**Sense of Humour**
A healthy sense of humour helps you to see the lighter side of yourself, to have fun, and to cope with life's ups and downs.

**Sense of Purpose**
Having things that you believe in and that matter to you helps to give your life purpose and meaning - even the simple things you do can be meaningful.

**Sense of Self-worth**
You don't have to be great at anything to have a healthy sense of self-worth. Just remember that you are special because you are you.

**Sense of Belonging**
Belonging means being connected to others, being part of a group, and having people who care about you.

**Sense of Future**
This helps you look forward with hope and optimism, and to believe that things will be okay even if times get tough.

**Sense of Control**
There are some things in life that you simply can't control - so it's important to know that you have skills to handle life's ups and downs, and to keep your emotions in check when things get daunting.

**ESSENTIAL SKILLS**
These are important life skills like helpful thinking and self-talk, problem-solving, good communication, planning and time management, recognising and controlling your emotions, and learning ways to keep your body and mind well.

**ONLINE COUNSELLING**
www.kidshelp.com.au

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- www.inspire.org.au

**Thank you for helping me think helpfully and challenge unhelpful thoughts.**

**Humour: The world is yours to enjoy**

If you are feeling stressed, take a few deep breaths.

A healthy sense of humour helps you to see the lighter side of yourself, to have fun, and to cope with life's ups and downs.

**Plan to do some fun things**
Look for your strengths.

**If something “goes without saying”, why do people still say it?**

**Belonging: Remember you are not alone.**

**Life would be much easier if I had the source code.**

Unknown

**Think helpfully and challenge unhelpful thoughts.**

**Youthbeyondblue: 1300 22 4636**

**The purpose of life is a life of purpose.**

Robert Byrne

**Purpose: Your life has meaning.**

**Control: You can control your emotions in a crack when things get daunting.**

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Recognising and Regulating Emotions

We all experience a range of emotions, from small ones like feeling slightly pleased or irritated, to big ones like joy and fury. However, it's not good when your emotions take over and seem to control your life.

- Different emotions are appropriate for different situations (like feeling annoyed because you can't find your shoe).
- If you act on your emotions all the time there can be unwanted consequences (road rage is a classic example).
- Being able to recognise the emotions that others might be feeling is really useful for good communication (it gives you clues about what they might be thinking).

Understanding and regulating your emotions helps you deal appropriately with life’s ups and downs.

How Will I Know?
Look for warning signs that you are feeling strong emotions.

**Physical Signs:**
- heart rate goes up
- throat feels tight
- face becomes hot
- muscles tense

**Thoughts:**
- ‘It’s not fair!’
- ‘How dare they?’
- ‘I always make mistakes!’
- ‘Nothing ever turns out for me.’

Strategies to Regulate Emotions

1. **Recognise physical symptoms**
   - e.g. throat tightening, heart rate rising
2. **Use physical venting**
   - e.g. jogging, swimming, singing loudly
3. **Withdraw from tense situations**
   - If you feel angry or unsafe, physically leave the situation
4. **Change your thinking**
   - Consider alternative, more helpful ways to think about the situation
5. **Seek help**

Everyone experiences times when it seems difficult to manage emotions. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed or that your emotions are taking over, talk to your GP, school counsellor, or other trusted adults. You should also consider these options:

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What is the A-B-C-D Model?

Our thoughts play a central role in influencing how we feel and what we do as a result of those feelings. In other words, when something happens to us, it’s not the event but how we think about that event, that leads us to feel certain emotions and to perhaps act on those feelings.

Does This Apply at School Too?

Absolutely!
Imagine that Sachi and Dom are about to receive the results of the latest science test. Sachi is a dedicated student with high expectations for herself; Dom is more interested in extracurricular activities and isn’t expecting to do particularly well. They both get the same mark, but because they both think differently about the mark, each experiences different feelings and behaves differently, too.

What Does This Mean?

While we can’t always change the events that happen to us, we do have the option to change the way we think about events, which can positively affect how we feel and how we behave. By challenging unhelpful thoughts, we can actually help ourselves to feel better about some of the events that occur in our lives!
COMMON THINKING ERRORS...

**ALL-OR-NOTHING**
This is when you see everything as black or white, with no in between. If something isn’t 100% perfect, then it’s a total failure. Clearly, this is a very unrealistic way to think.

**OVER-GENERALISATION**
This is when you see one event that didn’t turn out so well as part of a never-ending pattern of failure or disappointment. The truth may well be that the incident was an isolated event, and if you put it into perspective, it probably isn’t that bad at all.

**MIND-READING**
This is really just bad guessing. This is when you decide in your mind what other people must be thinking, without checking the facts, and then you act on that (quite probably incorrect) assumption. The reality is, you simply cannot know what other people are thinking without them telling you.

**FORTUNE-TELLING**
Maybe this should be called ‘misfortune telling’. It is predicting that things will turn out badly, even if you have absolutely no proof that this will be the case. This thinking error can lead to real problems, because if you think things are going to go wrong, then you may act in a way that allows them to go wrong.

**MAGNIFICATION**
This is when you make one little mistake, and it becomes so huge in your mind that it spoils everything else in your day. This is also called ‘blowing things out of proportion’, or ‘making mountains out of molehills’.

**MINIMISATION**
This is the opposite of magnification, but not in a good way! This is when you downplay anything good that might have happened to you because you are too focused on any aspect of the event that went wrong. It is possible to acknowledge where things might not have been perfect without allowing them to ruin the overall event.

**CATASTROPHISING**
This is a very common thinking error. It is when you make extreme judgments and imagine the very worst outcome will occur even if there isn’t a scrap of evidence they will. In this way, it’s a lot like Fortune-Telling - the difference is that Fortune-Telling has you thinking things won’t turn out, Catastrophising has you imagining the very worst will occur.

STOP!
When you find yourself thinking in any one of these seven ways, you need to tell yourself to STOP, and practise some thinking strategies that will allow you to challenge these unhelpful ways of thinking.
Thinking Strategies

Strategy 1: Consider the Evidence
If you find yourself thinking negatively about an event or situation, ask yourself: What evidence do I have that this is actually true or going to happen? Chances are, you don’t have any, and you’re worrying without good reason. Ben wondered if Bennette had a nasty reason for wanting to meet him in the park. Was there any evidence she was going to chase him with a cricket bat? None he could think of.

Strategy 2: Is There an Alternative Explanation?
If you have it in your head that an event happened because of something you did or didn’t do, ask yourself: is there an alternative to that explanation? Ben considered some other reasons Bennette may have wanted to meet him: perhaps to kiss and get back together, or perhaps to return his library card.

Strategy 3: What Would You Say to a Friend Who is Thinking Like That?
It is the easiest thing in the world to call yourself unpleasant names when you make a mistake. But unhelpful and negative self-talk can be really harmful and discouraging. So, if you find yourself in a situation like Ben’s, where he was tempted to call himself an idiot for ruining his white clothes, act like your own best friend and say something helpful like, ‘Chill out. It was a mistake, you didn’t do it on purpose.’

Strategy 4: What is the Likelihood?
Again, it is easy to imagine the worst when something important to you remains unresolved. In these situations where your imagination is tempted to run wild with negative possibilities, ask yourself “What is the likelihood?” When Ben heard the fire engine sirens, he immediately thought it was his house burning down. But was that likely? No. When you think rationally and objectively, you can reduce your stress and help yourself feel a bit better.

Strategy 5: Is There a More Helpful Way to Think About This?
This is a really valuable thinking skill to learn. This isn’t about glass-half-full or looking on the bright side – it is about looking at an event (even one with a less than ideal outcome) clearly and using your brain to work out if there is a way to think about it that isn’t just going to make you feel miserable. Ben received a huge credit card bill in the mail and became really stressed. Was that going to make the bill disappear? No. Life is about making mistakes – they are how we learn! And a big part of learning is looking at everything that happens, good and bad, in helpful ways. When Ben thought helpfully that he would simply have to create and stick to a budget in the future, he felt a lot better.

If you find that you are talking unhelpfully to yourself a lot, and that these strategies aren’t being as helpful as you’d like, don’t wait for things to get better by themselves. Talk to a friend, school counsellor, GP, or other trusted adults. You should also consider:

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Five Steps to Problem-solving

You will face problems all your life. Some of them will be small day-to-day problems like what to eat for breakfast, or where to find your house keys. Other problems that arise can be much more significant and complex, like disagreements with friends, or trying to decide what to do when you finish school.

Regardless of whether the problem you face is small, medium, or large, there are five steps you can take that can help you deal with it. This five-step model is not a guarantee that you’ll come up with the ideal solution, but it does encourage you to consider lots of options and outcomes. By doing this, you’ll know you’ve given this problem your best shot, and that should make you feel good no matter how things turn out.

STEP 1 Ask: What is the problem?
This is a really important step - sometimes, even just identifying what the problem is can prove half the battle!

Ben doesn’t know what he wants for breakfast.

STEP 2 Ask: What are the options/possible solutions?
This is a very important step, because you have to make yourself think about all your options, not just the obvious ones. Open your mind, and think objectively and creatively.

Ben considers every food option in the house.

STEP 3 Ask: What are the pros, cons, and consequences of each option?
Here is where you imagine what is likely to happen if you proceed with each of your possible solutions. What will be the upside? What might be the downside? Some options will have two sets of consequences: short-term and long-term. Some options will have outcomes that affect not just you, but other people, too. Complex, isn’t it? But this step is incredibly important.

Ben knows that cereal is quick to prepare (pro) but won’t be as tasty as he might like (con).

Ben thinks bacon and eggs would be the tastiest option (pro), but also one that leaves his kitchen in a mess and the house smelling like fried bacon (con) – consequences that might affect other people.

STEP 4 Make a decision
Ultimately, you have to make a choice. Problems that are left to fix themselves very rarely do. Remember nobody can read the future, so you just have to make a decision based on your clear thinking about options and their consequences.

Ben decides that yoghurt is today’s best breakfast choice.

STEP 5 Do and Review
There! You’ve chosen one course of action and gone through with it. Did it work? Maybe it did, maybe it didn’t. Regardless, you should feel good about it, because you thought clearly and carefully before you acted, and did the best you could. If things didn’t turn out, well, that’s life. We all make mistakes - mistakes are how we learn, so don’t make yourself feel bad!

Ben eats the yoghurt and thinks it is tastier than the cereal and less tasty than the bacon and eggs (but probably better for him), and the clean up is a breeze. Good choice!
Joining a Conversation

1. Think encouragingly.
2. Assess people’s body language.
3. Try to appear friendly.
4. Don’t worry about what to say next; just listen in to what others are saying.
5. Ask other people what they are interested in.
6. Show you understand and you are listening.
7. Give others chances to speak.
8. Acknowledge that different people have different opinions.
9. It’s ok to have lulls. You don’t need to fill every silence.
10. When a conversation reaches a natural end, thank the others for the chat, and say you enjoyed talking with them.
Perspective-taking, Assertiveness, Negotiation, & Conflict Resolution

**PERSPECTIVE-TAKING**
Perspective-taking means looking at situations from other people’s points of view. Almost every action we take has some impact on other people, and understanding how situations seem from others’ perspectives is really important to getting along. Sometimes you need to put yourself in other people’s shoes, such as:
- your friend’s
- your parent’s
- your boyfriend’s or girlfriend’s
- your teacher’s
and imagine what a situation must seem like from their point of view. That new perspective may change how you think about things!

**ASSERTIVENESS**
Being assertive means:
- Sticking up for yourself - don’t allow other people to dominate you
- Being firm, fair, and reasonable
- Looking for win-win outcomes

Here are some tips:
- Think about the other person’s motives
- Explain how their actions affect you
- Make eye contact and use a firm but calm voice
- Allow the other person to respond, and listen when they do
- Know what you want, but be prepared to compromise
- Speak to yourself helpfully
- If you don’t feel safe with the other person, move away.

**NEGOTIATION**
A negotiation is not issuing an order or receiving a command. Negotiations are like conversations – they are two-way interactions. Effective negotiations require good listening and thinking skills.

Here are some tips:
- Prepare beforehand – think about alternatives in case you can’t get your preferred outcome
- Find out the other person’s perspective – know what motivates their decisions
- State your own needs – explain why something is important to you
- Don’t argue – it’s not productive and it gets tempers up.
- Choose timing – allow a generous amount of time at a mutually convenient moment when neither of you is preoccupied
- Choose a good place – ensure it is a comfortable place for both of you, where you can speak without battling noise and distractions.

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION**
In life, it is inevitable that your wants and needs will rub up against other people’s – and that’s when conflicts arise.

Here are some tips that can help when you desire to resolve a conflict:
- Don’t go in angry – go in when you are calm and prepared to listen
- Understand each other’s perspective – it is important you both understand what the other person wants and why
- Prepare and make time – allow time to state your own case and to listen to the other person’s
- Consider getting help – a mediator can help with difficult conflicts. Mediators can include friends, counselors, psychologists, teachers, and youth workers. It is especially important to consider asking for help from a mediator if you are worried the other person could be abusive or violent.

If you need help ...

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- www.youthbeyondblue.com
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Planning & Time-management

Not everyone is a natural planner. If you find you are struggling to achieve even modest goals, you should seek help—especially if you’re finding things overwhelming. Talk to a teacher, the school counsellor, your GP, or other trusted adults. You should also consider:

- **Planning & Time-management**
  - Being flexible is good, but skills in planning and time management will help you meet your goals. It doesn’t matter if they are big, long-term goals like working overseas, starting a family or trade, or going to university, or more modest, short-term goals such as making time to watch your favourite show on Sunday night, getting to training more often, starting a painting or book, or saving money for a new iPod. **Planning is a great tool for helping you meet your goals.**

- **PLANNING ALLOWS YOU TO**
  - look ahead
  - predict likely obstacles (and how to overcome them)
  - create realistic schedules
  - manage stress
  - manage time effectively
  - make time for fun/enjoyable activities

- **TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS**
  - identify your goals and priorities
  - analyse how you are currently spending your time
  - match how you are using your time with your priorities
  - develop a plan that is manageable
  - review and change your plan if necessary
  - build in some activities that energise you and make you feel good
  - expect that unexpected things can occur
  - use schedules/diaries/reminder systems that work for you
  - think helpfully

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Seek Help When You Need it

There are times when all of us find it difficult to cope with anxiety and stress by ourselves. Some people you can turn to for help are your GP, counsellors, and other trusted adults. You should also consider these options:

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If you know someone who is struggling with problems, it is really important that they talk to someone. Trusted friends and adults, school counsellors, and your GP are all good places to start. You should also consider:

Ways to keep your mind and body working well:

• Eat well.
• Have enough sleep.
• Make time to exercise (a brisk walk or a ride on a bike are excellent, easy ways to exercise).
• Make time for fun or enjoyable activities.
• Find and practice ways to relax and manage stress that you enjoy (e.g. yoga, gym, meditation, painting, playing a musical instrument).
• Think well and speak to yourself helpfully – remember: you are unique and important.
• Challenge unhelpful thoughts and self-talk ("It’s okay if I don’t always get things right" is more helpful than "I’m a total idiot")
• Recognize signs that you might be stressed or anxious or need a break (e.g. feeling irritable, not sleeping well, having difficulty concentrating).
• Look for the strengths in yourself (and others):
  • focus on all the amazing things you can do (just being you is pretty amazing!)
  • remember your abilities that you usually don’t even notice (e.g. walking, talking, thinking, hearing music, tasting food)
  • stop focusing on the things that you might not like about yourself (many you cannot change, and most don’t really matter as much as you think).
• Find people and organisations who can provide help if you or a friend need it.

Everyone goes through times when it seems really difficult to feel well and to find fun ‘time outs’ for your mind. But problems can creep up on you. Here are some signs that you, or someone you know, might not be coping well:

• Extreme moods (really up and down)
• Fighting with others
• Withdrawal from family and friends
• Using drugs or alcohol
• Changed eating habits
• Sleeping problems
• Feeling afraid, anxious or depressed
• Not enjoying things as much as you used to
• Feeling overwhelmed or defeated.

Websites

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