



Teacher's Guide: 3rd & 4th Class

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Programme Overview

Folens *My Wellbeing Diary* is an evidence-based programme with a strong emphasis on daily mindful practice. Wellbeing is defined as feeling good about yourself and the world around you and functioning well in everyday life. It includes having good mental health, the ability to show resilience and coping skills and the ability to 'bounce back' when faced with the typical stresses and challenges of life.

Wellbeing encompasses:

- Proper sleep, diet and exercise
- Relationships, social connections and altruism
- Meaningful and purposeful activity and a sense of mastery
- The ability to regulate emotions and behaviour
- Healthy and helpful thinking skills
- Kindness to self and others
- Adopting a growth rather than fixed mindset
- The ability to adapt and bounce back

My Wellbeing Diary fosters all of the above concepts through a combination of mindful meditation videos, daily diary entries and learning modules. As with healthy eating and exercise, it is important that wellbeing is continuously worked on and engaged with in order for the individual to experience lasting benefit.

Wellbeing in Schools

The PDST states that 'Schools and centres for education in Ireland play a vital role in the promotion of wellbeing through a range of activities and approaches to support the academic, physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development of all children and young people.' The Department of Education launched the revised Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice in October 2019. Every school and centre for education is required by 2023 to use the School Self-Evaluation process to initiate a wellbeing promotion review and development cycle. (<https://ncca.ie/media/4456/ncca-primary-curriculum-framework-2020.pdf>)

The HSE suggests that in order to promote whole-school wellbeing, schools should be:

1. Developing and maintaining a safe, caring culture within the school to foster a sense of belonging.
2. Building positive relationships between teachers and children.
3. Adopting a whole-school approach to health promotion.
4. Actively involving children, their parents/guardians and the wider community in developing and implementing school policies to support mental health and health promotion.
5. Supporting and implementing a well-planned, consistent and integrated SPHE curriculum to enable children to enhance their coping and problem-solving skills.
6. Developing whole-school systems and structures to support the early identification of children experiencing social, emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties.
7. Actively involving, supporting and encouraging children's participation in extra-curricular activities.
8. Fostering a whole-school ethos that accepts and values diversity within the pupil and staff population.

9. Providing easy access to information for pupils and staff on supports available to them within the school and wider community.
10. Facilitating access to continuing professional development for school staff on the promotion of the mental health and well-being of children.

(<https://assets.gov.ie/41246/9a328ba4ecde44489eb9e686876041e3.pdf>)

In addition to the above, wellbeing is now listed as one of the seven competencies within the new draft primary curriculum framework published by the NCCA in 2020.

'This competency develops children's appreciation and demonstration of wellbeing and their ability to be as physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually healthy as they can be. It fosters self-awareness and promotes the importance of children seeing themselves as capable and resourceful. This supports their ability to deal with the normal challenges of life, become resilient and cope in a variety of situations and circumstances.

It contributes to children's demonstration of how they can be physically healthy through physical activity, eating healthy food and self-care. It helps children become positive and engaged in their learning and realise their own uniqueness and potential. It supports healthy relationships with themselves, their peers, their family and the wider world.'

(<https://ncca.ie/media/4456/ncca-primary-curriculum-framework-2020.pdf>)



Programme Components

The 3rd & 4th class programme for *My Wellbeing Diary* consists of the following components:

Pupil Book

The pupil book consists of both daily diary pages and learning module pages:

Diary pages

The diary pages require children to identify how they feel on a particular day and to colour or draw the emoji that best reflects how they feel. They also feature wellbeing 'challenges' and short writing activities.

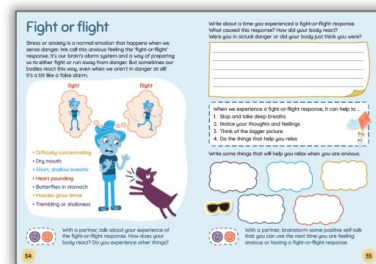


Diary pages

On Fridays, children are prompted to reflect and write about how they feel, identify things they are grateful for and set a wellbeing goal for the coming week.

Learning Module pages

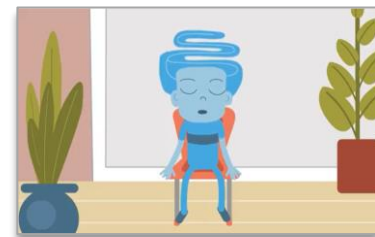
There are 10 learning modules (one for each month) covering different aspects of wellbeing.



Learning module pages

Meditation Videos

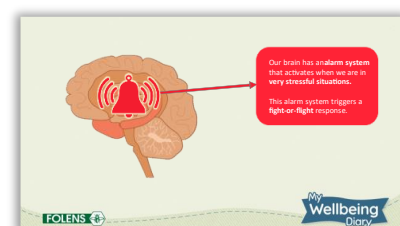
There are four daily meditation videos for 3rd & 4th Class – *Belly Breathing Practice*, *Body Scan Meditation*, *Leaves on a Stream* and *Breath as Anchor Meditation*. The purpose of each video is to encourage mindfulness, make children more aware of their own thoughts and feelings and create a sense of calm before a day of lessons. (Note: There is also a *Belly Breathing Instruction* video for use at the start of the year to demonstrate how belly breathing works.)



Meditation video

PowerPoint Presentations

There are 10 PowerPoint presentations which accompany the 10 learning modules. They can be used by the teacher to support instruction by introducing topics and concepts in a visual way.



PowerPoint

Teacher's Guide

The Teacher's Guide contains curriculum information as well as detailed lesson plans for each of the learning modules, including teacher prompts, circle time and classroom activity suggestions.

Using the Programme

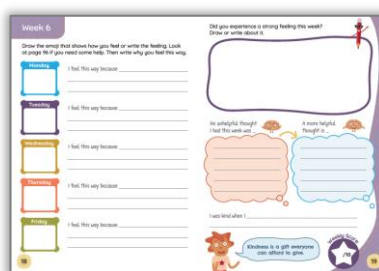
Diary Pages

The diary pages of *My Wellbeing Diary* are designed to be used daily in conjunction with the meditation videos. Teachers have the freedom to decide how to use the resources in a way that best suits their class (e.g. meditation directly followed by diary entry every morning or meditation in the morning and diary entry in the afternoon). Children can also fill in the diary pages at home if desired.

The first diary page for each week requires the children to identify how they are feeling each day. Children need to learn to recognise and name their emotions in order to be able to regulate them. More time can be spent on the second diary page which can be completed on Friday. The Friday diary pages alternate and either require the children to reflect on and write about their feelings or complete a unique activity that reinforces some of the concepts covered in the learning modules.



Diary pages: Type 1



Diary pages: Type 2



Diary pages: Type 3

Feelings PowerPoint and diary pages

Some children may struggle to identify or understand how best to deal with the emotions that they experience. To support them, teachers can spend the first few weeks of the year helping children to recognise different emotions, to understand the effect these emotions can have on their bodies and to respond to them in an emotionally-intelligent way. They can use the Feelings PowerPoint and diary pages 6–13 to do this before children start their daily diary entries in October.



Feelings PowerPoint slide



Feelings diary pages

Meditation Videos

These simple videos are approximately 5 minutes long and are designed to be used every day in class. These meditations can be carried out seated or lying on the floor and require no additional equipment. Teachers can alternate between the videos depending on what best suits their class.

Belly Breathing Instruction: The purpose of this video is to introduce children to the concept of belly breathing and to demonstrate how this type of breathing can be used to calm the body.

Belly Breathing Practice: Once children have grasped the basics of belly breathing, they can then use the *Belly Breathing Practice video*. Learning to belly breathe is an important skill for children as it calms the body and mind, thus encouraging emotional self-regulation.

Body Scan Meditation: A body scan is an effective way to engage in mindful meditation practice. It encourages children to step out of their mind and to pay attention to how their body is feeling in the present moment. The goal is to train the mind to become more aware of sensory experience, build focus and reduce tension.

Breath as Anchor Meditation: As an alternative to the Body Scan Meditation, children can use their breath as an anchor or point of focus during mindful meditation.

Leaves on a Stream: This video is a basic thought diffusion exercise. In learning to recognise that they are the observer of their thoughts and not the thoughts themselves, children are encouraged to detach from and let go of thoughts that might be causing pain or anxiety. In the video, children are asked to visualise their thoughts as leaves sailing down a stream and then disappearing. In doing so, they learn to take a step back and avoid getting 'caught up' in negative thoughts to the point where they lose perspective.

Learning Modules

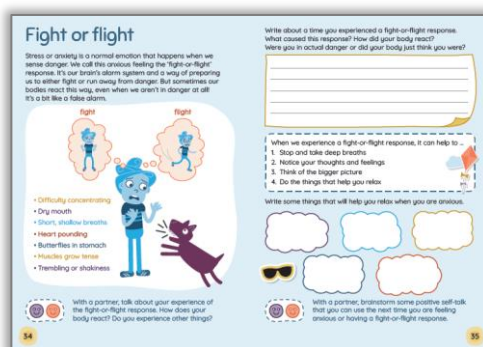
The 10 Learning Modules are designed to be used across the 10 months of the school year and cover the following concepts:

Month	Module	Concept
September	Amazing Me	Develop identity and a sense of self
October	My Fantastic Family	Understand their role and the role of others within their family unit
November	The Best Friend I Can Be	Develop empathy and conflict resolution skills
December	Fight or Flight	Develop skills to cope with fearful or challenging situations
January	Challenging ANTs	Become aware of negative thoughts and how they can be 'reframed'
February	Facing My Fears	Develop an understanding of the interrelationship between mind and body
March	Growing My Growth Mindset	Develop resilience and a 'growth mindset'
April	Healthy Me	Understand the importance of healthy eating, sleep, exercise and play
May	An Attitude of Gratitude	Develop an understanding of how gratitude can support a positive mindset
June	Logging on Safely	Understand the importance of maintaining personal safety while using the internet

For each module, there is an accompanying PowerPoint, which teachers can use to prompt discussion of the concepts. At the end of the lesson, children complete the relevant learning module pages in the diary.



Learning module PowerPoint slide



Learning module diary page

Yearly Scheme

Month	Diary Pages/Learning Modules	Strand	Strand Unit
September	Learning Module 1: Amazing Me	Myself	Self identity
	Diary Pages: 6–13	Myself	Growing and changing Self-identity
		Myself and others	Relating to others
October	Learning Module 2: My Fantastic Family	Myself and others Myself and the wider world	Myself and my family Citizenship
	Diary Pages: 16–23	Myself	Growing and changing Self-identity
November	Learning Module 3: The Best Friend I Can Be	Myself	Self-identity
		Myself and others	My friends and other people
		Myself and others	Relating to others
	Diary Pages: 26–33	Myself	Growing and changing Self-identity Taking care of my body
December	Learning Module 4: Fight-or-Flight	Myself	Growing and changing
	Diary Pages: 36–43	Myself	Growing and changing Self-Identity Taking care of my body
		Myself and others	Relating to others
January	Learning Module 5: Challenging ANT's	Myself	Growing and changing
	Diary Pages: 46–53	Myself	Growing and changing Self-identity
		Myself and others	Relating to others
February	Learning Module 6: Facing My Fears	Myself	Growing and changing Making decisions
	Diary Pages: 56–63	Myself	Growing and changing Self-identity

			Taking care of my body
		Myself and others	Relating to others
March	Learning Module 7: Growing My Growth Mindset	Myself	Self-identity Growing and changing
	Diary Pages: 66–73	Myself	Self-identity Growing and changing
		Myself and others	Relating to others
April	Learning Module 8: Healthy Me	Myself	Taking care of my body Making decisions
	Diary Pages: 76–83	Myself	Growing and changing Self-identity
		Myself and others	My friends and other people Relating to others
May	Learning Module 9: An Attitude of Gratitude	Myself	Growing and changing Taking care of my body
	Diary Pages: 86–93	Myself	Growing and changing Self-identity
		Myself and others	Relating to others
June	Learning Module 10: Logging on Safely	Myself	Making decisions Safety and protection

Sample Lesson Plans

Learning Module 4: Fight-or-Flight

Overview

September	
Strand: Myself	Strand Unit: Growing and changing
Objectives	<p><i>Feelings and emotions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talk about and reflect on a wide variety of feelings and emotions and the various situations where these may be experienced and how they may be expressed • identify strong feelings and learn how to express and cope with these feelings in a socially appropriate manner • explore how feelings can influence one's life
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>My Wellbeing Diary C</i> (pp. 34–35) • Learning Module 4 PowerPoint: Fight-or-Flight
Learning experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint Slide 2-5: Children identify what anxiety is and learn about the fight-or-flight response - what causes it and the physical effect it has on our bodies • Video: Children watch a video about the fight-or-flight response • PowerPoint Slide 6: Children learn how deep breathing can help calm them when they are anxious • Class activity: Children practice deep breathing • Class mediation (optional): Children do a walking meditation or seated mindfulness meditation • Powerpoint Slide 7: Children discuss other ways of calming down • Class activity: Children create their own calm-down jar • <i>My Wellbeing Diary C</i> (p. 34-35): Children discuss a text with their partner, write about their experience of a fight-or-flight response and identify ways they can relax when they feel anxious
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher observation • Diary pages (pp. 34-35)
Integration	<p>Literacy – Oral language development; writing</p> <p>SESE – Science/Living things/Human life</p>

Background Information


The amygdala is one of the most ancient structures in the brain. It evolved to recognise danger and to prepare our body us to react to it – in other words, to fight or to run away (flight). The amygdala effectively acts as the body’s alarm system. When it perceives a threat, the amygdala triggers a set of biological responses to help us survive. For example, our heart rate increases so that more blood flows to our muscles in case we need to fight or run away. As blood is diverted away from our digestive system to our muscles, our mouths become dry and we may get butterflies in our stomach. Our thoughts start racing, as quicker thinking can help us to evaluate the potential threat.

These reactions can often be unhelpful in modern times as the stresses we face are rarely threats to our lives. Children, especially, can feel like their body has been hijacked and may not understand why they are experiencing such debilitating physical reactions.

As a result, it is important that children know that this is common physical reaction and to understand why it occurs. It is also important that they learn to recognise when their brain and body is reacting in this way and to know what steps they can take to manage these potentially overwhelming sensations.

The key to calming the nervous system is through relaxation techniques or physical exercise. Deep abdominal breathing or belly breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body. When you breathe deeply, it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to your body. As a result, your heart rate and blood pressure decrease. Deep breathing is not just something children can do when they are in the throes of a fight-or-flight response - children who are naturally disposed to higher levels of arousal and anxiety can benefit from practicing it regularly. Deep breathing can also help to bring attention away from worries or fears that all children may at times have and quiet their minds.

Detailed Notes

PowerPoint content	Teacher discussion prompts
Slide 1 	Launch the PowerPoint for Learning Module 4: Fight-or-Flight

Slide 2



Click to reveal the image of Appa looking anxious. Ask children to explain what it means to feel anxious (*e.g. to be worried, stressed, afraid, nervous*).

Ask children how we know when we are anxious. Prompt for descriptions of the physical signs of anxiety (*e.g. sweaty palms, shortness of breath, heart pounding, chest feeling tight, stomach pains, trembling, dry mouth, etc.*). Then click to reveal the images. Discuss any signs that weren't mentioned.

Now prompt for descriptions of the mental signs of anxiety (*e.g. worrying about things a lot, getting a thought stuck in your head, having a feeling that something bad is going to happen, mind racing, struggling to pay attention, etc.*) Click to reveal the thought bubbles.

Slide 3

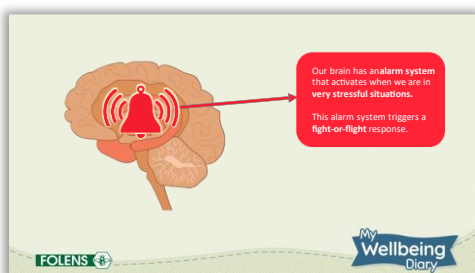


Explain that there are lots of things that can make us anxious. For example, going to hospital, flying on a plane or having to read or present in front of the class.

Ask children to think of something that has made, or makes, them feel anxious. Prompt for as many different answers as possible (*e.g. being sick or injured, going to a new place, performing in a school show, playing a match, school tests, arguing with friends/family, spiders, heights etc.*)

Point out that everyone feels anxious sometimes and it's perfectly normal. Emphasise that a situation that causes one person lots of anxiety might not bother somebody else at all and this is normal too! Everybody's experience of anxiety is different.

Slide 4



Explain that **anxiety happens when our brain sends a message to our bodies that there is something to fear.**

Click to reveal the image of the brain.

Explain that your brain has lots of different jobs. You could ask children to name some of the important jobs our brain does every day (*e.g. helping us to walk, talk and remember things.*) Point out that one of the brain's jobs is to keep us safe from danger.

Click to reveal the alarm bells, then click to reveal the accompanying text.

Explain that our brain has an alarm system that activates when we are in very stressful situations. In these situations, our brain triggers something called the 'fight-or-flight' response. Ask children if they know, or can guess, what the fight-or-flight response is.

Slide 5



Click to reveal the images of Obi.

Ask children what the scary situation here (*a barking dog that has run up to Obi*). Point out that Obi doesn't know if the dog is only going to bark or if he might actually attack him, so his brain sends a message to his body that there might be danger and to prepare to react.

The bubble on the left shows Obi's brain telling his body to prepare to ward off or fight the dog. **This is the 'fight' response.** Click to reveal the label.

The bubble on the right shows Obi's brain telling his body to run away from the dog. **This is the 'flight' response.** Click to reveal the label.

Explain that the reason that we all have the 'fight or flight' response is to help us deal with threats by getting our bodies ready to prepare for action. In other words, to fight, or to run away. For example, our heart starts beating hard so that the blood flows to our muscles in case we need to run away.

However, **sometimes our brains can't tell the difference between something that stressful and something that is life-threatening.** In other words, the fight-or-flight response is useful, if say, we need to jump out of the way of a car that's about to run us over. However, it's not helpful if we need to take a test or read out loud in front of our class!

Video (Optional)

Play this video explaining the fight—flight—freeze response:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O_5M

Discuss the video with the children afterwards. Explain that the freeze response is another way the body has of responding to a threat although it is less common than the fight-or-flight response.

Slide 6



Explain that everyone experiences the fight-or-flight response and that is perfectly normal. But **there are things that we can do to calm our bodies down when we are having a fight-or-flight response.** We don't to be a victim to our body's reactions.

Click to reveal the image of Obi meditating. Explain that **one of the most effective ways to calm ourselves down is to take a few slow, deep breaths, paying attention to our breathing and how it makes our body feel.** Breathing slowly and deeply lowers our heart rate and makes us feel more relaxed.

Class Activity

Encourage children to close their eyes and take a few deep breaths. Afterwards, ask how it made them feel. Alternatively, you could play the belly breathing practice or breath as anchor mediation videos.

Explain that physical exercise is another useful way of calming the body when we feel stressed. Exercise relieves tension in our muscles and makes us feel good. Suggest that children pay attention to how they feel after they have exercised.

Slide 7



Ask children to name other helpful ways of calming down when they have felt anxious in the past (*e.g. taking a bath, having a cold drink, going for a walk, counting backwards from 20 to 1, etc.*). You could compile these suggestions into a classroom 'calm-down kit' which children can draw on whenever they are having a fight-or-flight response.

Class Activity (Optional)

Mindfulness is a useful way to counter anxiety. If possible, bring the children outside into a green space and do a whole-class walking meditation. Ask children to walk silently, observing everything around them with all of their senses – the sounds and smells, the feeling of the air against their skin, anything unusual or new that they see.

Class Activity

Children who struggle with anxiety will benefit from having a physical tool they can use to ground themselves when they are experiencing a fight-or-flight response. Calm-down jars are useful tools for self-soothing and easy to make in class.

Have each child bring in an empty watertight glass or plastic jar. Fill each jar until it is almost full with warm water, then have children add glitter glue and loose glitter in their chosen colour or colours. Seal the jars – for extra security you could use a hot glue gun to seal around the lid. Children shake the jars and then watch as the glitter slowly settles to the bottom. Encourage children to do this when they are feeling stressed or anxious and to take some deep breaths as the glitter falls to the bottom of the jar.

My Wellbeing Diary C

Ask children to turn to page 34 and 35 of *My Wellbeing Diary C*. Ask children to read the text on page 34 and complete the partner activity task (talking about their experience of a fight-or-flight response). Then ask children to write about their experience of a fight-or-flight response and identify ways they can relax when they feel anxious on page 35.

Learning Module 5: Challenging ANTs

Overview

September	
Strand: Myself	Strand Unit: Growing and changing
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talk about and reflect on a wide variety of feelings and emotions and the various situations where these may be experienced and how they may be expressed • identify strong feelings and learn how to express and cope with these feelings in a socially appropriate manner • explore how feelings can influence one's life
Strand: Myself	Strand Unit: Taking care of my body
Objectives	<i>Health and wellbeing</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • begin to develop strategies to cope with various worries or difficulties that he or she may encounter
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>My Wellbeing Diary C</i> (pp. 44–45) • Learning Module 5 PowerPoint: Challenging ANTs
Learning experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint Slide 2 - 4: Children discuss unhelpful thoughts and learn about the thought – feelings – behaviours cycle and automatic negative thoughts (ANTs) • Classroom activity: Children identify and label their ANTs • PowerPoint Slide 5, 7: Children learn about challenging negative thoughts • Pair work: Children practise challenging negative thoughts • <i>My Wellbeing Diary C</i> (p. 44): Children read the text • <i>My Wellbeing Diary C</i> (p. 45): Children answer the questions in order to practise challenging a negative thought
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher observation • Diary pages (pp. 44-45)
Integration	Literacy – oral language development; writing

Background Information


Our thoughts can have a powerful effect on our mood. Some children (and adults) are more vulnerable to negative thought patterns than others. These thought distortions are often negative, judgmental, exaggerated, and rigid. When negative thoughts go unchallenged in childhood, they can easily become habitual. Automatic negative thoughts (also known as ANTs) contribute to feelings of anxiety, stress, anger and helplessness and can lead to depression in later childhood and adulthood. It is therefore important to equip children with the tools to manage ANTs so that they develop the skills to cope with the inevitable challenges and failures they will encounter during their lives.

In order to break patterns of negative thinking, children need to learn that a) they are not their thoughts and b) their thoughts are not necessarily true. Whenever children feel sad, angry, nervous, or out of control, they should be encouraged to pay attention to and challenge negative or unhelpful thoughts, e.g. *Is my thought true? Is there evidence to support it? Is it a helpful thought? Is there an alternative, more helpful way to look at this?* Recognising and challenge negative thoughts is the first step in breaking the cycle of negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours that can easily become overwhelming.

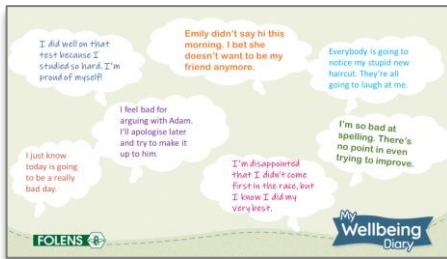
It is important that children create a distance between their negative thoughts and their own identity. When encouraging them to challenge negative thoughts, avoid suggesting that they themselves are negative. Place the emphasis on their thoughts, and on how they can always choose more helpful thoughts.

Note: For some children, a negative thought may be particularly strong or 'sticky'. These could be thoughts which are deeply embedded in the child's identity or from past trauma. In challenging these thoughts, the child may end up paying more attention to them and as a result, the neural pathways associated with the thought simply grow in strength. In these instances, rather than trying to reframe the thought, children should be encouraged to simply accept and let go of the thought. One way to do this, is to practice thought diffusion using a video such as Leaves on a Stream.

Detailed Notes

PowerPoint content	Teacher discussion prompts
<p>Slide 1</p> 	<p>Launch the PowerPoint for Learning Module 5: Challenging ANTs</p>

Slide 2



Before launching the slide, explain to children that **we all have thousands of thoughts running through our minds everyday**. Sometimes we are thinking about what happened in the past, sometimes we are thinking about what is going to happen in the future, sometimes we are thinking about ourselves and sometimes we are thinking about others.

Point out that some of the thoughts we have are **positive or helpful thoughts** and others are **negative or unhelpful thoughts**.

Click to reveal the thoughts on the powerpoint. Ask children to decide whether each thought is a helpful thought or an unhelpful one. Click to highlight the unhelpful thoughts.

Ask children if they can explain where our unhelpful thoughts come from. Prompt for as many different answers as possible (*e.g. we have unhelpful thoughts when bad things happen, when we are feeling sad or stressed or anxious, when we have done something we feel guilty about, when we are feeling physically bad, etc.*)

Slide 3



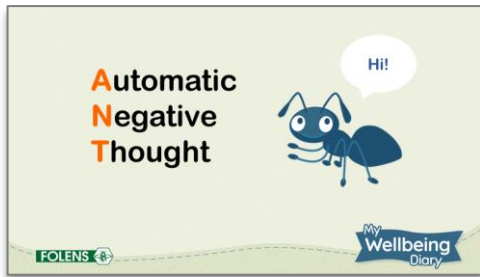
Click to reveal the thoughts, feelings and behaviour diagram. Explain that **our thoughts, feelings and behaviours are all linked, so our thoughts can impact upon our feelings and our feelings in turn can impact our behaviour**.

Give the following example. (Click to reveal the artwork for each bullet point.)

- Imagine that you didn't get onto the football team even though you really wanted to. So you begin to **think the unhelpful thoughts** (e.g. 'Everybody thinks I'm rubbish at football'.)
- This thought makes you **feel** sad and angry.
- Because you **feel** sad and angry, the next time your friends ask you to play football, you **behave** differently – you say you don't want to play, even though you do. Your friends are disappointed and you feel left out. Maybe they don't ask you to play again because they think you don't like football anymore. This results in even more negative thoughts.

Explain that this is called **a vicious cycle**, and if we don't find a way out, we can become stuck in it!

Slide 4



Tell children that sometimes we can develop a habit of thinking negatively about things and our perceptions are not always correct. Unhelpful thoughts that seem to pop into our heads from nowhere, are called **Automatic Negative Thoughts**. We call them **ANTs** for short!

Click to reveal the image.

Emphasise that ANTS are not necessarily true. They are not facts, they are just thoughts. **We don't have to accept these unhelpful thoughts just because they come into our heads. If we are aware of them, we can challenge them!**

Point out to children that sometimes two people will have the very same experience but for one person it results in a negative thoughts while for another person it results in a neutral or positive thought.

For example, say Aoife and Niamh get picked for the camogie team. Aoife thinks 'Great, I can't wait for the match on Saturday!' Niamh thinks 'What if I don't play well at the match on Saturday and they won't want me on the team anymore?'

Both girls had the same experience but while Aoife had positive, helpful thoughts about it, Niamh had negative, unhelpful thoughts.

Classroom Activity

Give children a piece of paper and ask them to draw a row of ants with speech bubbles above them. Children then personalise and name the ANTs to reflect the different types of automatic negative thought they experience regularly. It may help to give examples of these types of negative thought, e.g.

- Can't ANT says 'I just **can't** do this' (defeatist thinking)
- Labelling ANT says 'I'm dumb/useless/a bad friend' (applying negative labels)
- General ANT says 'This **always** happens to me/I'll **never** be good at maths' (generalising from one bad experience)
- Catastrophe ANT says 'Everything is ruined!' etc. (catastrophising and thinking things are worse than they are)

Encourage children to refer back to this drawing when they recognise a negative thought and identify it, e.g. 'That's just Can't ANT talking, I don't have to listen to him'.

Slide 5



Explain to children out that we don't have to accept negative thoughts. We can challenge negative thoughts by questioning them. Click to reveal the bullets.

- Am I absolutely sure this is true?
- Is this a helpful thought?
- Can I replace it with a kinder, more helpful thought?

To help us decide if something is true or not, we can ask the following questions:

- What evidence is there to support this thought?
- Am I jumping to conclusions?
- Would someone else look at this the same way?
- What would a friend think or say to me?
- Is this likely to happen?

Note: it's worth pointing out to children that not all unhelpful thoughts are untrue. It might be the case that we find spelling hard or are not very good at football. However, just because we have made a mistake or are not very good at something does NOT make us bad or stupid. **We can accept our weaknesses without allowing them define to us.**

Pair work

Display slide 6. In pairs, ask children to look at the unhelpful thought at the top of the slide and to see how they could challenge this negative thought. What questions could they ask to establish if the thought is true or not? Might there be an alternative explanation? (e.g. Maybe Emily didn't see her, or she was just in a bad mood. She may not have said hi to anyone)

Slide 7



Remind children that **we can change unhelpful thoughts into more helpful ones.**

Click to reveal the unhelpful thoughts.

Ask children to suggest an alternative more helpful thought for each of the unhelpful thoughts.

You could organise children in groups for this exercise and have each group focus on one of the thoughts before sharing their ideas with the rest of the class.

Slide 8



Tell children that there are times when challenging an unhelpful thought or trying to replace it with a helpful one is especially tricky or hard.

For example, perhaps we have a thought from our past (which we can't change) that keeps popping into our heads and bothers us all the time. **We call these 'sticky thoughts' – because they get stuck in our heads.**

Explain that when we have a sticky thought, trying to turn it into a helpful thought might not be the best solution. **When we have a sticky thought, it can be better to practise just letting it go without trying to change it.** We notice the thought, we accept it, but we don't get tangled up in it.

Explain that one way to do this is by imagining that we are holding a balloon. (Click to reveal the balloon).

We imagine writing the thought on the balloon. (Click to make the text appear on the balloon.)

And then we say to ourselves, 'I am letting this sticky thought go,' and we let the balloon float away. (Click to make the balloon float away.)

Slide 7



Ask children what they feel they have learned about ANTs. Suggest that they practice paying attention to and challenging their ANTs over the next few days.

Class Activity

Play the 'Leaves on a stream' meditation to help children practise letting go of sticky thoughts. You could also do a more physical version of this exercise by inviting children to write their sticky thoughts on a scrap of paper, scrunch them up and throw them into the bin.

My Wellbeing Diary C

Ask children to turn to pages 44 and 45 of *My Wellbeing Diary C*. Tell them to read the text on page 44. Ask children to challenge a negative thought by writing their answers to the questions on page 45.