

Healthy Thoughts

Quarter 7 • Lesson 13

Focus on Life Skills

1. *Connecting*: Learn how thoughts affect feelings and actions.
2. *Teaching*: Learn to identify unhealthy thoughts and replace them with healthy thoughts (Philippians 4:8).
3. *Responding*: Practice giving and receiving encouragement and thinking positively.

SUPPLIES

- Bible

Optional Supplies:

- Board and chalk or large paper and marker
- Pencils
- Memory Verse Poster
- Student Pages
- Board and chalk or large paper and marker

If possible, write Philippians 4:8 on the chalkboard or large paper.

Teacher Devotion

*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up
against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every
thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

2 Corinthians 10:5

As a Christian, there is a battle between who you were and who God is creating you to be. It is a battle between the old self and the new creation. And the battlefield is your mind. In this battle, it is truth versus lies, and fear versus God's promises.

Stop all unhealthy thoughts when they first enter your mind. When you do this, you "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God." You "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). This week, commit every thought to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you recognize every unhealthy thought and replace it with thoughts of things that are excellent, lovely, and praiseworthy.

Family Connection: Let the families know that their children are learning to identify unhealthy thoughts and replace them with healthy thoughts. Encourage family members to share a negative thought they had that day and think of a way to replace it with a positive one.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Learn how thoughts affect feelings and actions.

Greet the children and ask a few to share if they were able to successfully use any of the strategies they learned last week to help them with difficult emotions.

At our last meeting, we talked about dealing with difficult feelings. We learned healthy ways to calm down so we can think before we act.

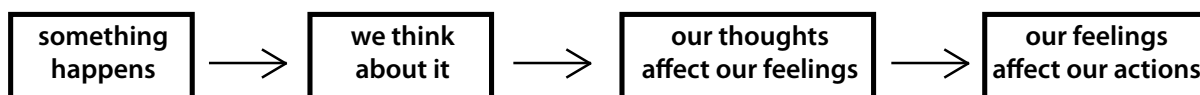
Teacher Tip: This week the children learn to identify unhealthy thoughts and to replace them with healthy thoughts. It is important that the children develop confidence that with God's help, they can change their thoughts and reactions.

- **What are some ways to calm down when we are angry? Remember, one was to breathe in deeply and slowly! There were 9 more ideas. Who remembers another one?**

Name any of the strategies that your children forget: squeeze and relax your muscles, count to 10 slowly, daydream, listen to music, exercise, laugh, talk it out, name your feelings, and read the Bible and pray.

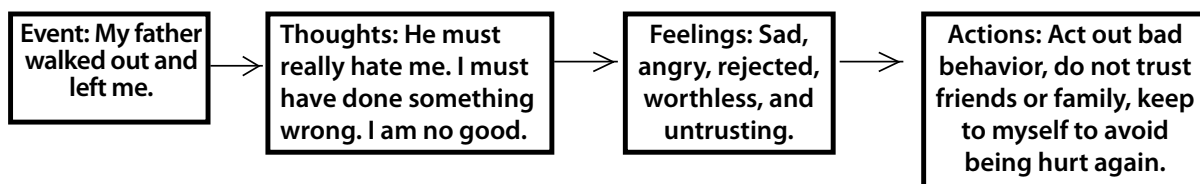
Good job remembering the tips! Once we have calmed down and figured out what we are feeling and thinking, we are ready to make changes. To do this, we need to understand how feelings work. Feelings work like a chain reaction.

Act out the following diagram as you talk your children through the process of changing negative feelings. Start at the left side of your teaching space, say what is in the first box, then take a few steps to the right. Say what is in the next box, then take a few more steps to the right. Continue this until you say what is in the last box while you are at the far right of your teaching space. As you walk across the space, explain that this is how feelings work.



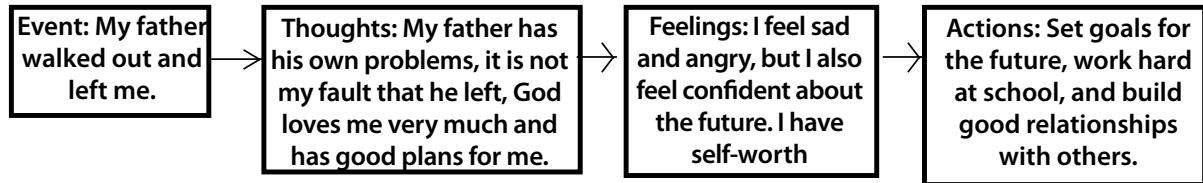
Work through 2 examples using the same event and different thoughts to clearly demonstrate that thoughts affect feelings. Feel free to come up with your own examples that might better fit your children, especially if the examples here might be too emotionally difficult for some children. As you talk through the following examples, move across your teaching space each time, from left to right.

Example 1



Notice that the second example starts with the same event as the first one. Watch to see how I can change my thoughts and therefore my feelings.

Example 2



Divide the children into small groups of 3–4. Read a situation and have the groups try to find a positive reaction for it. They should talk about what thoughts, feelings, and actions they would use. Give the groups about 2 minutes to talk after each situation. Call on several groups to share after each one.

Situation 1: My little sister is mentally disabled. (Thoughts. Feelings. Actions.)

Situation 2: My friends can do everything easily and without problems. I cannot do anything right. Therefore I must be a stupid person. (Thoughts. Feelings. Actions.)

Situation 3: School fees are due, but our crops failed this year. (Thoughts. Feelings. Actions.)

Situation 4: We are moving to a big city so my father can find work. (Thoughts. Feelings. Actions.)

2. Teaching: Learn to identify unhealthy thoughts and replace them with healthy thoughts (Philippians 4:8).

To change our difficult feelings, we need to change our thoughts. Our thoughts are our inner voice or the things that we say to ourselves. We call this “self-talk.” We are always saying things to ourselves (in our minds) about ourselves, other people, things happening around us, and our past and future.

Some of our thoughts may be true, but others are definitely not. We often have untrue and unhealthy thoughts about ourselves. For example, have you ever thought these untrue things about yourself? “I am not good enough.” “I cannot do anything.”

Sometimes we interpret situations the wrong way. For example, when I see a group of girls whispering, I may think, “They are talking about me” even though they are not. Unhealthy thoughts often make us feel bad about ourselves or other people. Also, unhealthy thoughts usually become stronger when we experience negative feelings.

The Bible tells us how to have healthy thoughts. Listen to this verse. If we really believe this verse, we will not fall into the trap of bad thinking.

Before class, write this verse on the chalkboard or large paper, if possible. If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

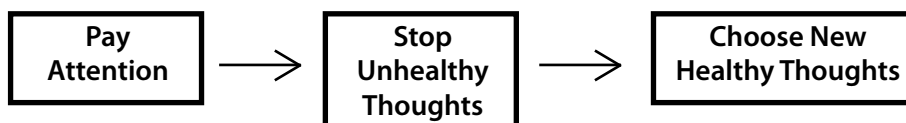
Finally, my brothers and sisters, always think about what is true. Think about what is noble, right and pure. Think about what is lovely and worthy of respect. If anything is excellent or worthy of praise, think about those kinds of things.

Philippians 4:8, NIV

- Instead of thinking bad things about ourselves, what does the Bible say we should think about?
- What is something excellent you could think about instead of thinking unhealthy thoughts? What is something worthy of praise?

Suppose you feel unhappy. Maybe you feel angry. How do you change your feelings? Begin by paying attention to your thoughts. When you notice that you are thinking unhealthy thoughts or even thinking lies about yourself, tell yourself, "Stop!" Then, replace the unhealthy thoughts with new, healthy thoughts.

Explain that you will walk across your teaching space again. Begin at the left side, move to the centre and finish on the right side. Tell your children that this is how to put the Bible verse into practice.



With God's help, you can become good at replacing your unhealthy thoughts with new, healthy thoughts. It does not happen instantly. Practice, practice, practice! Ask God to help you and remind you of what is true.

I will tell you some unhealthy thoughts. I want you to tell me what healthy thoughts could replace them.

Read the following comments to the children. More than one child may want to respond to each one. Encourage them to use "I" when they talk.

I will never learn English. I am just too stupid.

For example, a child might replace this unhealthy thought by saying, "I am very good at math, so I cannot be stupid."

Nobody at this school likes me. I will go through my whole life and no one will ever like me.

God does not love me. If He did He would make my mother healthy again. I will be sad for the rest of my life.

I will never amount to anything. I am just a girl. If I were a boy, I could be a success, but now I am just a failure.

I hate that boy for treating me like I am not even here. I am so unimportant I am almost invisible.

Optional: If you are using the Student Page, give the students time to complete it. There is space there for children to practice replacing unhealthy thoughts with healthy thoughts.

Here are some other ways to handle difficult feelings:

When you feel angry, learn to recognize how your body reacts so that you can calm down and avoid saying things that you will regret. Remember the signs we talked about that show you that you are angry, such as getting hot or clenching your fists or teeth.

When you have sad or bad feelings, try do things you enjoy. Talk to friends, even though you do not feel like it.

What scary situations do you face? Think of the worst thing that could happen in this situation and prepare yourself for it. For example, your uncle beats you when he is drunk. Is there any way to avoid being around him when he is drunk? Is there anything you can do or say that may keep him from beating you?

If you feel unsafe because of natural disasters, wars, or violence, talk to an adult. Ask someone to explain what to do in an emergency. Ask for an adult's help with that fearful thing.

You may not always be able to deal with your feelings right away. You may need to calm down first. But it is important that you do not put off dealing with your feelings forever.

Congratulate yourself when you deal with your feelings in a healthy way. You deserve it!

3. Responding: Practice giving and receiving encouragement and thinking positively.

We all have to deal with unhealthy thoughts from time to time. The Bible tells us that we can replace unhealthy thoughts with healthy ones that encourage us rather than discourage us. When you encourage other people, you help them think positive, healthy thoughts.

Think of a sentence of encouragement you can give to the child sitting next to you. Place both your hands together like a cup. Put your hands into that child's hands and open yours as if you were dropping a gift into his hands. Say a word of encouragement to him. You can come up with your own, or you can say, "God has given you the ability to think lovely, excellent thoughts instead of angry or sad, unhealthy thoughts." Then change roles and you will receive a gift of encouragement from your partner.

Give the children a few minutes to do this activity. Close class by praying Philippians 4:8 from the NIV as a blessing over the children. Consider praying over each child individually as you do the cupped hand motions again. If your class is too large, read the blessing over the children and then have each child turn to 2 others to pray it over them, using the cupped hand motions again. Also you can stretch out your hands towards the children and pray for them.

Blessing: "Finally, my brothers and sisters, always think about what is true. Think about what is noble, right and pure. Think about what is lovely and worthy of respect. If anything is excellent or worthy of praise, think about those kinds of things."

Lead the children in singing this quarter's song, if possible.

"Raise a Hallelujah" by Bethel Music https://youtu.be/JvXBf_dEiHU