Background

This session aims to introduce the idea that emotions are not a direct consequence of events, but reflect the way people think about and interpret events. It highlights the link between events, thoughts and feelings.

Psychological research shows that it is not an event itself which causes a person to feel a particular way, but rather the way that the person interprets the event that influences subsequent mood. Therefore it is possible for two people to interpret a situation or event very differently, and to have quite different emotional reactions to the same event. People who display an optimistic or helpful thinking style when faced with a challenge are more likely to be resilient. A pessimistic thinking style is linked to more negative outcomes. Thinking styles are not fixed and it is possible to teach people to think more optimistically. Being able to challenge unhelpful thoughts and to replace them with more helpful thoughts is a protective factor contributing to resilience.

The session will introduce students to the idea that the way they think about situations can influence mood, and encourage them to practise positive or helpful thinking.

Learning outcomes

Students will evaluate the influences on self-concept, self-esteem and resilience.

In this session, students will:

• describe the role of different thoughts in specific situations and the influence of these thoughts on subsequent feelings/mood; and

• evaluate the influence of thoughts on mood.

Students will recommend and demonstrate skills that promote a positive self-concept and resilience.

In this session, students will:

• practise generating helpful thoughts which are likely to affect mood positively.
session outline

• Review
• Activity 1. Thought or feeling?
• Activity 2. Linking thoughts and feelings
• Activity 3. The role of helpful thinking
• Reflection
• Home tasks

Preparation/resources

No additional resources required.
### Session Plan

**Emotional regulation — the thinking-feeling link**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Review</strong> [2–5 mins]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Review previous session — re-introduce the idea that emotions can be both positive and negative, and that students can influence mood by planning and engaging in pleasant activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Review home tasks — ‘My activities and feelings record’. What did students notice about their feelings over the past week?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Link to current session.</td>
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**Points to make**

- *In the last session, we saw that there are many different types of emotions and they come in different strengths.*
- *Today we will be looking at how our feelings are linked to what we think.*

### Activity 1. Thought or feeling? [10–15 mins]

**Process**

1. As a class, discuss distinctions between feelings and thoughts.

**Points to make**

- *Feelings can be described in one word and come from inside you.*
- *Thoughts are the words or pictures that go through your mind.*

2. Refer students to page 68 of the Student Workbook and have students individually complete the ‘Thought or feeling’ activity.

3. As a class, discuss the responses.

**Purpose**

*Students will learn to distinguish between thoughts and feelings.*
Activity 2. Linking thoughts and feelings

[10–15 mins]

Process

1. Refer students to page 69 of the Student Workbook. In pairs, read through the list of situations.
2. For each situation, have students discuss and identify how they would feel in the same situation. Write the feeling in Part A.

Point to make

- You and your partners may have different answers. That’s OK. Remember, people often feel differently about the same situation.

3. Then have students read the two thoughts in Part B of each situation. In pairs, discuss:
   - how you would feel if you had these different thoughts in relation to the situation
   - write the feeling below each thought.

4. As a class, briefly discuss responses.

Points to make

- The way we think about an event or situation can affect how we feel.
- Some interpretations or thoughts are more likely to lead to positive feelings, while others can make us feel a negative emotion.

Purpose

Students will understand the link between how they think about a situation or event, and their mood (or how they feel).
Activity 3. The role of helpful thinking [10–15 mins]

Process

1. Refer students to pages 72 and 73 of the Student Workbook. Have students read the list of situations.
2. Underneath each situation is an example of a negative thought someone might have if the situation/event happened to them.
3. For each negative thought, have students:
   - identify how the thought would make them feel;
   - think of a more positive or helpful alternative thought; and
   - identify how the more helpful thought would make them feel.
4. Discuss the link between situations, thoughts and feelings.

Points to make

- Our thoughts influence how we feel.
- It is not just the event that makes us feel bad, but how we think about that event.
- Some difficult events may lead to negative thoughts and feelings, but it is important to realise that negative thoughts are usually unhelpful.
- It is usually possible to think of a more helpful thought about a situation.

Purpose

To further reinforce the link between thoughts and mood. To give students practice at generating alternative positive/helpful thoughts.

Helpful thoughts can help you cope with difficult events and emotions.
**Reflection** [3–5 mins]

Refer students to page 74 of the Student Workbook. Ask students to complete the following tasks:

1. Ask students to look back over their Activities Diary completed for last week’s home task.
2. Ask students to choose one or two examples from the diary, and to try to remember what they were thinking when they were feeling their best and feeling their worst.
3. Ask students to consider if and how their thoughts could have influenced their feelings in these examples.

**Home tasks**

Refer students to page 75 of the Student Workbook. This week’s home task is:

- Over the next week, continue to complete an activity diary. You are asked to record what you were doing when you were feeling your best and when you were feeling your worst, as well as the emotion you felt, and the strength of the emotion, using the Feelings Thermometer. This time you also need to record what you were thinking at the time when you experienced the feeling.