

PARENT PACK

HELPING YOUR TEEN WITH

LOW MOOD

CORONAVIRUS



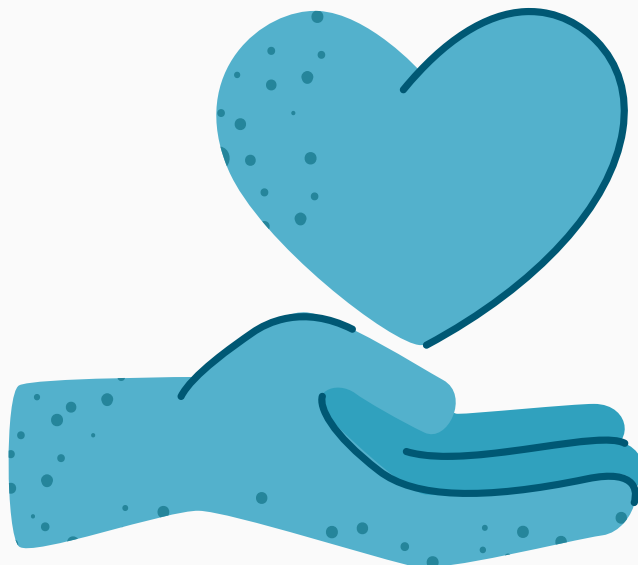
What you need to know

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is going to affect everyone's daily lives, as the government and the NHS take necessary steps to manage the outbreak, reduce transmission and treat those who need medical attention.

Regardless of their age, this may be a difficult time for children and young people. Some may react right away, while others may show signs of difficulty later on.

How a child or young person reacts can vary according to their age, how they understand information and communicate, their previous experiences, and how they typically cope with stress. Negative reactions may include worrying thoughts about their health or that of family and friends, fear, avoidance, problems sleeping, or physical symptoms such as stomach ache.

During this time, it's important that you take care of your family's mental health – there are lots of things you can do, and support is available if you need it.



Background

This advice is to help adults with caring responsibilities look after the mental health and wellbeing of children or young people, including those with additional needs and disabilities, during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Looking after your own mental health

As well as thinking about the children or young people in your care, it is important to take care of your own mental health and wellbeing. Children and young people react, in part, to what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with a situation calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children and young people. Parents and caregivers can be more supportive to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Please see advice on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak or visit [Every Mind Matters](#) for clear advice and actions to take care of your mental health and wellbeing.



What is low mood

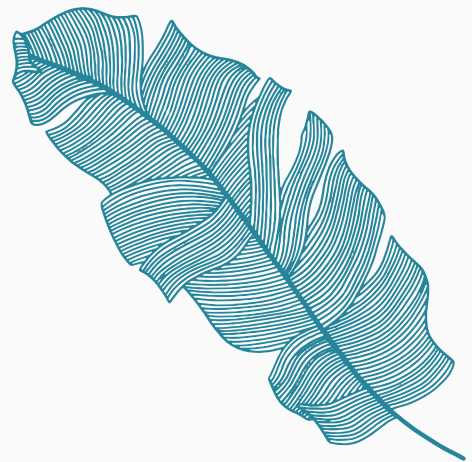
Everyone feels low or down from time to time. It does not always mean something is wrong. Feeling low is common after distressing events or major life changes, but sometimes periods of low mood happen for no obvious reason.

You may find your child is feeling tired, lacking confidence, frustrated, angry and worried. But a low mood will often pass after a couple of days or weeks – and there are some easy things you can try and small changes you can make that will usually help improve your mood.

If they are still feeling down or no longer get pleasure from things for most of each day and this lasts for several weeks, it may be they are experiencing depression. The tips in this book should help, but you may also want to find out about what further support is available.

Signs of low mood

- sad
- worried, anxious or panicked
- tired
- a lack of self-confidence
- frustrated or irritated
- angry
- not interested in things



Or you might notice you start:

withdrawing from your usual activities, particularly ones you used to enjoy or value

spending less time with those you care about

having trouble sleeping

Tips for helping improve low mood

It's important to remember it is OK to feel this way and that everyone reacts differently. Remember, this situation is temporary and, for most of us, these difficult feelings will pass.

There are some simple things you can do to help you take care of your mental health and wellbeing during times of uncertainty. Doing so will help you think clearly, and make sure you are able to look after yourself and those you care about.

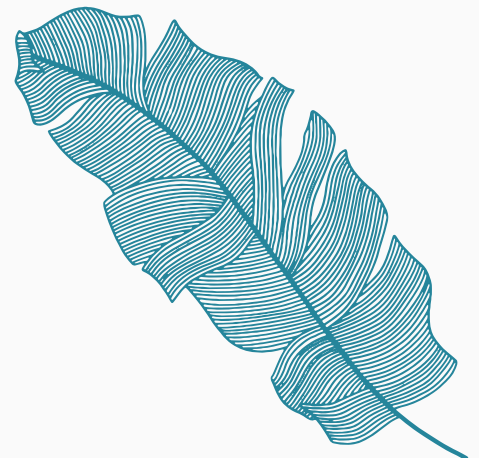
Stay connected with people

They may be struggling with self-isolation and social distancing

Social distancing and self-isolation can be really hard to deal with. It's normal to feel anxious, frustrated or bored, and if you're worried about the effect it will have on your mental health, you are not alone.

Maintaining healthy relationships with people we trust is important for our mental wellbeing, so think about how you can help your child to stay in touch with friends and family while needing to stay at home.

You could try suggesting phone calls, video calls or social media instead of meeting in person – whether it's with people you normally see often or connecting with old friends.



Talk about their worries

It's normal to feel a bit worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember: it is OK to share concerns with others you trust – and doing so may help them too.

If they feel they cannot speak to someone they know or if doing so has not helped, there are plenty of helplines you can try instead.

Mind

Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems.

Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm)

Website: www.mind.org.uk

Rethink Mental Illness

Support and advice for people living with mental illness.

Phone: 0300 5000 927 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm)

Website: www.rethink.org

YoungMinds

Information on child and adolescent mental health. Services for parents and professionals.

Phone: Parents' helpline 0808 802 5544 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm)

Website: www.youngminds.org.uk



Look after their physical health

Our physical health has a big impact on how we feel. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour that end up making you feel worse.

Try to encourage your child to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and exercise regularly.

You can leave your house, alone or with members of your household, for 1 form of exercise a day – like a walk, run or bike ride. But make sure you keep a safe 2-metre distance from others. Or you could try one of our easy 10-minute home workouts.



Do things you enjoy

If we are feeling worried, anxious or low, we might stop doing things we usually enjoy. Focusing on your favourite hobby, relaxing indoors or connecting with others can help with anxious thoughts and feelings.

If you cannot do the things you normally enjoy because you are staying at home, think about how you could adapt them, or try something new.

There are lots of free tutorials and courses online, and people are coming up with inventive new ways to do things, like hosting online pub quizzes and music concerts.

Stick to the facts



Find a credible source you can trust – such as GOV.UK or the NHS website – and fact-check information you get from newsfeeds, social media or other people.

You could also use the GOV.UK Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp. This automated chatbot covers the most common questions about coronavirus. Message the coronavirus chatbot to get started.

Try not to share information without fact-checking against credible sources.

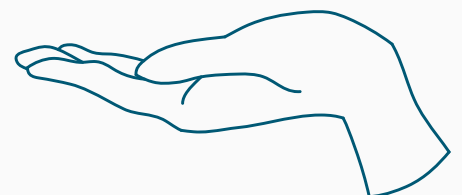
You could suggest a set a specific time to read updates

Support and help others

Helping someone else can benefit you as well as them, so try to be a little more understanding of other people's concerns, worries or behaviours at this time.

Try to think of things your child can do to help those around you. Is there a friend or family member nearby they could message? Collect shopping for elderly relatives or neighbours.

Remember, it is important to do this in line with official coronavirus guidance to keep everyone safe.



Getting enough sleep



Good-quality sleep makes a big difference to how we feel mentally and physically, so it is important to get enough.

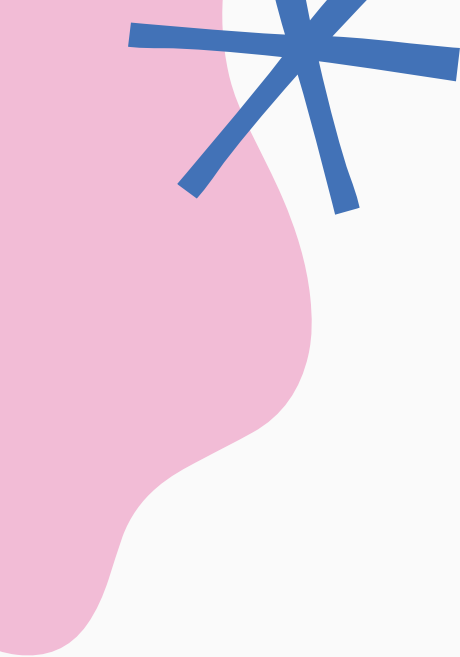
Try to maintain regular sleeping patterns and keep up good sleep hygiene practices – like avoiding screens before bed, cutting back on caffeine and creating a restful environment. See our sleep page for more advice



School or College

With older students, keeping up with expectations from school can be challenging, especially for those with ADHD, learning disorders or organization issues.

You can help teenagers — and college students who've been sent work home — create a realistic schedule for getting work done in defined periods, building in breaks and times for socializing, exercising and entertainment. The key principle: do a session of work first, then reward yourself with something relaxing. Keep in mind that it's not going to be as effective as school, but it may get to be more effective over time as everyone on the school front, as well as the home front, works to improve remote learning.



daily schedule

DAY

9:00

10:00

11:00

12:00

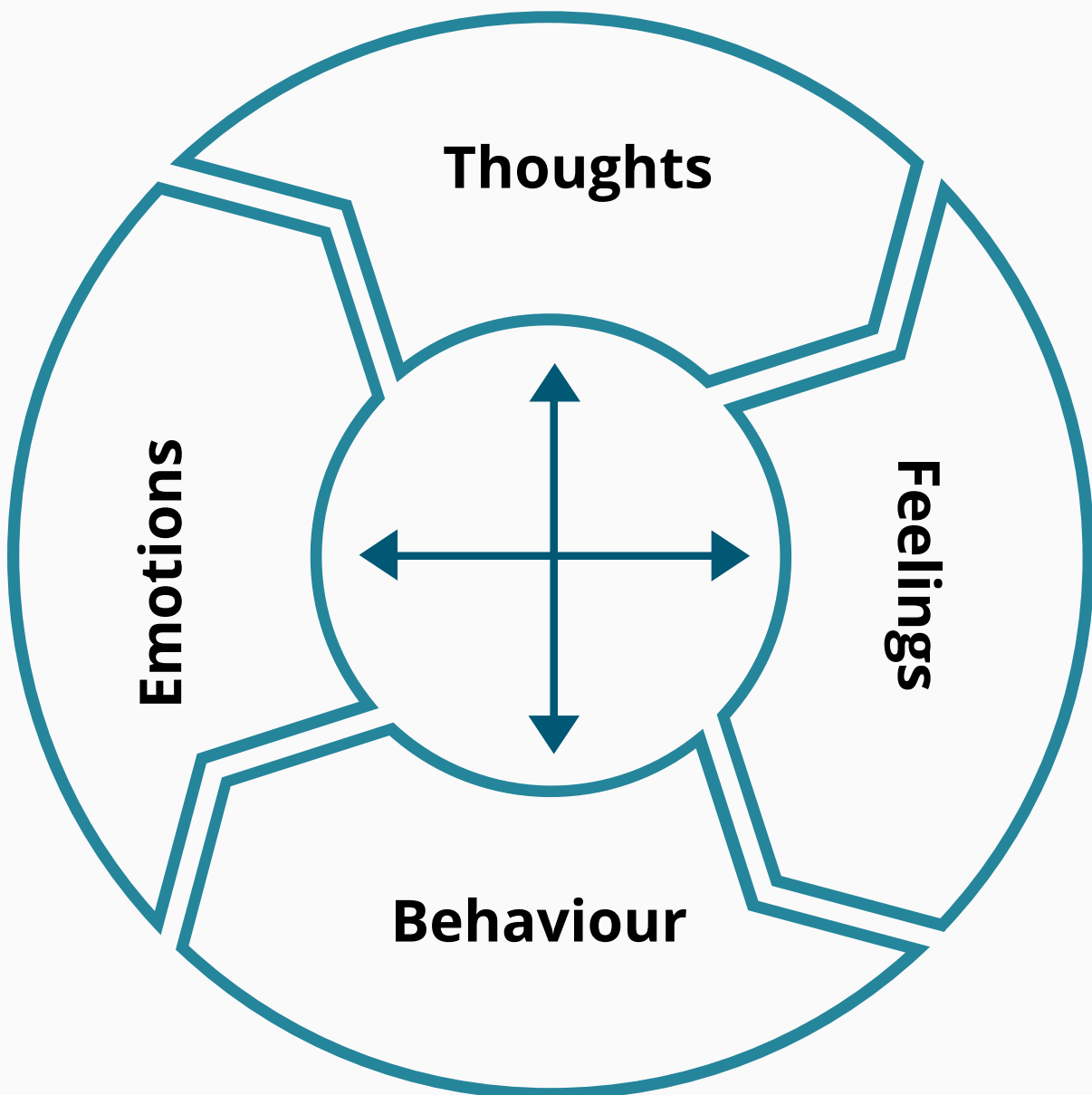
1:00

2:00

3:00

Feelings and how they link together

When we are feeling low it can impact on everything and cause a downwards spiral that can be difficult to get out of. It can cause us to stop doing things, which give us more time to think negative thoughts, which can make our bodies feel strange, maybe tired, achy or tense and this in turn makes us feel more sad.



IDENTIFYING NATS

(Negative Automatic Thoughts)



& UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES



Catastrophising

(e.g. "This is awful, nothing will ever go right again").

Black and white thinking

(e.g. "I felt a bit better doing something different, but not a lot, so it's useless").

Personalisation

(e.g. "It must be my fault, I'm to blame, it's because I'm no good").

Overgeneralising

(e.g. "I tried talking to a friend once and that didn't work, so there's no point talking to anyone").

Tunnel Vision

(e.g. remembering one bad thing when 10 good things were also said).

Jumping to conclusions

(e.g. "doing something different won't do any good").

Emotional reasoning

(e.g. "If I feel anxious so the party must must be going to be bad").

Mind reading

(e.g. "She thinks I'm weird", "He definitely doesn't want to play with me").

Discounting/disqualifying

(e.g. "That doesn't count.", "That was just lucky - it would never happen again").



Challenge unhelpful thoughts

Our thoughts impact the way that we feel and when we are feeling low our brains tend to pick up on the bad things and make things seem worse and overwhelming. We don't expect you to be able to stop thinking negative thoughts but we would like to help you balance those thoughts.

You can do this by recording the thoughts that you have and seeing what type of thinking style or NAT (negative automatic thought) your brain used because you are feeling low. Then once we have noticed these we can try to challenge these thoughts to balance them, this can be really tricky but you can try to use these techniques to help.

Think about what you would tell a friend if they were thinking this thought.

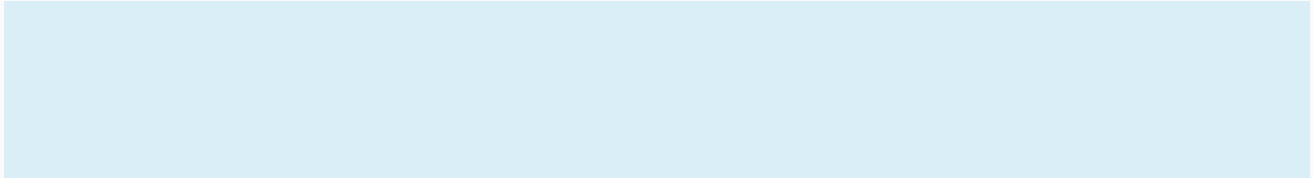
Imagine that you are in a court of law, would this thought hold as a fact or is it your opinion? What would someone say to prove it is not a fact?

Do you believe this thought 100%? If not what makes up the other percent?

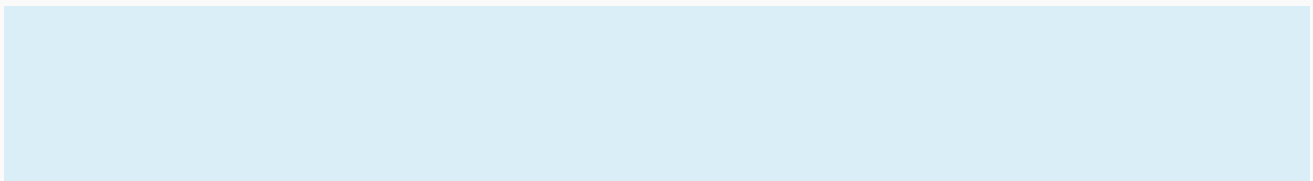
Will this matter in 6 months time?

Ten steps to challenging an unhelpful thinking style

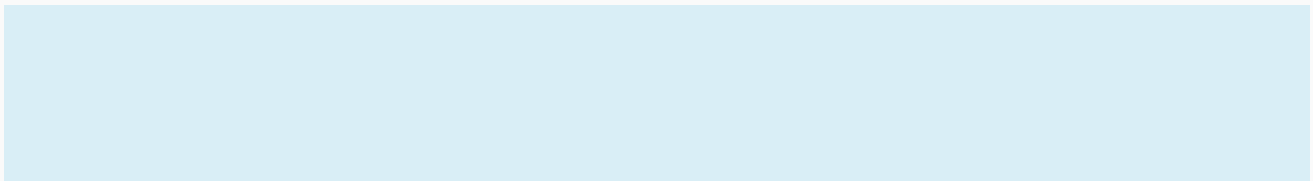
Step one: Use a thought diary to identify unhelpful thinking style



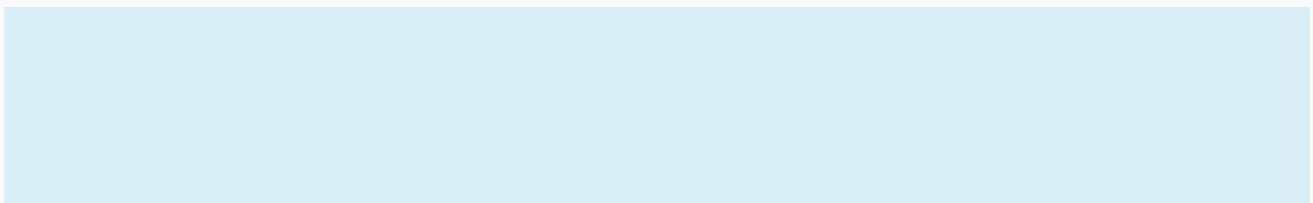
Step two: Explore the thought What is the unhelpful ANT (automatic negative thought(s)) that keep coming back to you?



Step three: Consider what you are doing or what is happening when you have this thought

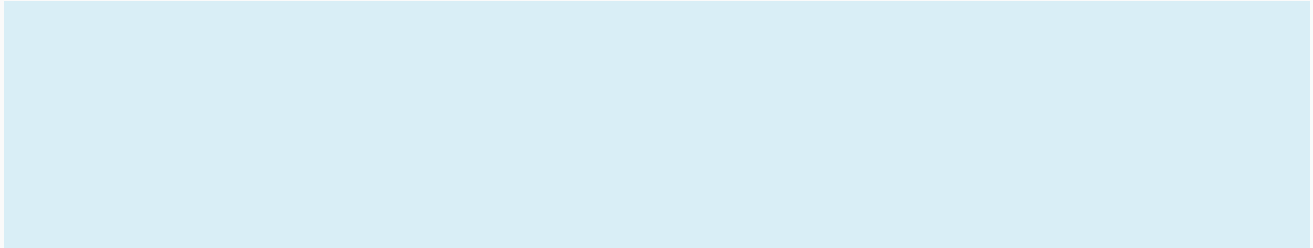


Step four: How does it make you feel? How does the ANT make you feel on the mood scale 1-10? (one being most positive, 10 being most negative)



Step five: Challenge the thought

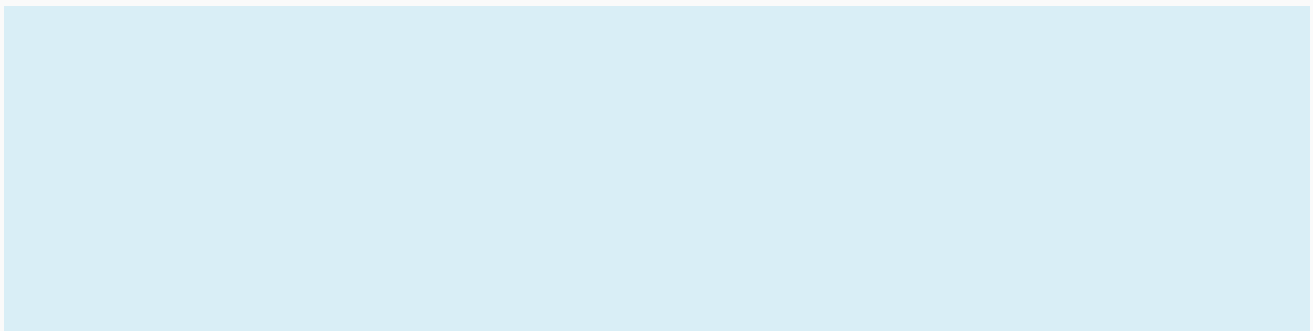
What evidence is there for this thought? Evidence for and Evidence against



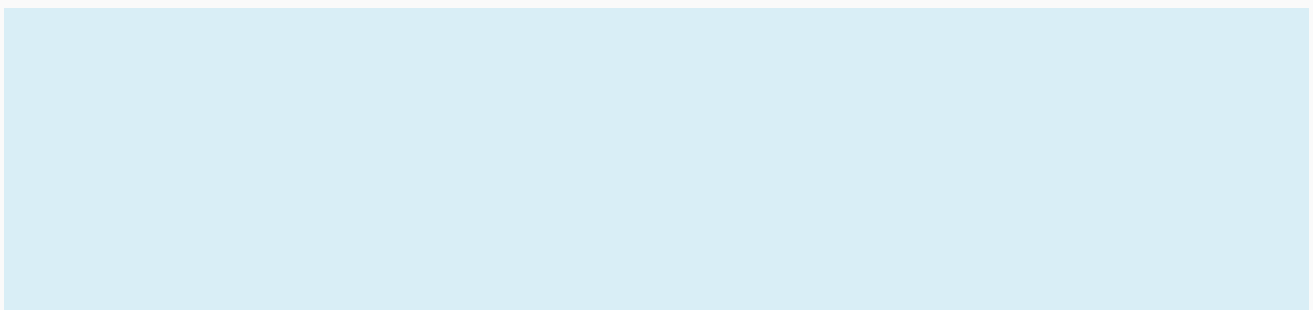
Step six: Is your ANT a negative predication ('What if' thinking)?

What are the real chances of this happening?

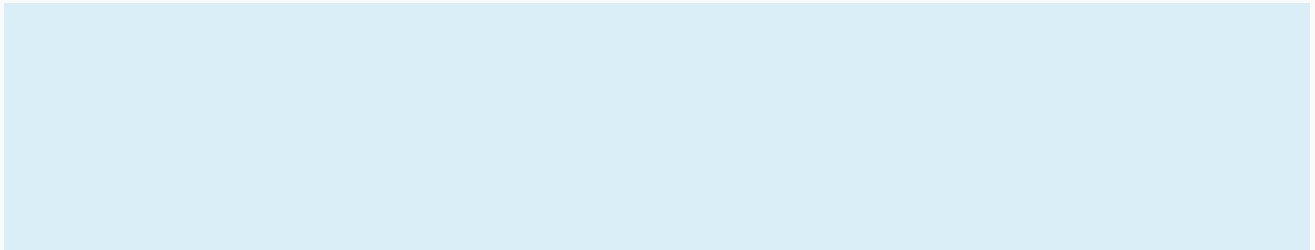
What is the worst thing that could happen?



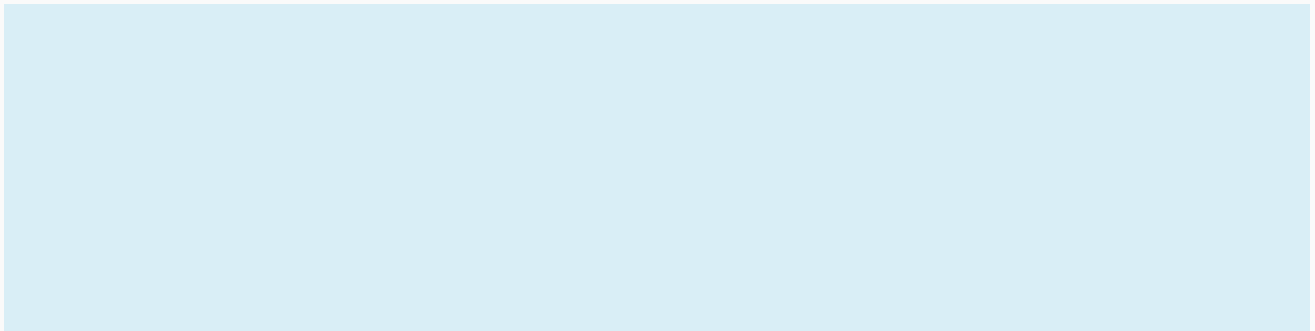
Step seven: What would a friend say to you about this ANT?



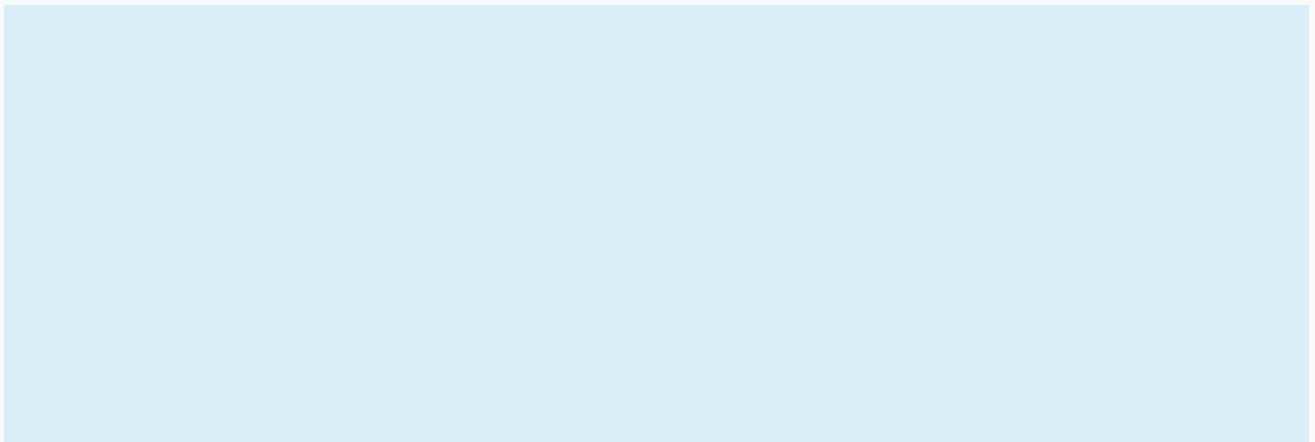
Step eight: How helpful is this way of thinking?

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Step nine: What would be a more helpful and accurate way of thinking?

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Step ten: Put this into action. How did it make you feel? What is your mood now on a scale 1-10? (one being most positive, 10 being most negative)

A large, empty light blue rectangular box intended for the user to write their response to Step ten.

RESOURCES

Young Minds info on Coronavirus

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/>

Mind - Looking after your mental wellbeing

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/looking-after-your-wellbeing/#collapse7546>

Mindful gNATs App (Android only)

Free app with activities to help to relax and manage your thoughts.

Mood Tools App (IOS only)

Free app to help you record your thoughts or schedule activities to help manage your low mood.

Unicef - How to deal with the new normal

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teenagers-can-protect-their-mental-health-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

YoungScot - Looking after your wellbeing in a Coronavirus outbreak

<https://young.scot/get-informed/national/how-to-look-after-your-mental-wellbeing>

RESOURCES

Local support:

Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning - <https://www.ghll.org.uk/>

Teens in Crisis - <https://ticplus.org.uk/>

TIC+ Parent support line 0800 6525675

On Your Mind Gloucestershire - <https://www.onyourmindglos.nhs.uk/>

This booklet was created by Young Minds Matter Gloucestershire, part of the School's Mental Health Support Team.

