

# UNDERSTANDING THOUGHTS

## Skill Sheet for Educators

Our thoughts can be overwhelming at times and can cause us to feel stressed and anxious. Our hedgehog friend in the video taught us that it can be easy to overthink and get stuck thinking unhelpful thoughts that may not be true. That's why it's important to take the time to pause and remember that thoughts are not facts and that we have the power to change them. Changing our thoughts can help us reduce our uncomfortable emotions and navigate challenging situations better.

### Summary of the **KEY SKILLS** from the video.

- Thoughts are not always facts and are temporary.
- Thoughts can be either helpful or unhelpful.
- You can practice changing unhelpful thoughts to thoughts that are more realistic or helpful.

### Practice skills

- Help your students to practice identifying unhelpful and helpful thoughts and describing how their thoughts make them feel.
- If you recognize that a student is expressing an unhelpful thought, encourage them to replace the thought with a more helpful or realistic thought. Here are some examples where this may be helpful:
  - “ Your student states that their best friend doesn't like them anymore because the best friend was playing with someone else at recess. You can ask your student, “What could be another reason your friend was playing with someone else?”  
Your student states, “I'm so stupid” after receiving a low grade on an assessment. You can ask your student, “What is another reason you may have received a low grade on the test?”
- Use specific positive feedback frequently, immediately, and consistently when your students change their unhelpful thoughts (whether it is independent or prompted). You might say, “Great job staying calm and thinking of all the possibilities!”
- Utilize academic opportunities to promote different thinking, including highlighting what a character in a book is thinking and how events might have been different if that character thought differently.

**Start with this →**

- Ask your students the following questions to get them to be more aware of their thinking:
  - “ What were you thinking in that situation? Or: What is your brain saying?  
How is this thought making you feel?  
Do you think this thought is helpful or unhelpful?
- Remind your students: “It’s just a thought, and it does not mean it’s important or that it’s true.”
- Remember that recognizing your thinking takes practice.

On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your students to help practice understanding thoughts.

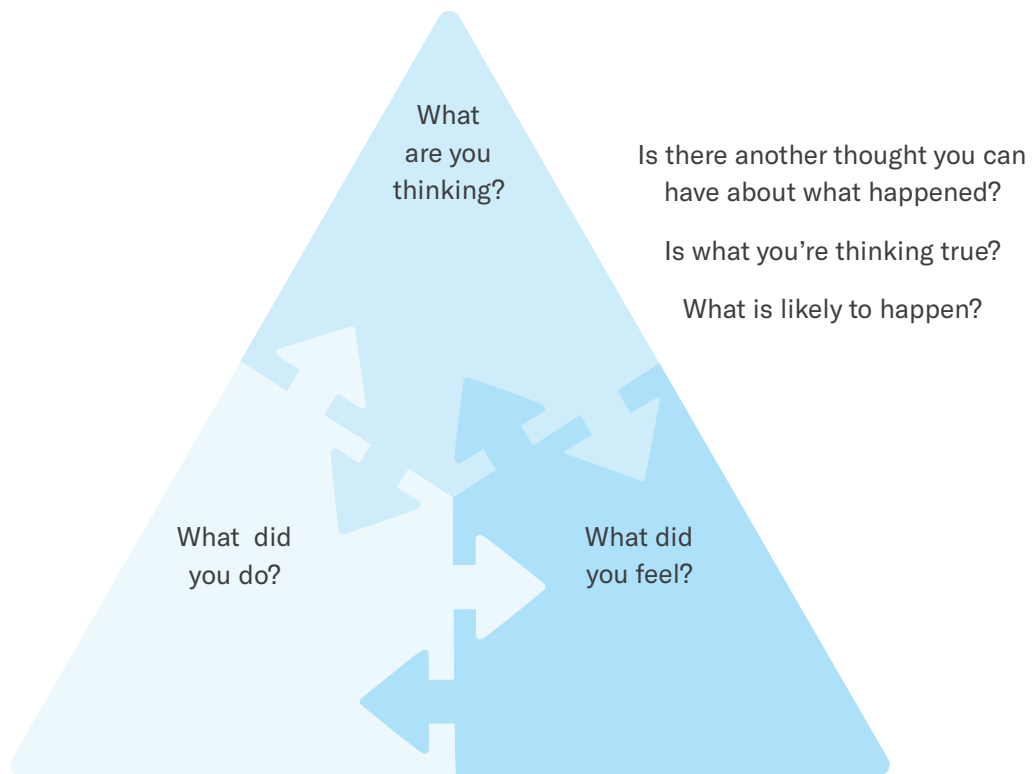
## Activity

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

# Understanding Thoughts

Recognizing and changing unhelpful thoughts takes practice. You can support your students by helping them to identify when they are experiencing an unhelpful thought and encouraging them to practice changing that thought into one that is more realistic or helpful. You can begin with the below activity to practice noticing the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors associated with a specific event:

What Happened?



## Follow Up

When you notice how your thoughts are connected to how you feel, you're gathering data about yourself. If you notice that certain ways of thinking are not all that helpful or lead to uncomfortable feelings, remember that you have the power to slow down and consider when there might be other ways of thinking about the situation. The skills reviewed in the additional videos and worksheets of this curriculum can also help!