


Emotion Regulation Activities

Counseling worksheets to name and tame challenging feelings

The Perfection Police

It tells you it better be perfect

The Perfection Police won't let you rest. It starts writing tickets for every mistake, even when you're doing better. But it usually just makes you feel worse.



Talk Back To It
You can tell the Perfection Police it's wrong. Say, "Done is better than perfect and good."


Send It Away
You can make the Perfection Police go away by:

- ✓ Set a "good enough" standard for yourself.
- ✓ Give yourself a done deadline. Write it down.
- ✓ Ask: What actually happens if it's not perfect?

Short Fuse

It fires you up fast and is hard to stop

Sometimes something happens and a hot feeling starts. That's the Short Fuse. The shorter the fuse, the faster things blow. But you can get it and when it explodes. Learning to not let it explode.



When Does It Show Up
The Short Fuse shows up when you're in a hurry or when you're angry.


Know Its Warning Signs
You might feel hot, your heart might race, and you might feel like you're about to explode.

What It Tells You
It tells you that you're angry and that you need to take a break.

The Dread

It makes challenges bigger and scarier

The Dread makes you want to turn and run. It comes up and plants itself right there, making things seem really scary. But you can get it and when it explodes. Learning to not let it explode.



When Does It Show Up
The Dread shows up when you're facing a challenge that seems really scary.

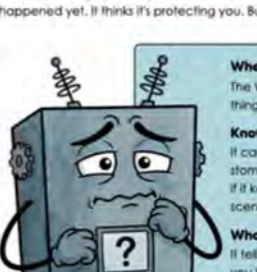
Know Its Warning Signs
You might feel like you're about to faint, your heart might race, and you might feel like you're in a trap.

What It Tells You
It tells you that you're scared and that you need to take a break.

What If Machine

It keeps your thoughts spinning

The What If Machine gets your brain stuck in a loop. What if this goes wrong? What if that happens? What if, what if, what if. It keeps coming up with questions and spinning through things that haven't even happened yet. It thinks it's protecting you. But it's just working overtime on all the what-ifs.



When Does It Show Up
The What If Machine comes around when things are uncertain or changing.

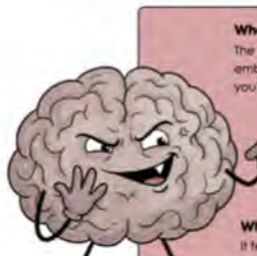
Know Its Warning Signs
It can make your thoughts race and your stomach fill with butterflies. Don't be surprised if it keeps you up at night with worst-case scenarios.

What It Tells You
It tells you that something bad will happen or you have to be alert so nothing goes wrong.

Bully Brain

It is always ready to put you down.

The Brain Bully is a mean voice in your head. It's being unkind and unfair. It says things like, "You're the problem. Everyone else is better than you."



When Does It Show Up
The Brain Bully shows up when you're feeling down or when you're being unkind to yourself.


Know Its Warning Signs
You might feel like you're not good enough, and you might feel like you're being judged.

What It Tells You
It tells you that you're not good enough and that you need to be kinder to yourself.

Blaster

It gets you to launch before you can think

The Blaster gets your body to move before you can think. It's something, grab, or react, and a second later you're off. Really fast, before you've thought about it.



When Does It Show Up
The Blaster shows up when you're in a hurry or when you're being impulsive.


Know Its Warning Signs
You might feel like you're about to launch, and you might feel like you're not in control.

What It Tells You
It tells you that you're being impulsive and that you need to take a moment to think.

Gloom Cloud

It makes everything feel gray.

The Gloom cloud appears, making everything feel dark and heavy. It's hard to move, talk, and even think. It hangs over you, coloring everything in gray. Sometimes, you have to push the gloom cloud away to let the sun through.



When Does It Show Up
The Gloom Cloud shows up after something disappointing, sad, or hard. And sometimes for no clear reason at all.


Know Its Warning Signs
Everything starts to feel dark and slow. You might want to pull away from people, and stop doing things you like. Your body might feel tired, hollow, and heavy.

What It Tells You
It tells you nothing will get better. It's not worth trying because it's too hard.

Overwhelm Octopus

It pulls at you from every direction.

The Overwhelm Octopus shows up when you're trying to do too many things at once. It makes you want to give up. It pulls at you from every direction. It makes you want to give up. It pulls at you from every direction.



When Does It Show Up
The Overwhelm Octopus shows up when you're trying to do too many things at once.

Know Its Warning Signs
You might feel like you're being pulled in too many directions, and you might feel like you're not in control.

What It Tells You
It tells you that you're trying to do too much and that you need to focus on one thing at a time.

Talk Back To It
You can tell the Overwhelm Octopus it's wrong. Say, "I don't have to do everything at once. I can do it one step at a time."


Send It Away
You can make the Overwhelm Octopus go away by:

- ✓ Write everything down to get it out of your head.
- ✓ Focus on one thing at a time.
- ✓ Take a break when you feel overwhelmed.

Not Enough Whisperer

It tries to convince you you're not good enough

The Not Enough Whisperer is a quiet voice that tells you you're not good enough. You don't measure up. It is an expert at making you feel like you're not good enough.



When Does It Show Up
The Not Enough Whisperer shows up when you're comparing yourself to others or when you're feeling like you're not good enough.

Know Its Warning Signs
You might feel like you're not good enough, and you might feel like you're being judged.

What It Tells You
It tells you that you're not good enough and that you need to be kinder to yourself.

Talk Back To It
You can tell the Not Enough Whisperer it's wrong. Say, "I am good enough. I am just being a little better than I was."


Send It Away
You can make the Not Enough Whisperer go away by:

- ✓ Write down what you're good at.
- ✓ Focus on your own progress.
- ✓ Take a break when you feel like you're not good enough.

Power Magnet

It tells you to pull some in and push others out.

The Power Magnet makes you feel unsure of your place with your friends and like you need to control what others do. It tells you to pull some people in and push others out.



When Does It Show Up
The Power Magnet shows up when you feel left out or when a friend is becoming closer with someone else.

Know Its Warning Signs
You watch who your friends are spending time with. You feel bothered when two friends seem closer. You want to be in control of what your friends do and with who.

What It Tells You
It tells you to make sure you aren't left out and that if someone was really your friend, they would only hang out with you.

What It Wants You To Do
It wants you to leave others out, gossip about people, demands someone do what you want.

Talk Back To It
You can tell the Power Magnet it's wrong. Try saying something like: "Making my friends hang out with me or leaving others out isn't being a good friend."

Send It Away
You can make the Power Magnet go away. Try:

- ✓ Focus on your own friends.
- ✓ Don't compare yourself to others.
- ✓ Take a break when you feel like you're not good enough.

Help students name and tame feelings

Engaging counseling toolkit with 10 illustrated characters, anchor charts, student worksheets, counselor directions, and a create-your-own template.

- ✨ Great for 2nd to 5th grade.
- ✨ Uses externalization, a research backed CBT exercise.
- ✨ Take what you need for each student.

What's Included



Counselor guide

10 character anchor charts + cards

10 character worksheets

Create your own template

Craft extension directions

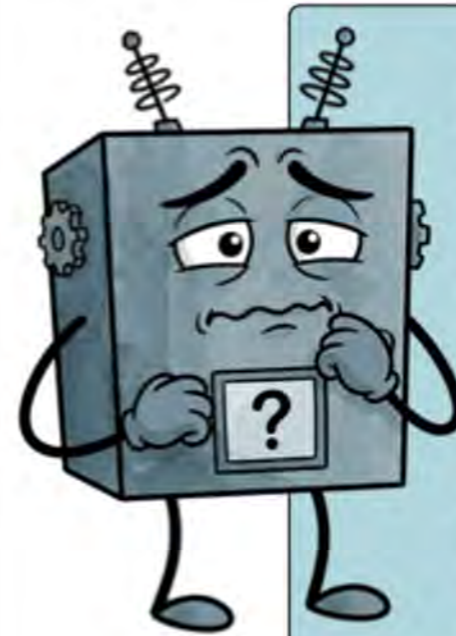
What If Machine

It keeps your thoughts spinning.

The What If Machine gets your brain stuck in a loop.

What if this goes wrong? What if that happens? What if, what if, what if.

It keeps coming up with questions and spinning through things that haven't even happened yet. It thinks it's protecting you. But it's just working overtime on all the what-ifs.



When Does It Show Up

The What If Machine comes around when things are uncertain or changing.

Know Its Warning Signs

It can make your thoughts race and your stomach fill with butterflies. Don't be surprised if it keeps you up at night with worst-case scenarios.

What It Tells You

It tells you that something bad will happen or you have to be alert so nothing goes wrong.

What It Wants You To Do

It wants you to avoid things you are unsure of, spend all your time thinking about what might happen instead of being present.

Talk Back To It

You can tell the What If Machine it's wrong. Try saying something like:
"Worrying about it won't change anything."

Send It Away

You can make the What If Machine slow down or shut off. Try:

- ✓ Ask: Is this a fact or just a what-if?
- ✓ Give it a worry window. 5 minutes and then switch it off.
- ✓ Zoom in on the right now, instead of what might happen.

Character Posters & Cards

The Perfection Police

It tells you it better be perfect or it's terrible.

The Perfection Police won't let you rest until everything is exactly right. It shows up and starts writing tickets for every mistake, every imperfection. It thinks it's helping you do better. But it usually just makes you feel like nothing is ever enough.



Talk Back To It

You can tell the Perfection Police it's wrong. Try saying something like:
"Done is better than perfect and good enough is fine right now."

Send It Away

You can make the Perfection Police go away. Try:

- ✓ Set a "good enough" standard before you start.
- ✓ Give yourself a done deadline. When the time's up, it's done.
- ✓ Ask: What actually happens if this isn't perfect?

Each poster covers:

triggers

warning signs

what it tells you

what it wants you to do

talk back phrases

send it away strategies

Student Worksheets

Students draw their own version of the character, then work through the triggers, warning signs, what it does and says, how to talk back and shrink it.

Short Fuse

It fires you up fast and is hard to stop.

Sometimes something happens and a hot feeling fire. It's fast and hard to stop. That's the Short Fuse. Some and now it's burning. The shorter your fuse, the faster blow. But there's always a window between when it when it explodes. Learning to notice that window is



Make It

What do
What do

Know It

Just got I
Burning f
Almost a
Ready to

When Does It Show Up

Check any situations that bring it around or add your own.

- Someone was unfair.
- I was embarrassed or felt disrespected.
- Something I was looking forward to got ruined.
- Things didn't go my way and I couldn't control it.

Know It

What are
 Face
 Hand
 Breath
 Feel li
 Every

Short Fuse



What does it say?

Check phrases or add your own.

- "That's not fair!"
- "They did it on purpose."
- "I won't let this go."

What does it want you to do?

Check actions or add your own.

- Yell, hit, or throw something.
- Say something I'll regret.
- Storm off or shut down.
- Get back at the person.

Talk Back To It

You don't have to believe everything the Short Fuse says or do everything it tells you. Here are some things you can say back.

"The Short Fuse got lit. But I can still put it out."

"Fair or not, exploding makes things worse."

"I can feel angry without letting it explode."

My own talk back:

Shrink It

What puts out the Short Fuse?
What cools you down?

My Plan

The Short Fuse tells me

But I know

One thing that can put it out

Someone who can help me

10 Characters for Common Challenges

Worry

Sadness

Fear

Anger

Perfectionism

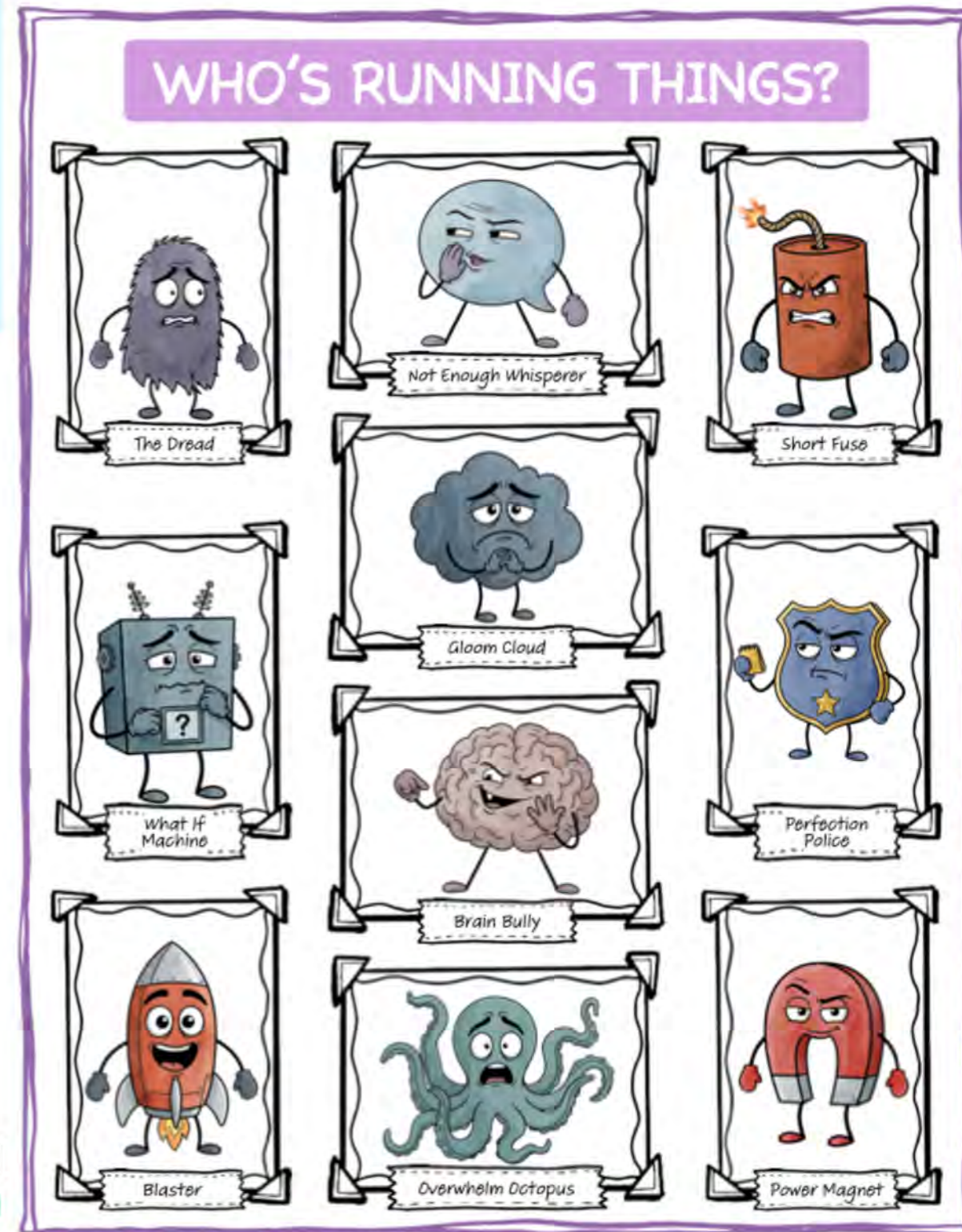
Stress

Comparison

Relational Aggression

Negative Self-Talk

Impulsivity



Create Your Own Character

Blank worksheets for students to create their own character

PDF
Editable PowerPoint



Name:

What does it say?
What does it want you to do?

Talk Back To It

You don't have to believe everything it says or do everything it tells you.
What can you say back?

What I can say:

Shrink It

What makes it smaller, quieter?
What helps you take back control?

My Plan

It tells me
But I know
One thing that can stop it
Someone who can help me

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Name:

About

Make It Yours

What does your character look like?
What object or creature is it? What do you want to call it?

Know Its Strength

When Does It Show Up

Write down the situations that bring it around.

Know Its Warning Signs

Write down the signs that tell you it's trying to take charge.

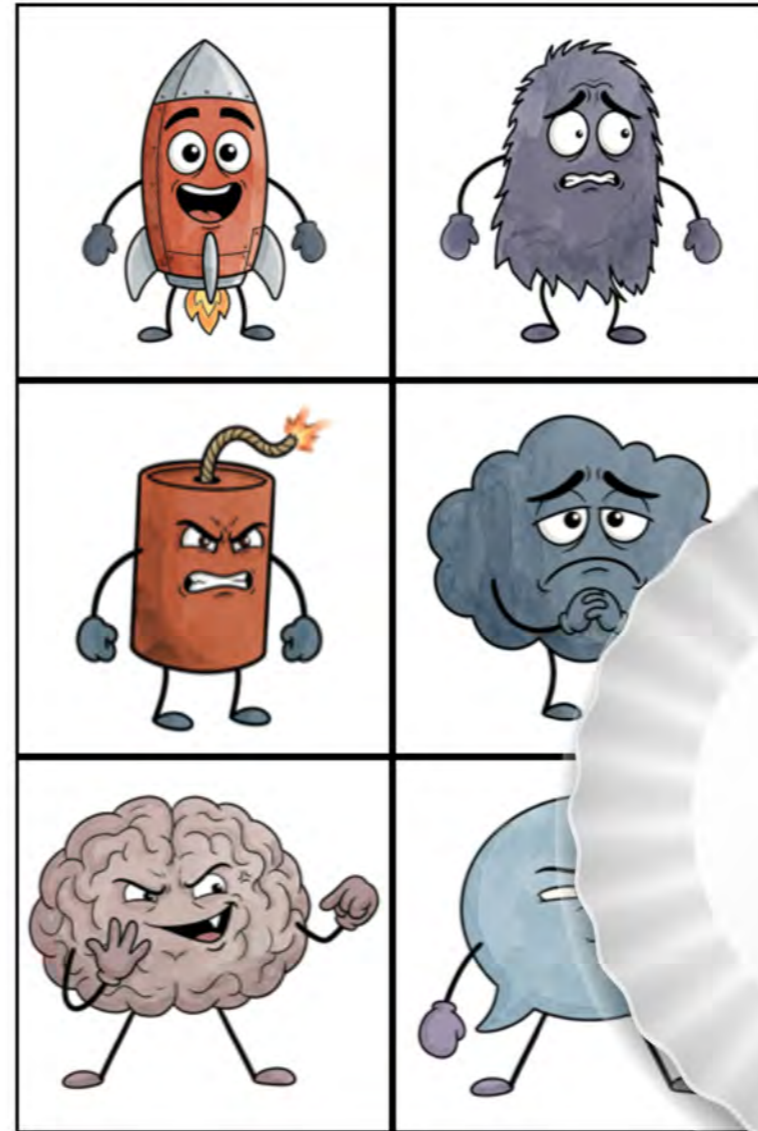
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Craft Ideas

Bring characters to life by creating them using:

- Craft sticks
- Paper plates
- Paper bags

Character Squares



Straightforward Counselor Guide

Simple guide walks
counselors through
externalization in 5 steps

How to Use This

Externalization Toolkit - Counselor Guide

Externalization is a CBT technique that turns a negative feeling or behavior into a character separate from the student. The student isn't an angry kid. Their anger volcano is erupting. When a child believes that negative feelings or behaviors are part of who they are, it's harder to change. With externalization, you make it something they can name and talk back to.

What It Works With Kids

Creating a character can help make this concept concrete. The feeling becomes a character they can see and interact with, bridging the cognitive gap.

The 5-Step Process

Shown here using the Gloom Cloud, the same framework applies to the 10 included characters and any you create.

Step 1: Introduce & Draw the Character

Start by normalizing that everyone feels sad sometimes, and that sometimes sadness can feel really heavy or hard to shake. Then invite the student to bring it to life:

"Sometimes when we feel really sad, it can feel like something is following us around or sitting on top of us. I want you to draw what that sad feeling looks like if it were a character. This one is called a Gloom Cloud, but you can make it look however you want and call it whatever you want. What does its face look like? What color is it? Is it big or small?"

Step 2: Build the Character's Profile

Once the student has brought their character to life, it's time to learn more about it.

- "What does the Gloom Cloud tell you when it shows up?" (negative self-talk)
- "When does the Gloom Cloud come around?" (triggers)
- "What does the Gloom Cloud want you to do?" (unhelpful behaviors)
- "How big does it get? Does it ever feel as big as the whole sky?" (intensity scale)

Use the intensity scale (Know Its Strengths) to understand the range of this feeling.

Step 3: Separate the Student from the Character

Reinforce the separation between the student and this negative feeling. **Don't rush past this step.**

Key language shift:

*"So you don't have anyone to play with at recess. And you think, "No one likes me."
That's the Gloom Cloud talking! We need to make that Gloom Cloud go away.*



How to Use

Step 1: Introduce Character & Draw

Step 2: About the Character

Step 3: Separate Student from Character

Step 4: Brainstorm Ways to Shrink It

Step 5: Write a Simple Plan

Practical Details



Grade Level

2nd to 8th



Made For

Individual counseling



File Format

PDF

Editable PowerPoint



AND

CBT-based

Print and go

Use what you need



Printing

Color + BW

What you'll love

Responsive: Choose the character you need based on the challenges you see with your student(s).

Flexible: 10 prebuilt characters or create your own.

Ready to Use: Color + BW options, simple instructions.



More CBT Activities



CBT WORKSHEETS




school counseling tools

COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

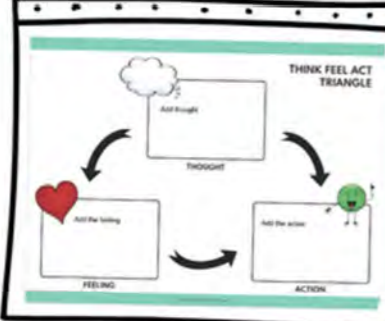


THOUGHT TRAPS
BLAME TAKER
GOOD IGNORER
SHOULD POLICE

THOUGHTS FEELINGS ACTIONS



2-5
CBT COUNSELING ACTIVITIES



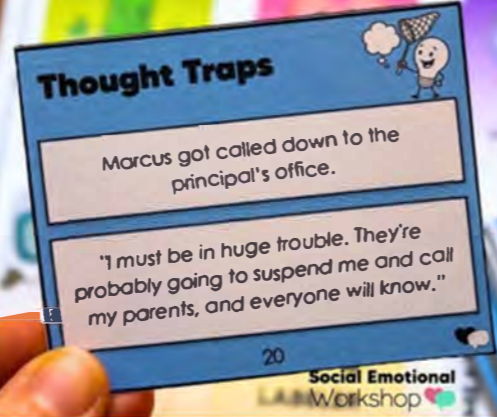
THINK FEEL ACT TRIANGLE

THOUGHT
FEELING
ACTION

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NEGATIVE THINKING

counseling activities



Thought Traps

Marcus got called down to the principal's office.

"I must be in huge trouble. They're probably going to suspend me and call my parents, and everyone will know."

20
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3-5

THOUGHT DETECTIVE

3-5
negative thinking game



Should Police
All or Nothing
On the Case
Mind Reader
Disaster Mode
Fortune Teller
That's Not True

Thought Detective Agency

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Positive Action
Try my best
Take my time
Remind myself
I know this stuff!

Positive Feeling
I liked this unit and studied

Hi! I'm Laura

I create research-driven, uncomplicated tools and resources designed to build students' social and emotional skills in counseling or the classroom.

During ten years as a school psychologist, I wore all the hats - but the one I never took off was supporting my colleagues.

Whether you're a first-year counselor or a seasoned teacher, I want you to have the tools you need to support each student.

Visit [my blog](#) for more ideas and [subscribe](#) for exclusive resources!

contact: support@socialemotionalworkshop.com



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