

BEND DON'T BREAK

2023



Building strengths that build resilience

It is better to bend than to break!

In a storm, a palm tree's trunk bends.

Their deep roots help them stand in hurricane-force winds.

Resilience during tough times is about being like a palm tree.

Bend, don't break!



2023 edition of Bend Don't Break

The original version of Bend Don't Break was written in 2012. This version is based on the experience of using it and with feedback from workers and service users.

That feedback is greatly appreciated.

How to get the most from this workbook

New skills don't happen by themselves. You need to practice them. So, reading this workbook will not be enough.

We are calling this a **'workbook'**. You are going to have to work at it. Some suggestions to help you do this are:

- Talk about what you are doing with someone
- Do not let unfamiliar words throw you. Read it over a few times if you need to
- Write down your thoughts as you go through the workbook. We have added a skills pack with worksheets to help you practice skills covered in this workbook
- Develop a plan for how you are going to practice this stuff
- Reward yourself for small steps
- Stop if you feel you have opened a part of you that is difficult to manage. Any increase in symptoms or distress, stop, and discuss it with a professional
- This work is not a quick fix. It will take effort and repetition on your part to build positive habits.



What you do with this material is entirely up to you.

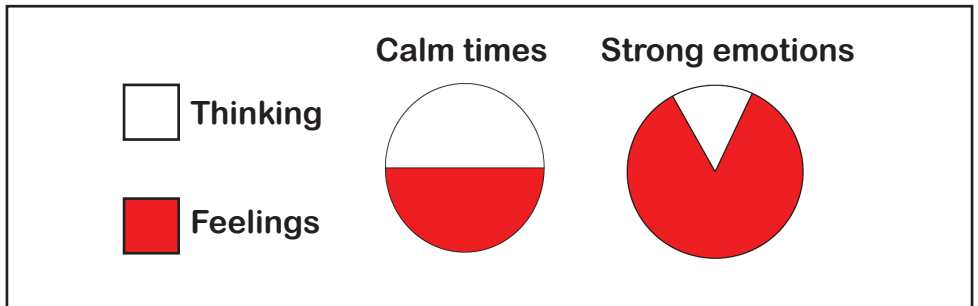
We hope you find it helpful.

Bend Don't Break: Building Strengths that Build Resilience

Do you have times when:

- Things seem to get on top of you?
- You can't stop worrying?
- Stressful situations are just too much?
- You beat yourself up with self-criticism?
- Your mood is low and you are not enjoying things?
- Do feelings like fear, anger, or sadness seem to take over?

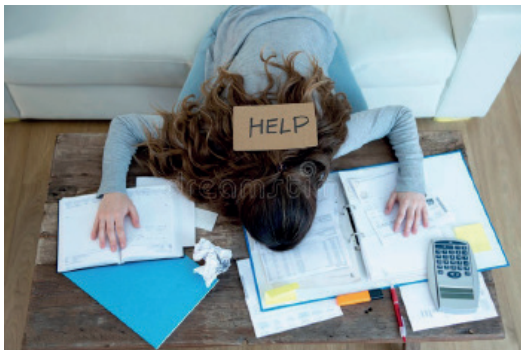
Your thinking 'closes down' and looks like this:



What influences your feelings?



Understanding how our bodies react to stress
may be a good starting point.



The body under pressure

It could be helpful to increase our understanding of how our brain and nervous system work.



How our body responds under pressure is called the 'fight-or-flight response'.

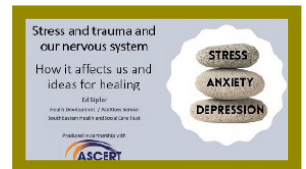
It's your body's way of telling you to react to something perceived as a threat.

When you experience stress, your body releases stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol to give you a rush of energy and prepare you for action.

When stress is excessive our thinking goes offline. This is the way the human brain has evolved and is normal. It is protective. We don't have to think what to do, we react.

This is helpful when danger is there yet can happen in response to everyday challenges.

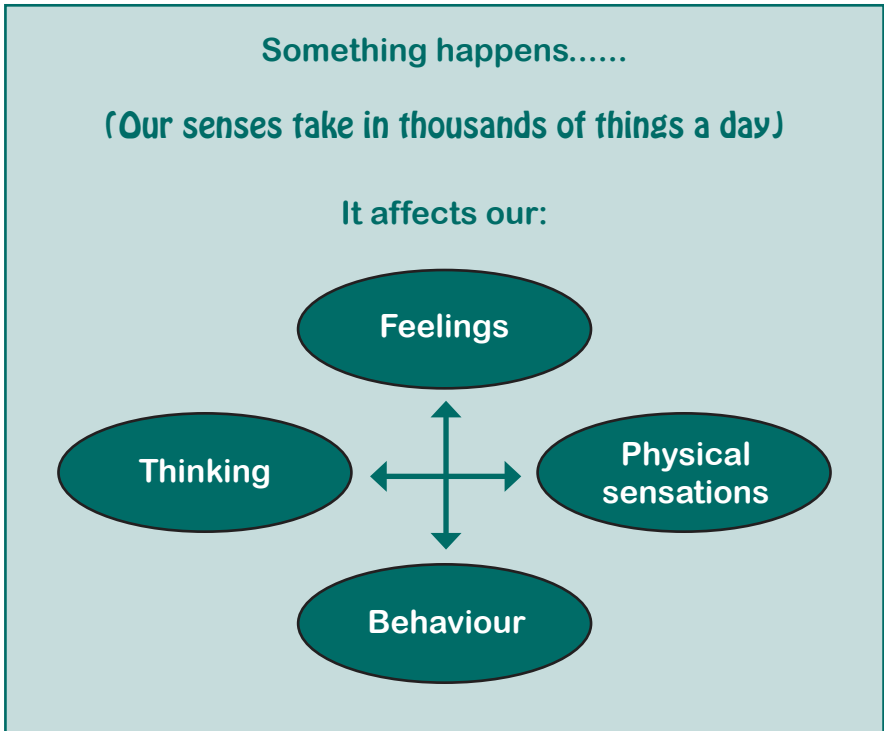
We have a You Tube clip to help explain this in more detail. The link is [\(9\) Stress and trauma and our nervous system: How it affects us and ideas for healing. - YouTube](#) or search Ed Sipler on the You Tube or visit www.ascert.biz under the resources section.



Can you do anything about this? Absolutely. People have and so can you. That is what this workbook is all about.

What happens in all of us?

When something happens how do we respond?



Changing one thing in one area
can make a big difference
in the other four.
(The 5 Area Approach - C Williams 2015)

The skills in this workbook will help you do this
and help you be more resilient.

We better explain what we mean by resilience.

Building resilience

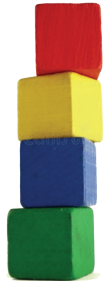
Everybody experiences some stress. We all have unexpected things happen. We make mistakes. People let us down.

But what does being resilient mean?

Resilience is being able to ‘bounce back’ from tough times. It is having strengths within and outside yourself that help you through difficulties. The good news is our resilience can be strengthened at any age if we work at it.

What are the building blocks of resilience?

- A stable person in your life
- Feeling you can overcome hardships and guide your destiny
- Feeling equipped to manage your behaviour and emotions
- Being involved and feeling connected.



Research says a significant process in building resilience is ‘active agency’ - you choose what will work for you, hope and optimism will help and you have the confidence to do it.

How you think, who and what you use for support and how you look after yourself can help you get through tough situations.



This strengthens your belief in yourself, a cornerstone of resilience.

Knowing yourself: Seven abilities associated with resilience

What strengths do you already have? In Northern Ireland we tend to be quick at seeing our weaknesses. Seeing our strengths is more difficult.

Researchers in resilience have identified seven factors that support resilience.

As you read through these abilities think of at least one you have seen in yourself recently.

Give yourself thinking time

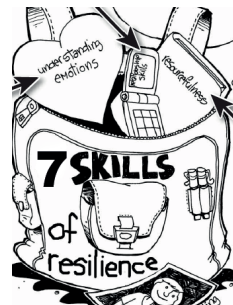
Being able to think through options and consequences and to choose what is best is a key skill.

Recognise your feelings

Being aware of your feelings is vital. Strong feelings like worry or sadness can make you feel powerless. Naming what you are feeling is a good start at controlling your feelings.

Use that thinking time. Analyse the cause of problems

Do we accurately decide the cause of problems? The word accurate is crucial. What we think about when stressful events or problems affects how we feel and what we do.



Staying hopeful (optimistic)

Can we see things as they are and make the best out of any given situation? This does not ignore difficult things, but avoids getting locked into negativity. It's being able to be hopeful.

Believe in your ability

Do we believe we can tackle most things head on and bounce back when things get tough? It is the belief that what we do makes a difference.

Empathy

Empathy is the understanding of what it is like being in someone else's shoes. It is an important part of strong relationships.

Reaching out

Reaching out has two parts. It is the ability to take on life's opportunities and not fear failure. It is also about being willing to ask for help. Some people see asking for help as a weakness. It is a strength acknowledging that we all need support at times and that it is ok to ask for help.

Which of these skills have you seen in yourself this week?

Using this workbook

This workbook makes use of those seven abilities to strengthen the building blocks of resilience.

It will explore:

- How you can recognise your feelings
- Giving yourself thinking time
- Using that thinking time Looking at the support you have
- Ways of looking after yourself and self-care.

As it said at the beginning, you choose what you believe will work for you.

How do you get more control over your emotions and thinking?

1. **Catch it:** Recognise your feelings and unhelpful thoughts.
2. **Pause it:** Put on the brakes. Create thinking time.
3. **Challenge it:** Use that thinking time and challenge thoughts.
4. **Change it:** Create an alternative to unhelpful thinking or deal with strong emotions.

**This may sound simple. Simple does not mean easy.
It takes practice, so keep reading.**

Setting goals - From what you have read so far, what would you like to get most from using this workbook?
(Tick as appropriate)

- Deal with stress and problems
- Be less anxious
- Lift your mood
- Anything else you would like to gain?

How does this work again?

Something happens

Situations happen or our senses pick up something. There are thousands of things we experience daily.

An interesting question - What comes first your thoughts or feelings? A quote that may shed light on this:

“Never apologise for how you feel. No one can control how they feel. (Though you are responsible for what you do with it.) The sun doesn’t apologise for being the sun. The rain doesn’t say sorry for falling. Feelings just are.”

Jain Thomas

But how do we get control of our feelings?

Another way to explain this is your feelings will play a big part but so will what is going on in your body, your behaviour, and your thinking.

Unhelpful thinking habits is like having a playlist in your head, with a list of bad songs (unhelpful thoughts), that switch on the moment something happens.

The longer this type of thinking goes on the more it turns the volume up on what we feel. This will then affect what we do and what is happening in our body.

As previously said, changing one thing in this cycle can make a big difference.

So, let’s start with feelings.



Feelings are normal and influence thinking and changes in our body

As stated before, there is a link between thinking, feelings, what is happening in our body, and behaviour.



Feelings do affect the body. Part of the brain that responds when you are under threat is the amygdala. It controls the instinctive ‘fight or flight’ response to threat and stress, allowing you to react first and think later. It is how the human brain has evolved.

When we experience danger, the chemicals that are there to deal with that immediate danger can suppress the thinking part of the brain. These chemicals send blood and most importantly oxygen from our brain to our large muscles to respond to that danger (the fight or flight response).

Guess where some of that blood and oxygen comes from?
 - The thinking part of the brain.

Unhelpful thinking amplifies feelings. Human beings also have a negativity bias. We tend to see the bad more than the good.



Thought	Feeling	Amplified	Change in the body
Feeling attacked. They are out to get me.	Annoyed Furious	Rage	Can be similar to how we respond to panic if extreme.
Something is a threat.	Worry Fear	Panic	Adrenalin increases. Heart beats faster. Breathing speeds up. Fight or flight response (or freeze) kicks in.

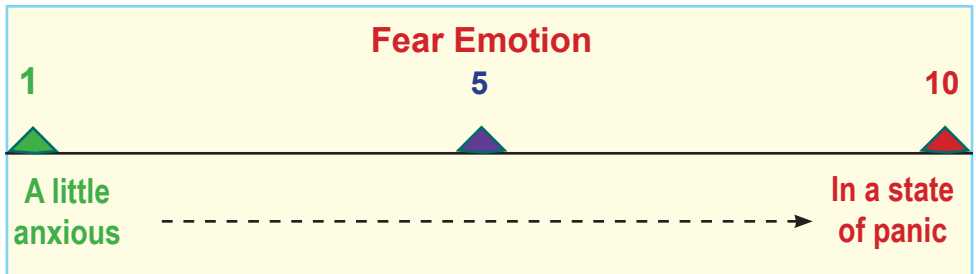
Naming what you are feeling emotionally

Just by naming what you are feeling can start a calming response. A list of feeling words would be lengthy. There is some thinking that says there are only 4 core emotions. All other feeling words are variations of those core feelings. What are these core emotions?

Sadness, Anger, Fear, Joy

Every emotional feeling word fits to a degree into these four.

Take one feeling like fear. Put it on a ruler. At one end the feeling may be low. To describe it you may use the words, 'a little anxious'. On the other end of the ruler you may put it as 'panic'. They are both from the same core emotion: Fear.



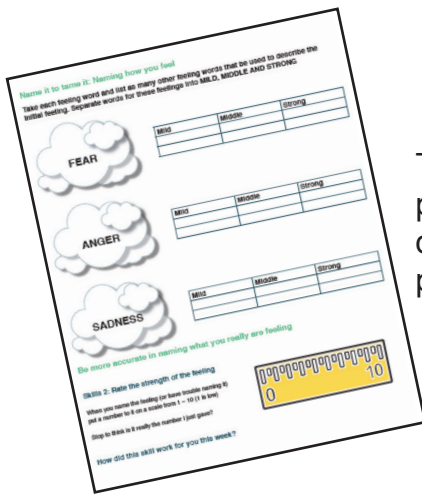
There are a few exceptions: Jealousy is fear, anger or a bit of both? Nostalgia is joy remembering good things along with some sadness that it is gone. Can you think of any more exceptions of feelings outside these four core emotions?

Be more accurate in naming how you feel.

This is where the core emotions can help. Remember the slogan: ***'Name it so you can claim it. Claim it so you can tame it.'***

Think of words that describe the levels of these four core emotions.

Rate the strength of the core feeling if you have trouble naming it. Put a number to it on a scale of 1 - 10 (1 is low). Is it really the number you just gave?



There are 3 worksheets in the skills pack on naming our feelings, where do I feel it in my body, letting them pass like clouds.

Thinking: Using that thinking time to help us cope

We all have situations that seem to push our buttons and make us react in certain ways. Or so it seems.

In many situations, what we **think** is important.

There is a strong connection between what we **think**, what we **feel** and what we **do**.

How does thinking affect what we do?

There are things that happen that are outside of our control.

What we can control is how we react!



Most of the time we don't notice what we are thinking because it happens so quickly and it seems automatic.

What if our thinking tends to have a negative tone to it?

The problem with these unhelpful thoughts is that they can be:

Automatic: They just pop into your head with no effort on your part.

Hidden: You don't usually notice them. It's like music playing in the background that we don't pay attention to.

Distorted: They ignore any evidence right in front of you.

Reasonable: You can accept these thoughts as facts and you don't check them out.

Negative and unhelpful: They may start out seeming reasonable enough but can make you feel increased emotions like sadness, anger, worry and you may do things to avoid these feelings.

Look back to the time you had strong feelings from the last page.

What part does your thinking play?

How to get more control of your thinking

Catch that unhelpful initial thought

The first thing to do is recognise unhelpful thoughts. Listen to what you are thinking.

Once an unhelpful 'song' is in your head it can get stuck.

'To name it is a step to taming it.'

Putting a name to the type of thought you have helps.

Types of unhelpful thinking

Here are very common types of unhelpful thoughts that can be like a 'bad playlist' in your head.

Black and white



If I'm not perfect I have failed.

"Either I do it right or not at all."

Over generalising


"Everything is always rubbish"

"Nothing good ever happens"

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event.

'It is going to be one of those days.'

Mental filter



Zooming in on the bad.

Ten things happen to you today. 9 good and 1 bad. You dwell on that one bad thing.

Disqualifying the positive



The good does not count.

Jumping to conclusions



2+2=5

There are 2 types:

Mind reading (we know what others are thinking)
Fortune telling (predicting the future will turn out bad).

Making a mountain out of a molehill



Blowing things out of proportion.

Turning a disappointment into a disaster.

Emotional reasoning



Assuming because we feel a certain way it must be true.
"I made a mistake. I feel stupid. I must be stupid."

Should

must

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'have to'.
We put ourselves and others under pressure.

Labelling

STUPID

Assigning labels to ourselves or other people.
*"I'm a loser."
"I'm completely useless."
"They're such an idiot."*

It's all my fault

"this is my fault"

Blaming yourself for something that wasn't your fault.

Did any of these types of unhelpful thoughts pop up in your thinking this week?

Which three gave you the most difficulty?

-
-
-

What happened when you thought this way?

See if you can name it exercise

Consider those automatic unhelpful thoughts. Let's meet Nick and see how his thinking works.

He has applied for a job he really wanted but didn't get it. He is disappointed, which is a very natural reaction.

Look at the unhelpful thought list. What might Nick be saying to himself in an unhelpful way?

What would he be feeling?

What would he be thinking?

What would that do to what he was feeling?

How would he be reacting physically?

What would he do?

The unhelpful thought list

Black & white thoughts

Over generalising

Mental filter

Disqualifying the positive

Jumping to conclusions

Making a mountain out of a molehill

Emotional reasoning

Should statements

Labelling

It's all my fault

Thought Spotter - worksheet in the skills pack

This task is to build the positive habit of 'Catching it'. You can use the worksheet in the skills pack or just write it out.

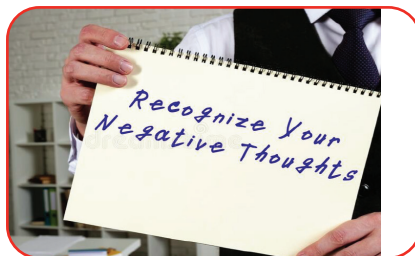
Take a situation - what happened?

What were you feeling? Name the feelings you had.

What were you thinking? Name the type of unhelpful thought. Was it?

- Black and white thinking
- Over generalizing
- Mental filter
- Making a Mountain out of a molehill
- Disqualifying the positive
- Labelling
- It's all my fault
- Jumping to conclusions
- Emotional reasoning
- Should statements.

Catching it comes first. Pausing it comes next.



Pause it: push the pause button

Giving yourself thinking time is one of those abilities associated with resilience.

When you notice strong feelings or your body's reactions, it is a signal to create thinking time. You don't have to stop the thought, just pause it.



Here are some ways to create that thinking time:

Use words or phrases that tell you to clear your head

If we get into a habit of saying things to ourselves, we can learn to link that phrase with a signal to pause thoughts.

- I can work this out
- Stop, observe, get curious
- This is only temporary.

Deep Breathing

When we experience stress of any kind, we tend to breathe shallow and rapidly. Breathing like this is part of the fight/flight/freeze response. Slow belly breathing counters that.



Deep breathing allows lots of oxygen to quickly enter your body, which can result in a calming sensation.

Breathe from your stomach rather than your lungs. When you breathe in, your stomach should rise, and it will fall or contract as you breathe out.

Try placing your one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach. Is your stomach rising? Then you're doing it right!

A safe place in your head

Picture in your mind a relaxing, calming place. (You can make one up). Go there in your mind for a moment.

Can you think of any other ways to push ‘your pause button’? We have added other ideas to pause it in the skills pack for you.

Challenge it: Use that thinking time

Once you hear that negative thought pop into your head, pause and check it out. As the skills associated with resilience say: ‘use that thinking time.’ How can you do that?

- Stop, observe, get curious
- Be a detective. Check out what is going on.

Three ways to check out what is going on:

1. Reality testing
2. Look for other explanations
3. Put things into perspective.

Ask yourself:

Reality testing	Look for other explanations	Put things into perspective
Where is the proof? Am I guessing or is this really true? Do these thoughts help or hold me back? Is it a disaster or just a nuisance? If it is beyond my control (or responsibility) should I let it go?	Is there another way to look at this? Am I concentrating on my weaknesses and forgetting my strengths? Is there anything I can do about it?	Will this affect me tomorrow? Am I missing any good in this? Am I expecting myself to be perfect? Is this going to last a long time or is it just for now? Is this the big picture or am I only looking at a small bit?

Pick three of these questions you can use.
They can be your key ones to challenge unhelpful thoughts.

-
-
-

Change it: Create an alternative

Once you learn to catch an unhelpful thought, pause, and challenge it, you stand more chance of thinking differently... maybe more in a helpful way.

Aim to be flexible and creative in your thinking



See other ways to explain a situation:

- Alternatives: A more accurate way of seeing this is.....
- Evidence: That is not true because.....
- Implications: A more likely outcome is..... and I can deal with that!

It also helps to keep your goals in mind. What do you want?
What is important to you?

Now, take that situation Nick found himself in from page 16 when he did not get the job he really wanted. Once he notices what he was thinking, paused it and challenged it, what other ways could he see his situation?



**It is not just a message of 'think positive'.
It is using your thinking as a tool to help you cope.**

Core beliefs and rules

Do the words failure, worthless, stupid or unlovable ever appear somewhere in your thinking?

What may also be influencing your thinking are your core beliefs.

Having unhelpful core beliefs is like riding through life with the handbrake on. It may be one of the most important things you change.

Shatte and Reivich 2002

These are a set of rules and assumptions that shape our thinking and behaviour. We don't consciously think about them, but they are there all the same.

Core beliefs are like a lens or filter we look through that interprets things about yourself, people and the world that often starts forming in childhood.

Core beliefs tend to fall into 3 categories associated with:

- **Achievement:** I must always get it right. Mistakes are seen as failures
- **Acceptance:** Is there a strong need to be liked, accepted, and praised by others?
- **Control:** People can feel uncomfortable when things are not in their control.

Why is it important to be aware of our core beliefs?

- Not all deeply held beliefs are negative. Positive ones contribute to wellbeing
- When not aware of unhelpful beliefs that guide us, we can fall into the same emotional reaction repeatedly
- They can contribute to emotions and behaviours that just don't match up with what is going on
- We want to address the core beliefs that don't work for us, or that trap us in destructive feelings or behaviours.

Read through the following examples of common beliefs and rules. Which of these contribute to the way **YOU** think or feel? Do they work for you? How do they affect your relationships and daily living?

I am inadequate	I have little control over what happens to me
People can't be trusted	The world is dangerous
Never ask for help. It is a sign of weakness	It's easier to avoid difficulties rather than do something about them
I must be liked by everyone	I must do everything perfectly
Things should be fair	When things don't go the way I want it's terrible
It's normal to fear things that are uncertain	Any others

Understanding your core beliefs

While changing unhelpful core beliefs can be difficult, it can be the most powerful thing to do.

Our core beliefs shape our explanatory style: how we explain what is happening in our world. Do you have the tendency to have similar explanations for different events?

Being able to identify our underlying core beliefs, explanatory styles and unhelpful thinking habits is the first step towards change and resilient thinking.

When pessimistic we tend to think with the three P's:

- Permanence - it is going to last forever
- Pervasiveness - it is affecting everything
- Personalisation, it is all my fault.

On the other hand, optimists see negative events as more temporary and not affecting everything.

Take one unhelpful core belief or rule you would like to try changing.

- Is it working for me?
- Is there another way to see this?

It may not be useful to use the extreme opposite about your unhelpful core belief.

For example, *“I am not good enough”* to *“I am great”* may not work because you simply don’t believe it yet.

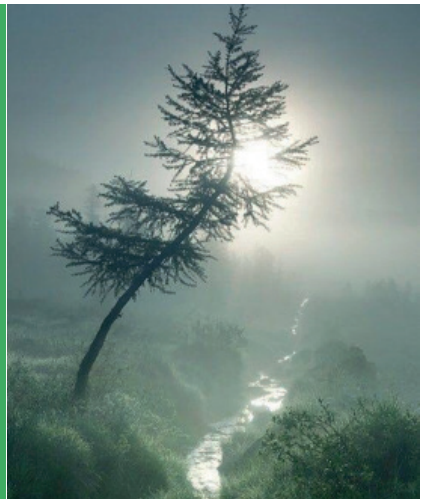
Like a well-trodden path in the woods, starting a new one will not be easy. At first, the new path can feel awkward. With consistent effort it can become familiar and even automatic.

Start chipping away with thoughts. *“It’s not 100% true”*. Generate arguments about the belief if it is not working for you. Is it too rigid or extreme? Does it make sense?

The skills work discussed earlier work with core beliefs too.

Catch it, Pause it,
Challenge it, Change it.

Because they have been around longer, changing them will take more effort.



Keeping a thought record

The more you unload onto paper, the more you will be able to make more sense of your thoughts and feelings. Writing them down gives you the opportunity to see them so you can change them. There are steps to a thought record.

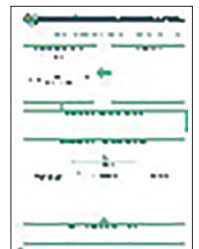


Write a thought record about any unpleasant experience that you would like to have handled differently. Start with easy ones at first and wait until you are more practiced before dealing with more uncomfortable experiences.

1. **The situation:** Briefly describe the situation you would like to have handled differently
2. **What feelings are present:** Rate them by a percentage or scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the strongest)
3. **Initial thought:** What automatic thought popped into your mind? Identify the type of unhelpful thinking. Choose one or more from the list of common types of unhelpful thinking or core beliefs
4. **Pause it:** What did you do to push the pause button?
5. **Challenge your thinking and look for a more rational thought:** Look at the evidence both for and against your thinking. Have you been in a similar situation? What did you learn from it? Make sure you see the whole picture
6. **See if you can change it**
7. **Re-score the feelings you have now** by a percentage or scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the strongest).

If you write a thought record for a few weeks, you will spot your unhelpful thinking and come up with better alternatives.

We have a work sheet for you in the skills pack or you can just write it out on paper.



Support

Changing your thinking can impact on your feelings. Using support is one way to change what you do.

What does the word support mean to you?



When I need a mentor or role model

When I need good advice for a problem

When I want my life to be different

When do you feel you would need support?

When I am hurting

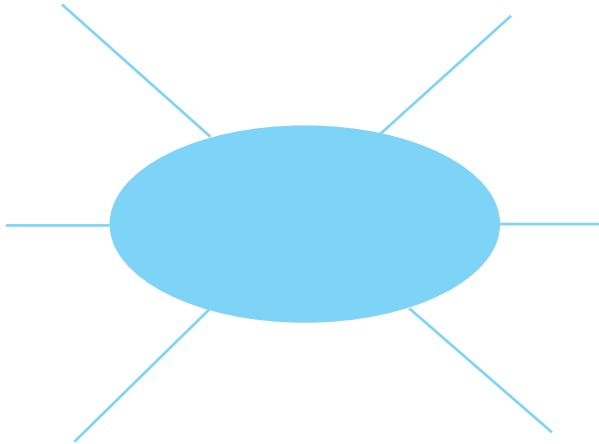
When I want to be with someone who knows me well and understands me

When I need to keep myself safe

When I want to share problems

Who are the important people you can turn to?

Write your name inside the circle below. Draw other circles representing each person or supportive activity in your life. Write the name of the person or activity in it. Draw circles of those you consider most supportive nearest to you and less supportive further away. Add more lines if you need to.



Some questions to ask:



What stops you using support?

Could you use the support you have put in your circle more?



If people or things are not helpful... could you stop looking for support from them?



Do you need some more positive support?

Self-care

Looking after your emotional wellbeing is also a way to change what you do. People tend to have more resources within themselves when they look after themselves. It is within your choice and control.

Here are some ideas to help you do this.



Take 5

Take 5 is a set of practical, evidence-based ways for improving everyone's mental health and wellbeing.

Connect - With the people around you. Family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours. Relationships are cornerstones of your life; invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be Active - Go for a walk or run. Play a game. Dance. Physical activity makes you feel good. Discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take Notice - Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savor the moment. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep Learning - Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Set a realistic challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident.

Give - Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself and your happiness, linked to the wider community creates connections with the people around you.

How could Take 5 be helpful for you?

How could you build on what you are already doing?

Step to well being	Examples	What are you already doing?	What could you do more of?
Connect	Call someone you have not seen in a while. Spend time with people who have similar interests. Get involved in a group in your community.		
Be active	Walk to the shop instead of driving. Dance.		
Take notice	Look up at what is around you. Enjoy a baby's smile.		
Keep learning	Choose something on TV that will teach you something. Read something new.		
Give	Smile at someone. Give to charity. Volunteer.		

Using positive emotions to deal with stress

If we have excessive stress in our lives maybe, we need to look after ourselves even more.

“There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.”

William Shakespeare, Hamlet

This work was used with people in very stressful situations and the researchers found that being able to have positive emotions helped them cope better. We explain how that works in the YouTube mentioned at the beginning. It is based on the Broaden Build Theory. Positive emotions build Dopamine in our brains, the chemical related to pleasure.

How do you increase your positive feelings?

Notice positive things

Pay attention to those little things that make you smile or feel good: a TV show that made you laugh, seeing something pretty, something nice to eat or drink, warm sunshine.

Use these positive things

Find ways to express what you did or saw. Telling someone, or writing it down makes the positive effect even stronger.

Gratitude

Thankfulness is a strong tool. Keep a journal and write down one thing you are thankful for every day.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is keeping your attention on one thing you are experiencing. Put everything else aside for a while.

- Deep breathing where you focus only on your breathing.
- Use your senses - Focus on the sweetness of a chocolate or the warmth of the sun on your face. Stay with that experience and to focus on it for that moment.

Positive rethinking

As this booklet keeps saying, it is how you think about events that can make them seem more stressful. Being more accurate in your thinking is the key to feeling more positive and to be able to cope with everyday pressures.

Focus on your strengths

Yes, everyone has weaknesses, but what are you better at? Being able not only to acknowledge your strengths but appreciating them is an important skill.

Attainable goals

We all feel good when we have done something we need to do. Make goals for yourself. Make sure they are realistic, but achievable. It may help to think of your goals in the short, medium and long term like each day, week, month, year/future.

Acts of kindness

These could be random (letting someone in front of you in a queue or helping a friend out when they are stuck) or planned (volunteering).

Being kind to other people can make you feel good and connected to other people. You will see people smile and be kind back.

Each day, plan how you are going to use at least 3 of these ways to express positive feelings.

-
-
-

Doing these regularly helps build your inner strengths to cope with most stresses. How are you going to use them and make them work for you?

Principles of coping

Do we have rules or helpful beliefs that we live by to help us cope?

- No thought or feeling is 'wrong'. It is what we do with it that really counts.
- Be aware of the way your body feels as tension begins to build up. Do something to deal with it as soon as you can.
- You are not on your own. Ask for help and advice.
- If you are feeling overwhelmed, try to reduce your activities for a period of time if you can.
- Recognise that family and friends have to deal with their feelings too. (They may be helpful or unhelpful to you).
- Try to have fun, relax and exercise everyday.
- You can work to solve some of the problems that are stressing you out.
- Feeling guilty and worrying about things you CAN'T change is pretty useless and energy-draining.
- Give yourself credit for whatever level of coping you are achieving. Remember, there is no 'instant fix' for stress.
- Value and respect yourself - because each of us is, with our strengths, a unique and worthwhile person.

Put a circle on ones you are already using.

Put an 'X' on ones you want to make more use of.

Choosing rules for coping that work for you is a way to build your confidence.

Some Characteristics of Successful Changers

Recognising your strengths is a way to build your confidence.

Naming your strengths can be a challenge for some people. In Northern Ireland people are generally not as good at seeing their strengths, compared to seeing their weaknesses.

Circle the ones you have seen in yourself over the past week.

Accepting	Committed	Flexible	Persevering	Stubborn
Active	Competent	Focused	Persistent	Thankful
Adaptable	Concerned	Forgiving	Positive	Thorough
Adventurous	Confident	Forward-looking	Powerful	Thoughtful
Affectionate	Considerate	Free	Prayerful	Tough
Affirmative	Courageous	Happy	Quick	Trusting
Alert	Creative	Healthy	Reasonable	Trustworthy
Alive	Decisive	Hopeful	Receptive	Truthful
Ambitious	Dedicated	Imaginative	Relaxed	Understanding
Anchored	Determined	Ingenious	Reliable	Unique
Assertive	Die-hard	Intelligent	Resourceful	Unstoppable
Assured	Diligent	Knowledgeable	Responsible	Vigorous
Attentive	Doer	Loving	Sensible	Visionary
Bold	Eager	Mature	Skilful	Whole
Brave	Earnest	Open	Solid	Willing
Bright	Effective	Optimistic	Spiritual	Winning
Capable	Energetic	Orderly	Stable	Wise
Careful	Experienced	Organised	Steady	Worthy
Cheerful	Faithful	Patient	Straight	Zealous

A final thought: A good laugh goes a long way

Researchers have found that laughter is similar to meditation in the way it activates areas of the brain.



Humour can reduce stress hormones like cortisol, lowers your blood pressure and can improve your mood.

That act of laughter increases the release of endorphins and dopamine in the brain, which provides a sense of pleasure and reward.

Higher levels of these hormones, responsible for feeling uplifted, increase brain wave activity.

Physical activity, meditation and laughter all do this.

So it is important to have a good laugh on a regular basis.



Action plan/tool kit: taking the work forward

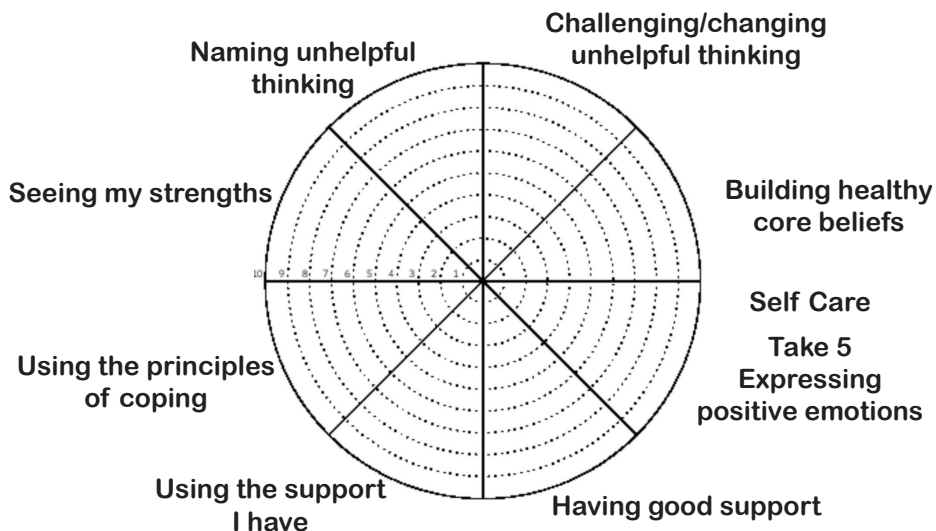
If you have reached the end of this workbook, well done.

What are you going to do now?

Let's look at the key skills from this workbook. How do you see yourself now?

See the small numbers in the circle. Colour the line in each section to show where you think you are with it now.

10 is the strongest (outer circle). The more scores on the outer lines the better. If your circle has scores closer to the centre those are the areas you could work on.



Review: what did I get from this?

How did using this workbook help you achieve what you wanted at the start?

Deal with stress and problems	
Be less anxious	
Lift your mood	
Anything else you wanted to gain?	

Taking the work forward: My Action Plan

What are the most important things you have learned from this workbook?

If you could tell one of your friends something about this booklet to help them, what would it be?

What are one or two things you want to do more of?

Who can help you?

Where can I get more help?

There is a range of help and support. Here are some contacts:

For emergencies:

- Your GP or the Out of Hours GP service
- The Emergency Department of your local hospital
- Lifeline: 0808 808 8000
- Domestic Violence Helpline 0800 917 141
- The Samaritans 08457 909 090.

Helplines in Northern Ireland <http://www.helplinesnetworkni.com>

Family support <http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk>

Sources of help www.mindingyourhead.info

Information and support <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/>

Alcohol and drug services <http://www.drugsandalcoholni.info/>

Wellbeing <http://communitywellbeing.info>

Each Health Trust has a Recovery College that provides a range of courses designed to help people develop skills and confidence in a safe environment for learning.

To find your local Recovery College click on the link below and search for contact details:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/health-and-social-care-trusts-mental-health>



This poem sums up what is the heart of this work.

Attitude

The longer I live, the more I realise the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than giftedness, appearance, or skill.

The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitudes we will embrace for that day.

We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude.

I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you.

We are in charge of our attitudes.

Charles 'Chuck' Swindoll

As the poem says: 'I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes.'

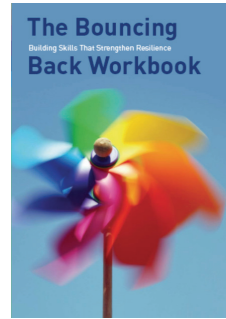
What do you think of that statement 'we are in charge of our attitudes'?

How important is that statement in the way you want to live your life?

Where this work comes from:

Some of the material in this booklet has been taken from The Bouncing Back Workbook.

It can be downloaded from the South Eastern Trust's website under the Healthy Living tab and in the section Building Resilience.



The 5 Area Approach is from *Overcoming Depression and Low mood: A Five Areas Approach* by Dr Chris Williams, Hodder-Arnold Press.(2015).

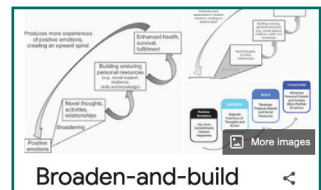
Seven abilities associated with resilience were taken from Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatte, *The Resilience Factor*, 2002 by Broadway Books.

Types of unhelpful thinking adapted from psychologytools.com

Theory of emotions from *The Complete Secrets of Happy Children: A Guide for Parents* by Steve Buddulph (2015).

Using positive emotions in the midst of stress was taken from a talk by Dr Judy Muskowitz from the University of California.

The Broaden and Build theory is from Barbara Fredrickson, (2001). *The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology*, American Psychologist.



Principles of Coping were adapted from *Managing the Stress of Cancer: A Handbook for Patients and their Families* by Dr Ronna Jevne, 1984.

Characteristics of Successful Changers is from Bill Miller in *Motivational Interviewing, Helping people Change*, 2013.

Additional resources for support

In partnership with ASCERT, YouTube clips are available in looking after ourselves. *Stress, Trauma and Our Nervous System, Self-Care, Now When We Need It Most, Dealing with Worry.*

All the clips have booklets that can be downloaded from the You Tube site or the ASCERT's website

Search Ed Sipler on YouTube or visit www.ascert.biz under the resources section.



This resource is for parents and carers to help deal with the ups and downs of our children's emotions and develop self-regulation skills.



An entire program sits on a digital platform and can be accessed through the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership website on the Parent's Page of the Youth Well Being Hub,

or the Community Well-Being Hub

or at: <https://view.pagetiger.com/selfcareforfamilies>

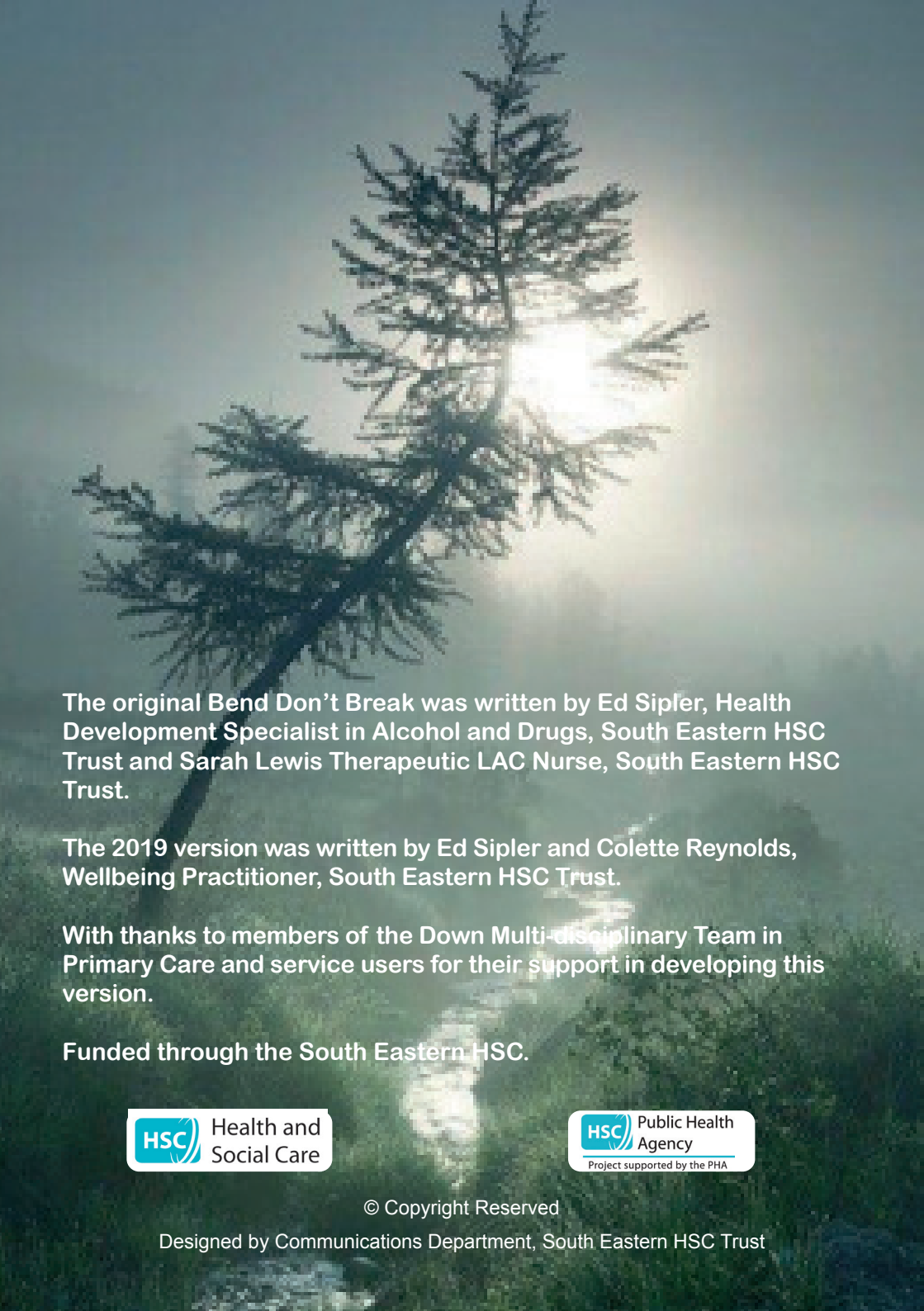


Using Self Compassion to support wellbeing Look to ASCERT's website www.ascert.biz



Notes

Notes



The original Bend Don't Break was written by Ed Sipler, Health Development Specialist in Alcohol and Drugs, South Eastern HSC Trust and Sarah Lewis Therapeutic LAC Nurse, South Eastern HSC Trust.

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With thanks to members of the Down Multi-disciplinary Team in Primary Care and service users for their support in developing this version.

Funded through the South Eastern HSC.



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