goals

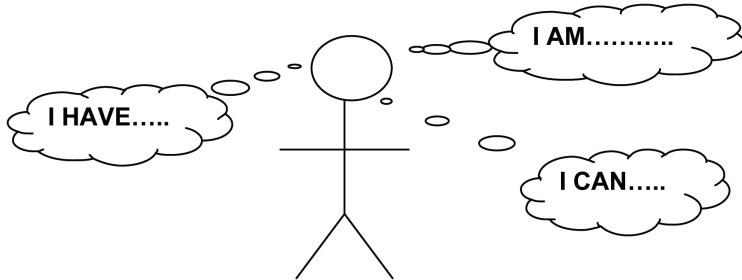
From what you have read so far, what would you like to get from using this workbook?

- Improve how I deal with stress and problems
- Be less anxious
- Lift your mood
- Try new things
- Anything else?



1. Building resilience

The “I Have, I Am, I Can factors” are a set of tools that build resilience. People who are more resilient might think:



“I HAVE” is having people who are around to support me:-

- I have people to look up to and learn from (role models)
- I have people who think and say “you can do it”
- I have people who are there for me and help me.

“I AM” is about my strengths, my feelings, what I think and what I believe:-

- I am confident: I believe
- I am caring towards others
- I am hopeful for the future.

“I CAN” are skills I use to cope:-

- I can talk about what I think and feel
- I can be flexible, not just think in one way
- I can think things through
- I can choose how I react to things even when I can’t control what happens
- I can let people help me.



Building on your strengths?

Sometimes it takes more effort to work out our strengths as we have become used to thinking about our weaknesses.

We all have times when we use our strengths, such as:-

- Not over reacting
- Thinking through what went wrong
- Believing you will do better next time.

Think about the, **I Have, I Am, I Can** factors that support resilience:-

- Which do you have and use?
- Which could you build a little bit more of?

Try to think of one time this week you have used each of these three factors.

I Have, I Am, I Can factors	Example of using this factor this week
'I HAVE' (people who are around to support me)	
'I AM' (my strengths, my feelings, what I think and what i believe)	
'I CAN' (skills I use to cope)	



2. Thinking: one of the best tools we have to cope

We all have situations that seem to push our buttons and make us react in certain ways. Or so it seems.

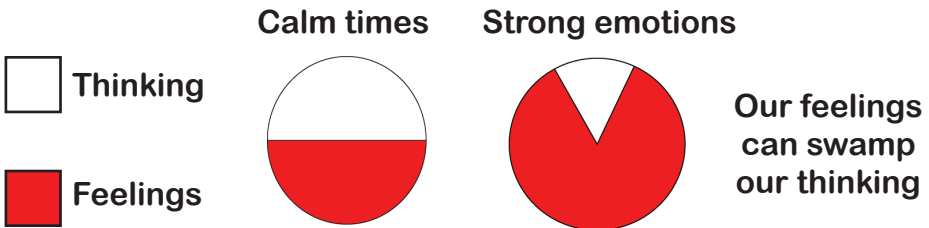
In most situations, it's what we **think** that is important.

There are things that happen that are outside of our control.

What we can control is how we react!

There is a strong connection between what we **think** what we **feel** and what we **do**.

Strong feelings like anger, fear or sadness can make our thinking “close down”. We don't think straight. This is what it looks like:-



Feelings

Feelings (emotions) are normal.

When we are calm or more in control we might see things very differently. It can be easier to solve problems or think about what to do.



Remember a time you had strong feelings like being sad, angry or worried.

What was going on?

What were you feeling?

What were you thinking?

What did you do?

How thinking works

How does thinking affect what we do?

Something happens → We think about it → We act

(Sounds simple doesn't it?)

But what if you have Unhelpful Thinking Habits?

This thinking is the way you talk to yourself. It comes in a flash between something happening and how we react.



The problem with these thoughts is when they are:



Automatic: They just pop into your head with no effort on your part

Hidden: You don't usually notice them. It is like music playing in the background that we don't pay attention to

Distorted: They ignore any evidence right in front of you

Reasonable (or so they seem): You can accept these thoughts as facts and you don't check them out

Negative and unhelpful: They may start out seeming reasonable enough but can make you feel emotions like sadness, anger, worry or giving up.

Look back to the time you had strong feelings from the last page.

Were any of these unhelpful thinking habits around?

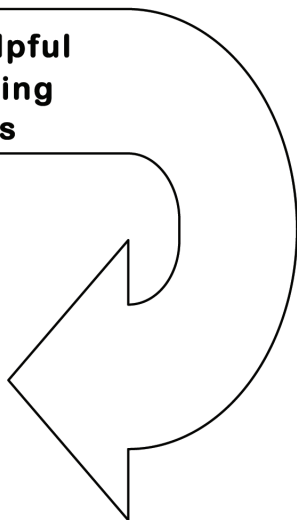


How does this work again?

Something happens

**Unhelpful
Thinking
Habits**

What you feel and do is affected



Another way to explain Unhelpful Thinking Habits is like having an MP3 player in your head with a playlist of negative songs (unhelpful thoughts) that always switches on the moment something stressful happens.



These thoughts can put you in a bad mood and you can't get them out of your head.

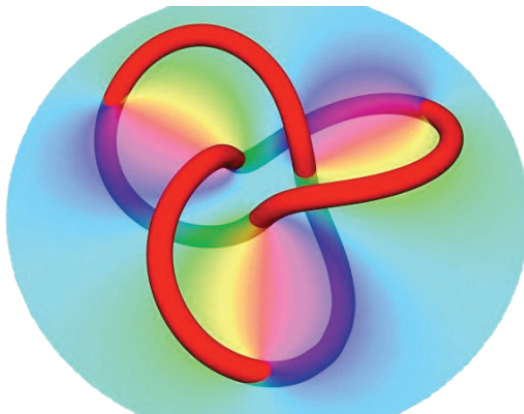
They change the way you feel and can turn up the volume of those feelings. This can change what you do.



How do you get more control over your thinking?

1. **Catch it:** Recognize the unhelpful thoughts you are having.
2. **Stop it:** Put on the brakes. Stop the thought.
3. **Challenge it:** Give yourself thinking time and challenge that thought: Is it a song you like?
4. **Change it:** Create an alternative: if you don't have the songs you like on your play list, make up a new one.

Start small.... Try to change everyday thoughts before you start with the big stresses.





3. How to get more control of your thinking

1. Catch it: Recognizing the “song” in your head


The first thing to do is recognize unhelpful thoughts when they happen. Naming them as you see them is the first step.



Types of unhelpful thinking

Here are very common types of unhelpful thoughts that can be like a ‘bad playlist’ on the MP3 player in your head.

Black and white



If I’m not perfect I have failed.

“Either I do it right or not at all.”

Over generalising

“everything is always rubbish”

“nothing good ever happens”

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event.

“It is going to be one of those days.”

Mental filter



Zooming in on the bad.


Ten things happen to you today. 9 good and 1 bad. You dwell on that one bad thing.

Disqualifying the positive



The good does not count.

Jumping to conclusions



There are 2 types:

Mind reading (we know what others are thinking)

Fortune telling (predicting the future will turn out bad)

Making a mountain out of a molehill




Blowing things out of proportion.

Turning a disappointment into a disaster.



Emotional reasoning



Assuming that because we feel a certain way that it must be true.

“I made a mistake. I feel stupid. I must be stupid.”


Should

must

Using critical words like ‘should’, ‘must’, or ‘have to’.

We put ourselves and others under pressure.

Labelling



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people.

“I’m a loser”

“I’m completely useless”

“They’re such an idiot.”

It’s all my fault

“this is my fault”

Blaming yourself for something that wasn’t your fault.

Did any of these “songs” pop up in your thinking this week?

Which three gave you the most difficulty?

-
-
-

What happened when you thought this way?



Getting in early: catching that unhelpful initial reaction:

Consider those automatic unhelpful thoughts. Let's meet Nick and see how his thinking works.

He has applied for a course he really wanted to get on but he didn't get a place on it. Some of his friends did get on it. He is really disappointed, a very natural reaction.

Look at the unhelpful song list. What might Nick be saying to himself?

What would he be thinking?

What would he be feeling?

What would he do?

The unhelpful thought list

Black & white thoughts

Over generalising

Mental filter

Disqualifying the positive

Jumping to conclusions

Making a mountain out of a molehill

Emotional reasoning

Should statements

Labelling

It's all my fault



2. Stop it!: Putting on the brakes

Stopping an unhelpful thought gives you time to think. Then you change it. Here are some things you can try.

Deep Breathing 7/11

From deep in the pit of the stomach breathe in for 7 seconds and then breathe out for 11 seconds. Do this 5, 6, 7 times and see the reaction. By breathing out more than breathing in you trigger a relaxation response instead of getting yourself stressed.

Clenched Fists

Have you ever noticed if you squeeze and relax muscles, they are always more relaxed afterwards.

Try it. First, make your hands into tight fists... as tight as possible. Notice the tension in your muscles. Become aware of the hardness of your fingernails in the palm of your hands.

Now let it go. When you do can you spot the difference between tense and relaxed. The relaxed feeling should now go up your arms to your shoulders. Let it spread to your whole body.

Try squeezing and relaxing other parts of your body too.





Making your thinking work for you

You can use certain words to help you pause and think, for example:-

“I can work this out.”

“Think, think, think.”

Can you think of any others?

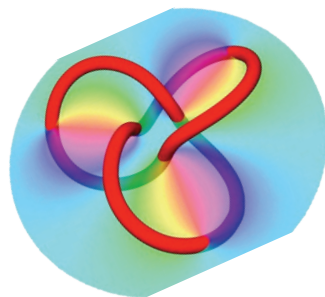
A safe place in your head

Picture in your mind a relaxing, calming place. (You can make one up) Go there in your mind for a moment.

3. Challenge it: Give yourself “thinking time”

Once you hear a negative thought pop into your head, pause and check it out. How can you do that?

- Take a deep breath
- Have a phrase you use to stop yourself like “stop” or “think, think, think”
- Be a detective. Check out what is going on. Three ways to do this.:-
 1. Reality testing
 2. Look for other explanations
 3. Put things into perspective.



Ask yourself:



Reality testing	Look for other explanations	Put things into perspective
Where is the proof? Am I guessing or is this really true? Do these thoughts help me or hold me back? Is this a disaster or just a nuisance? Is this beyond my control (or responsibility). Should I let it go?	Is there another way to look at this? Am I concentrating on my weaknesses and forgetting my strengths? Is there anything I can do about it?	Will this affect me tomorrow? Am I missing any good in this? Am I expecting myself to be perfect? Is this going to last a long time or is it just for now? Am I looking at the big picture or a small detail?

What you are looking for is Evidence Alternatives Choice.

Pick three of these questions you can use. They can be your key ones to challenge unhelpful thoughts.

•

•

•



4. Change it: Create an alternative

When you learn to catch an unhelpful thought, pause and challenge it. You stand more chance of thinking differently... maybe in a more helpful way.

Aim to be flexible and creative in your thinking

- A better way of seeing this is...
- That is not true because...
- What is more likely to happen is... And I can deal with that.

It might help to have your goals in mind. What do you want?

Now, take that situation Nick found himself in from **page 12** when he did not get on a course he really wanted on.

Once he stopped and thought, what could he do?

What other ways could he see his situation?

It is not just a message of “think positive”.

**It is using your thinking as a tool to help
you cope.**

Let's look at something you found stressful or difficult this week and give it a go.



<p>Situation</p> <p><i>What happened? Where? When? Who with?</i></p>	<p>Catch it: My initial feeling What unhelpful thinking was going on?</p> <p><i>What feeling did I have at that time? How intense was it? (on a scale from 1 - 10)</i></p>	<p>Stop it / Challenge it</p> <p><i>STOP! Take a breath What went through my mind? What did those thoughts mean to me, or say about me or the situation? What's the bigger picture? Is there another way of seeing it?</i></p>	<p>Change it Alternative More balanced perspective</p> <p><i>What would someone else say about this situation? What advice would I give someone else? Is my reaction in proportion to the actual event? How important is this? What would be the worst thing that could happen?</i></p>



Remember, new skills don't happen by themselves. They need to be practised.

Breaking old habits can take time and effort.

Some people say 4 weeks, maybe even 8 weeks until they become less of a habit. Stick at it. Although it might seem odd, writing down your thinking helps. You can watch it change for the better.

Use the Thinking Chart on the next page to do this. We have given you a blank page to practice.



My Thinking Chart



Situation What happened? Where? When? Who with?	Catch It My initial feeling What unhelpful thinking was going on?	Stop it / Challenge	Change it Alternative more balanced perspective



4. Deep core beliefs and rules

Are you holding on to negative beliefs about yourself?

Core beliefs or “rules” are those strongly held beliefs about ourselves that influence what we think and how we feel. They are called “core” because they are central to everything.

Our core beliefs are a bit like “glasses or filters” we look through to make sense of ourselves and other people.

Why is it important to be aware of our core beliefs?

- Not all deeply held beliefs and rules are negative.
- Core beliefs shape our values.
- We might not be aware of them but they are there all the same
- With unhelpful core beliefs we can fall into the same patterns or reaction to things over and over again.



Your core beliefs: are they helpful or unhelpful?

Mark the number closest to what you think they are.

Asking for help



How things turn out



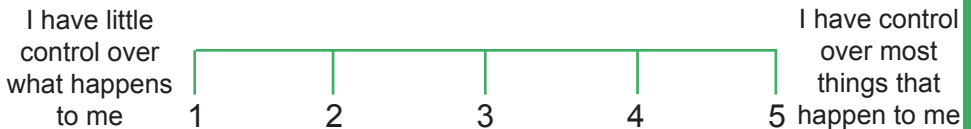
Making mistakes



Being liked by other people



Control



Some other unhelpful core beliefs may be about:

- New things are always too scary to try
- You can not trust anyone
- It's easier to avoid things or do nothing
- I am not good enough.

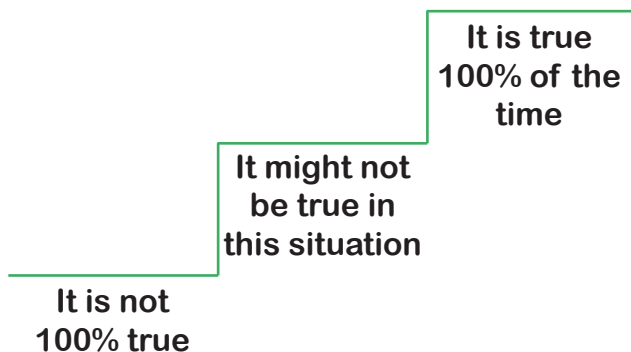


Understanding what your core beliefs mean to you

It can be difficult to try changing unhelpful core beliefs that you have had for a while... but it is worth it.

Take one unhelpful core belief or rule you would like try changing.

Don't go for the total opposite of what you believe for example "I am not good enough" to "I am great" because you simply won't believe it yet.



Being able to identify any unhelpful core beliefs and unhelpful thinking habits is the first step towards change and resilient thinking.

Use the skills to:
Catch it
Stop it
Challenge it
Change it

If a belief is not working for you, try to argue with it. Is it too rigid or extreme? Does it make sense?

Start chipping away at it with more helpful thoughts.



5. Feeling positive in the middle of stress

Stress is when you think that something is more of a problem than you can cope with.

Your thinking is really important. How you make sense of a situation can change how stressful it seems (back to your way of thinking).

Scientists are finding that being able to have positive emotions when you are in a stressful situation helps you cope better.

We know dealing with tough situations is hard. They can make you feel sad, angry, worried or confused.

But.... Positive feelings can make a difference.

How do you increase your positive feelings?

1. Notice positive things

Pay attention to those little things that make you smile or feel good: a TV show that made you laugh, seeing something pretty, something nice to eat or drink, warm sunshine.

2. Use these positive things

Find some way to express what you did or saw that was positive. Telling someone, texting someone or writing it down makes the positive effect even stronger

3. Gratitude

Being grateful or thankful is a one of the most powerful tools you have. Keep a journal and write down one thing you are really thankful for every day.



4. Mindfulness

Here is a word you may not have heard before. Mindfulness is the ability to focus your thinking on one thing that you are experiencing and put everything else aside for a while. There are two types of mindfulness; formal and informal.

- Formal mindfulness can be like deep breathing where you focus only on your breathing. We covered that on page 13
- Informal mindfulness Pay attention to those little things that happen everyday. Stroking a pet. Wind shaking leaves on a tree. Stay with that experience and focus on it for that moment.

5. Positive rethinking

As this booklet keeps saying, it is how you make sense of events that make things seem more stressful. Being more balanced in your thinking is the key to feeling more positive and being able to cope with everyday pressures.

6. Focus on your strengths

Yes everyone has weaknesses, but what are you better at? Being able not only to acknowledge your strengths, but appreciating them is important. If you are having trouble seeing what you are good at, ask someone you trust for suggestions.

7. Realistic goals

We all feel good when we have done something we need to. Make goals for yourself. Make sure they are realistic and achievable. It may help to think of your goals as:-

- Short - minutes or hours per day
- Medium - day per week
- Long term - month per year.

8. Acts of kindness



These could be random (let someone in front of you in a queue or helping a friend out when they are stuck) or planned (volunteering).

Being kind to other people can make you feel good and connected to other people. You will see people smile and are kind in return.

Putting these things to work for you helps build your inner strengths to cope with most stresses.

You do not have to use them all. It is like having a tool kit.

Choose the ones you like.

Your job now is to get a plan for how you are going to use them and make them work for you.

Each day, make a plan of how you are going to use at least 3 of these ways to express positive feelings.

-
-
-



To help you remember these ways to express positive feelings, we have moved the initials around to spell out “**STRONGER ME**”

S = Strengths: notice them

T = Thankfulness: another word for gratitude

R = Rethinking skills

O = Others: acts of kindness to other people

N = Notice nice things

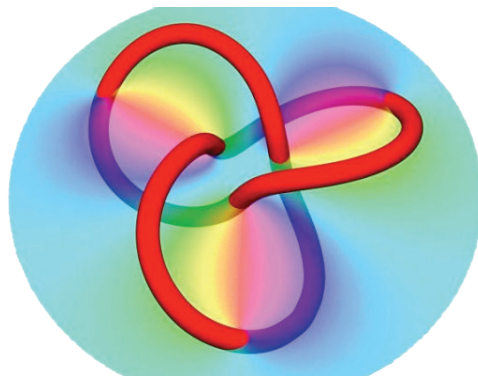
G = Goals

E = Express those nice things you see

R = Rethinking skills (so important it is here twice)

M = Mindfulness

E = Excellent that you are doing this!!!



6. Using Support



We all need help at some times in our lives. There might be times when it is hard to ask for help. We may prefer to try to solve problems on our own. We may feel under too much pressure.

Being able to use supportive relationships is a strength.

There are lots of different types of support. People who can be there:

As a mentor or
role model

When I am hurting

To share
problems

To laugh and
have fun with

When I want to be with someone
who knows me well

When I need good advice
with a problem

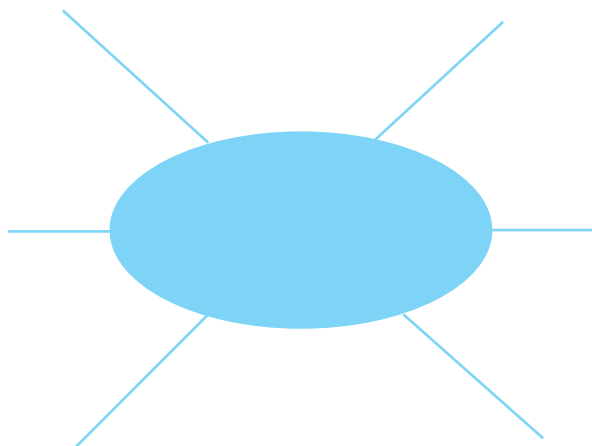
To help me discover and
try new things

What does the word support mean to you?



Who are the important people you can turn to?

Write your name inside the circle below. Draw other circles representing each person in your life. As you draw each circle, write the name of the person in it. Draw circles of those you consider most supportive nearest to you and people less supportive further away from you. Add more lines if you need to.



Some questions to ask:

- What stops you using support?
- Could you use any of your support more?
- If people don't help... could you stop looking for support from them?
- Do you need some more positive support?

Pick the three most supportive people from the last page. For each person you think of, how are they helpful? How does this makes you feel?



The person	How this person is helpful	How I feel about this person

The person	How this person is helpful	How I feel about this person

The person	How this person is helpful	How I feel about this person



7. Principles of coping

Being resilient helps us cope with the ups and downs that life brings. Tick each one if you agree with it.

- No thought or feeling is “wrong”; it is what we do with it that really counts.
- Be aware of the way your body feels as tension begins to build up. Do something to deal with it as soon as you can.
- You are not on your own. Ask for help and advice.
- If you are feeling overwhelmed, you may be taking too much on. Slow down a bit.
- Recognise that people close to you have to deal with their feelings too. (They may be helpful or unhelpful to you).
- Try to have fun, relax and exercise (even a walk) everyday.
- You can work to solve some of the problems that are stressing you out.
- Feeling guilty and worrying about things you CAN'T change is pretty useless and energy-draining.
- Give yourself credit for whatever level of coping you are achieving. Remember, there is no “quick fix” for stress.
- Value and respect yourself — because each of us is, with our strengths, a unique and worthwhile person.

Which ones do you think are the most important for you?



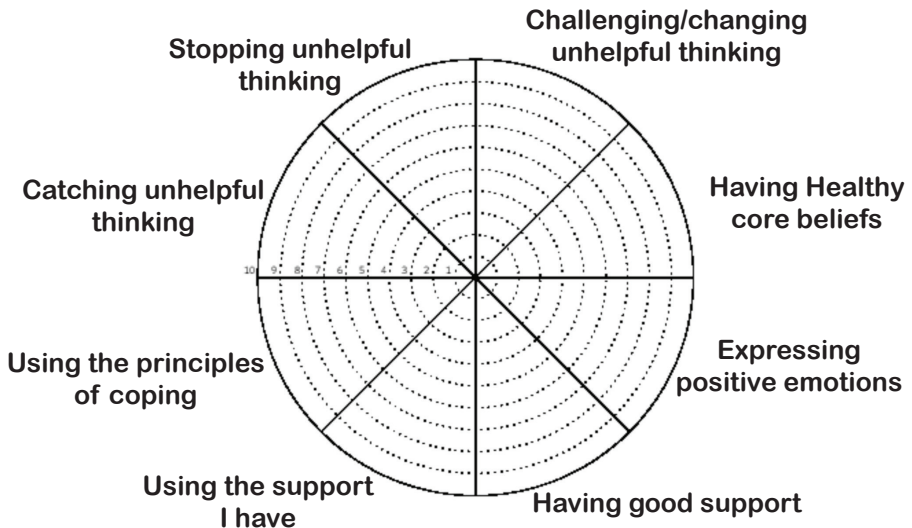
8. Action plan/tool kit: taking the work forward

If you have gotten this far, well done. Now, how are you going to keep it going?

Let's look at the key skills we looked at in this workbook. How would you see yourself now?

See the small numbers in the circle. Colour in the line in each section where you think you are with it.

10 is excellent (outer circle) 1 is poor (inner circle). The more scores on the outer lines the better. If your circle has scores closer to the centre those are the areas you could work on.





Think back to what you wanted to get from using this workbook, how did it help?

Improve how I deal with stress and problems	
Be less anxious	
Lift your mood	
Try new things	
Anything else you wanted to gain?	



Taking the work forward: my action plan



What do you remember most from this workbook?

What did you learn?

If you could tell one of your friends something about this booklet to help them, what would it be?

What is one thing you want to do a little more for yourself?

Who is in a position to help you?



Where can I get more help?

For sources of help see www.mindyourhead.info

The Samaritans	08457 909 090
Lifeline	0808 808 8000
Contact	(028) 9043 5810
Opportunity Youth	(028) 9043 5810
Include Youth	(028) 9031 1007
New Life Counseling	(028) 9074 6184

Your local youth service can give you ideas of things you can get involved in.

One final thought: One of the most powerful tools we have to keep our sense of wellbeing is gratitude.

Think of something you're grateful for every day. It does not matter if it is a very small thing. Many times we just take things for granted and it can be the little things that matter most. Write it down in a journal if you can.

There are many things we can do to build our strengths. Feeling connected, getting actively involved in community or school, looking after ourselves physically and mentally, building our skills and believing we are good at something all help.

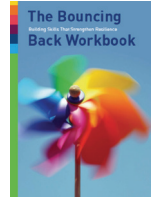
Where this work comes from:

Some of the material in this booklet has been taken from The Bouncing Back Workbook. It can be downloaded from www.ascert.biz

Using positive emotions in the midst of stress was taken from a talk by Dr. Judy Muskowitz from the University of California.

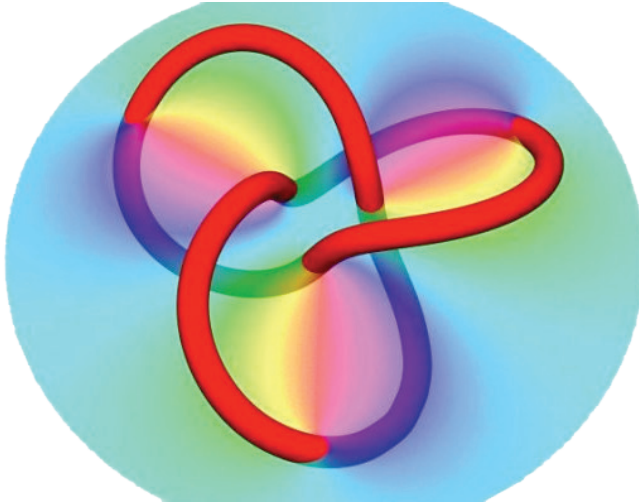
Principles of Coping were adapted from Managing the Stress of Cancer: A Handbook for Patients and their Families by Dr Ronna Jevne, 1984.

The I Have, I am, I can Factors is adopted from A Guide to Promoting Resilience in Children: Strengthening the Human Spirit (1995), Edith Grotberg from the Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflection Series, Bernard Van Leer Foundation.





Notes

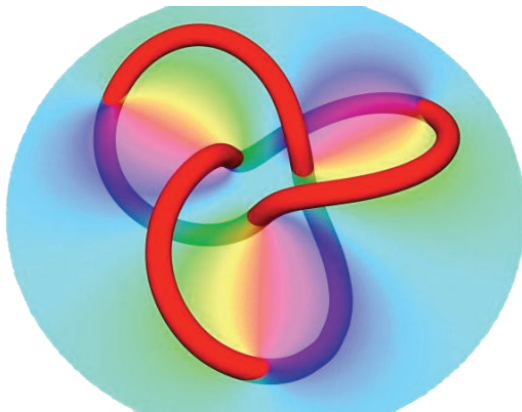


Written by Ed Sipler: Health Development Specialist in Alcohol and Drugs, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust and Sarah Lewis Therapeutic LAC Nurse, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust with support from:

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