

# Worries

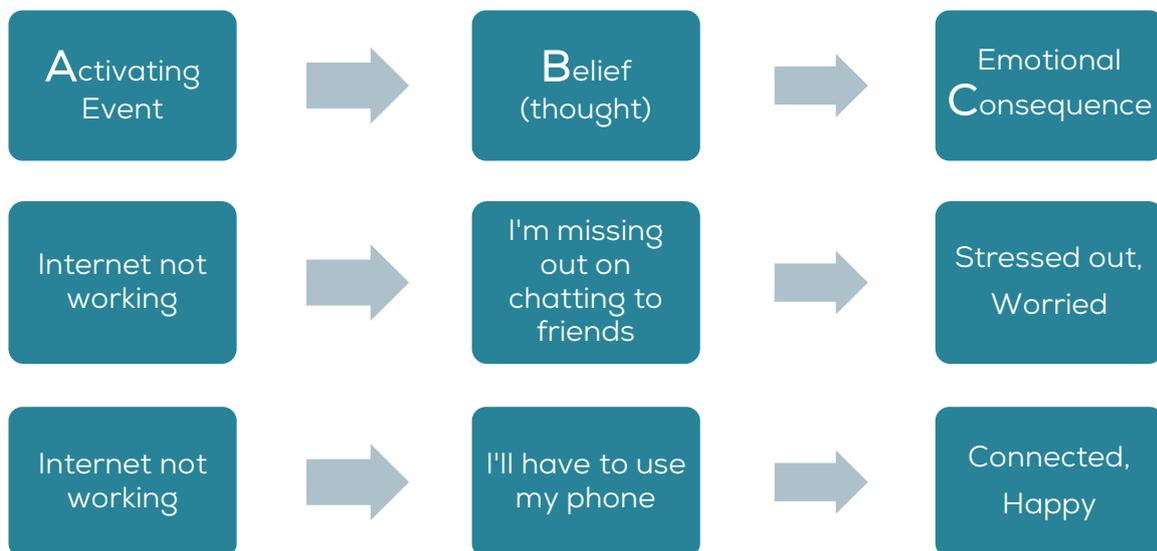
## ABOUT WORRY

It is not uncommon for people to experience worries especially during the teenage years. Some common worries that young people may have include those that are related to family, friendships, school, stress, safety, looks, health, conflict, money or bullying. Covid-19 has created uncertainty and changes to our way of living and interacting with others. Because of these changes, you may be having more worrying thoughts than usual. It is important to remember you are not alone in this experience.

We have many thoughts each day, so it is natural for some of these to include worries. Emotions give us important information about the world around us and worry can have an important function. Worry helps us to be more aware of what might be dangerous or challenging. This gives us time to plan how to respond and helps us to anticipate real or potential threats/dangers. It can also help us to solve problems and motivate us. When worries begin to take over though, it can leave us feeling upset. While we can't always change the situation we are in, we can learn new ways of thinking about it. You will learn how you can do this in the activity you are about to do.

## THE ABC OF EMOTIONS

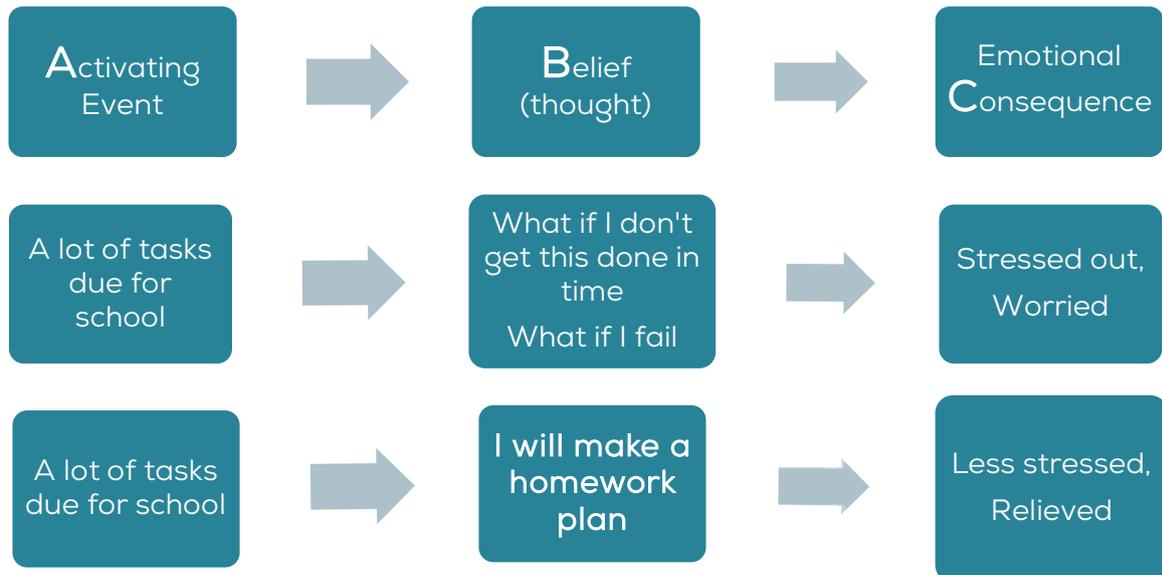
With the challenges we all face at the moment, it can sometimes feel harder to stay positive all the time. When this happens, worry can start to take over. Changing how we *think* about a situation can very helpful in changing how we *feel* about it. Take a look at this example:



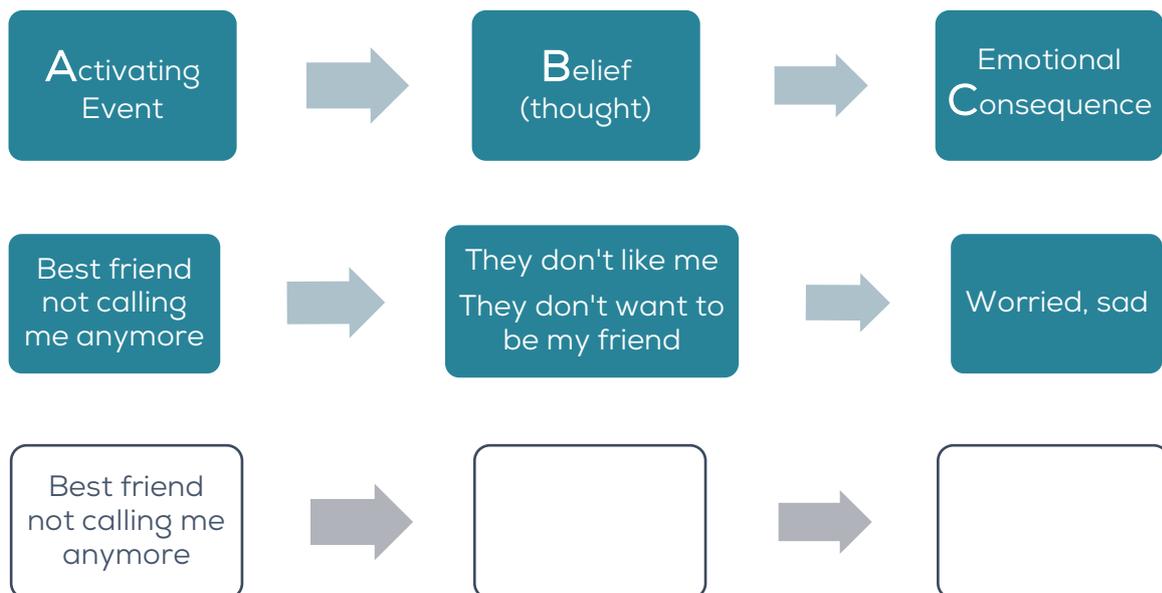
In this example, we can't change the internet not working but what we can change are our thoughts about it. By changing our thoughts, we can move from feeling worried and stressed out to happy and connected.



Here is another example:

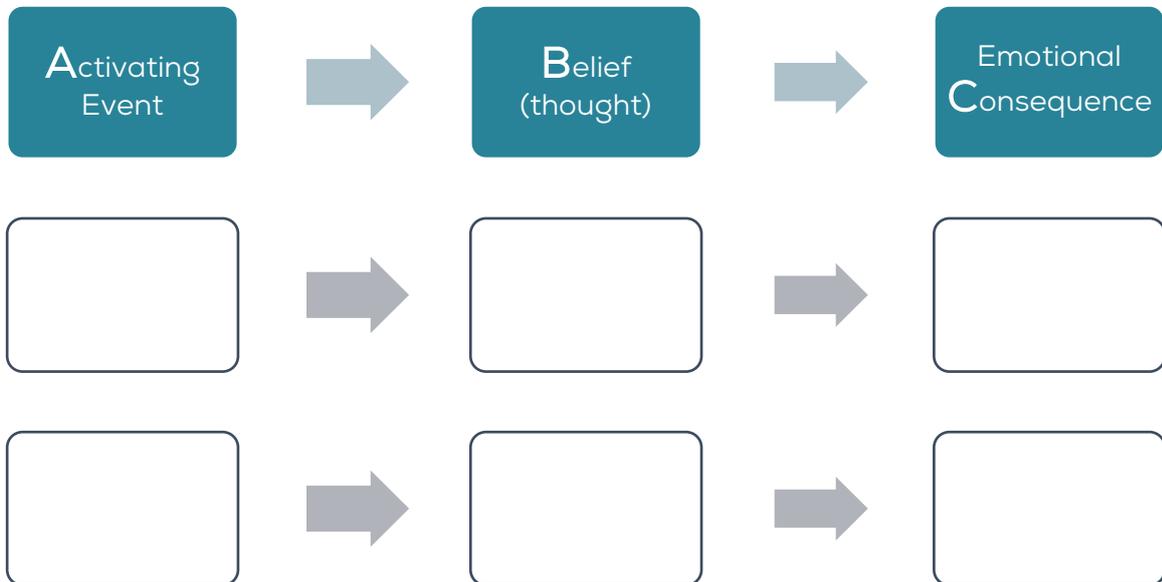
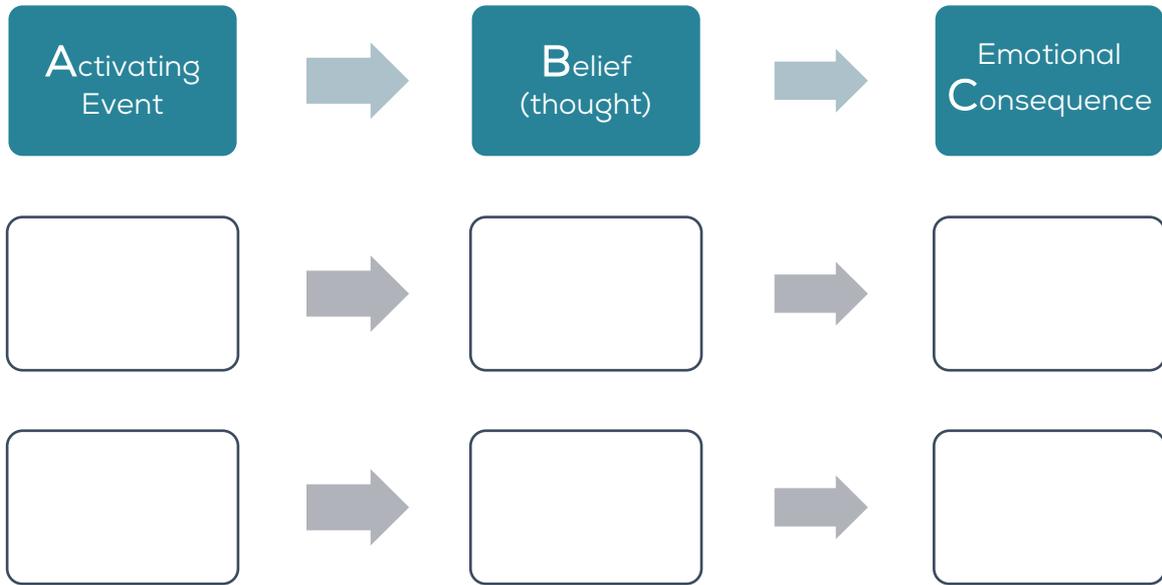


Now it's your turn to have a go at replacing the thoughts and emotional consequence



**TRY THIS**

Have a go at trying this yourself. Think about a situation you have experienced, the thoughts you might have about it and the emotional consequence (how you feel).



### TRY THIS

There are times we might worry about things that aren't in our control and as you just saw in the example thinking about things differently can be helpful in changing how we feel about it. There are also things you can do if you are having worrying thoughts:

COMMON WORRIES	IDEAS TO TRY
Friendships	Speak to your friend about how you are feeling (Using "I" statements can be helpful e.g. I feel frustrated when...), speak to your friend about possible solutions, speak to someone who can help
School	Ask for extra help, speak to your teacher, talk to someone, learn a new skill.
Safety	Speak to a trusted teacher or adult

You can also look at the Coping Activity to get some more ideas.

### TRY THIS

Another thing to note: worries love your attention! If you find yourself getting caught up in worries, can you give yourself a rest from it by finding something fun and interesting to do. Have a look through the Worry tip sheet for more ideas to try.

Write down any ideas that you think might work well for you:

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## Worries tip sheet

### THINK POSITIVELY – CHALLENGE WORRISOME THOUGHTS!

Anxiety can be healthy when it forces us to work hard to problem solve challenges. Anxiety can grow out of control however and blind you to logical or rational ways of thinking about problems. Practice catching your irrational worries and challenging them by thinking about them in a more positive way:

1. Worrisome thought	2. Emotions	3. Challenge the thought	4. Changes in Emotions
→	→	→	→
E.g. I <u>won't</u> make any friends and I'll be alone	Sadness, Fear	I've made friends before and I think I'm a pretty good friend	reassured, less anxious and fearful, motivated to try and make friends

**Note:** This process of challenging negative patterns of thinking can be helpful when students are displaying rigid ways of thinking (e.g. demanding perfectionism from others or putting unrealistic pressure on themselves).

### DE-CATASTROPHISE

Irrational thoughts can lead to an exaggeration of the problem. When we catastrophize, the importance of the problem is exaggerated or we accept that the worst possible outcome must be the most likely outcome. Question these assumptions by asking yourself the following:

- How likely is it that your worry will come true?
- If you answered likely to the question above, what evidence do you have to support this? Can you give an example?
- If the worry comes true, what is the worst thing that could happen?
- If the worry comes true, when is the most likely thing that could happen?

If the worry comes true, what are the chances that you will be ok in a:

Week \_\_\_\_\_% Month \_\_\_\_\_ % Year \_\_\_\_\_ %



## RELAX

When a person is feeling very anxious about something, their body can go into a “fight or flight” response where it prepares to either fight the threat or flee from it. When this happens, the body can go into over drive and a person can experience symptoms like a racing heart, sweaty palms, blank mind, breathlessness and tense muscles. These changes in the body are often useless in preparing us to face modern day worries and fears. Learning strategies to relax the body can overcome the fight or flight response and allow you to use more proactive coping strategies. Useful relaxation strategies include:

**Deep Breathing** - reverses the fast shallow breathing, which accompanies a fight/flight response and sends a message to the brain to begin calming the body.

*Try this:* Breathe in deeply and slowly for 5 counts, hold for 5 counts and out for 10 counts. Your outbreath should be slow and controlled as if you were breathing out through a straw. Keep doing this until you feel calm.

**Progressive Muscle Relaxation** – muscles tense and tighten during the fight/flight response leading to pain in areas of the body such as the neck and the back. Try practicing progressive muscle relaxation to learn what this tension feels like and how to release some of the tension held in your muscles:

First find a quiet location where you can sit or lie down comfortably, then beginning with your toes..

- a. Curl your toes into your foot to tense the muscles and notice how this feels. Hold for 5 seconds.
- b. Relax your toes to release the tension. Notice how your toes feel when you release the tension from them.
- c. Tense the muscles in your calves. Hold for 5 seconds, noticing the feeling of tension in your legs.
- d. Release the tension from your calves and notice how the relaxed feeling differs.

Continue tensing and relaxing muscles in this way up through your torso, hands, arms, neck and up through your face.

**Visualisation** – Our brains have the ability to create emotional reactions from thoughts. Use this to calm your mind and feel more pleasant emotions when feeling overwhelmed:

First make sure you are in a quiet place where you can spend a few minutes with your eyes closed..

- a. Think of a place that is calming for you. It may be a place that you have been to before such as a beach or a lake or an experience such as spending time with loved ones or a pet.
- b. Paint a picture of the calming image in your mind by imagining what you would be picking up with your senses in that place (e.g. hearing the waves lapping at the shore or smelling the salty air).



## EXERCISE

Regular exercise has a positive impact on how strong we feel mentally and emotionally. This can include improvements in self-esteem, the interruption of negative thought patterns, and an increase in healthy social behaviour.

Great ways to exercise include:

- Playing a sport
- Running
- Bike Riding
- Playing with a pet/walking the dog
- Dancing
- Swimming
- Climbing
- Walking
- Hiking

**If you are frequently experiencing strong, unpleasant or unhelpful emotions, it can be a good idea to seek additional support to help change this. If you think this is a problem for you, consider discussing it with a member of your household or get in touch with the following services.**

If you feel you need further help please contact the school counsellor, Jenelle Hooson, through your homeroom teacher. Or you can ask your parents to contact your homeroom teacher or the assistant principal, Mr Pilgrim, to talk about meeting with Jenelle.

Here are some support options specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25:

- [Need to Talk?](#) Free call or text 1737 any time to speak to a trained counsellor, for any reason
- [Youthline](#): 0800 376 633 (24/7), or free text 234 (8am-12am), or email [talk@youthline.co.nz](mailto:talk@youthline.co.nz)
- [What's Up](#): online chat (7pm-10pm) or 0800 WHATSUP / 0800 9428 787 children's helpline (12pm-11pm weekdays, 3pm-11pm weekends)
- [Kidsline](#) (ages 5-18): 0800 543 754 (24/7 but between 4pm and 9pm calls are answered by a Kidsline Buddy, specially-trained year 12 and 13 students)

Further resources to help parents support their children during this time:

<https://www.allright.org.nz/>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/>

