

THE
13
LIFE HACKS



Hack 12
Coping with Feelings
and Thoughts:
Teacher Notes

A project of



Government Criteria Alignment Chart

Framework	Criterion / Theme	Covered in Hack 12
PSHE (Health & Wellbeing)	H1: Recognise and talk about emotions	Six-step model on recognising and verbalising feelings
	H2: Impact of emotions on behaviour	Shows how ignoring thoughts/feelings increases distress
	H4: Developing resilience	Accepting and reframing inner experiences
	H6: Maintaining wellbeing	Using compassion, letting thoughts “float by”
	H10: Seeking help when needed	Guidance on turning to a trusted adult if overwhelmed
PSHE (Relationships)	R1: Self-awareness in relationships	Recognising feelings to respond better to others
	R5: Respect for others’ feelings	Validating emotions builds healthier friendships
RSHE (Mental Wellbeing)	Recognising unhelpful thinking	Identifying negative scripts and intrusive thoughts
	Emotional regulation strategies	Six-step process, reframing, “Thanks, mind”
	Building resilience and perspective	Accepting feelings as normal, not shameful
Safeguarding / KCSIE	Recognising mental distress	Normalises distress, teaches self-awareness of warning signs
	Knowing when to seek support	Encourages reaching out for help if feelings become too strong
British Values	Individual Liberty	Emphasises choice in responding to thoughts/feelings
	Mutual Respect	Builds empathy by showing emotions are universal
SMSC – Spiritual	Reflection on inner life	Thinking about thoughts/feelings and meaning
SMSC – Moral	Valuing self-worth	Challenging self-criticism, fairness to self
SMSC – Social	Communicating emotions	Verbalising feelings and sharing safely
SMSC – Cultural	Reducing stigma around mental health	Normalising open conversations about feelings

Learning Focus

This chapter helps students understand that thoughts and feelings are not dangerous in themselves, it's how we respond to them that matters. It equips them with a six-step process for handling intrusive thoughts and overwhelming feelings, teaching acceptance, healthy release, and when to seek support. Through metaphors, real-life examples, and practical exercises, students learn that thoughts do not define them, and feelings lose power when processed rather than feared.

Key Themes

- Not all thoughts are chosen, the mind produces random and sometimes scary ones
- A thought is not the same as an action, having it doesn't mean you believe it
- Intrusive thoughts often become stronger the more you fight them
- Feelings need processing, not suppressing, sharing them reduces their weight
- The "best-friend technique" works for scary thoughts too, self-kindness lowers fear
- The six-step process: Notice → Name → Normalise → Allow → Release → Ask for help if needed
- Seeking support (friends, teachers, trusted adults) is a strength, not a weakness
- Everyone experiences uncomfortable thoughts and feelings- you are not alone

Discussion Prompts

1. Understanding Intrusive Thoughts

- "Have you ever had a thought pop into your head that felt random or strange?"
- "Why do you think the brain sometimes throws out scary or silly thoughts?"
- "Does having a thought mean it's who you really are?"

2. Thoughts vs. Actions

- "What's the difference between thinking something and actually doing it?"
- "Why do people sometimes panic about a thought instead of just letting it pass?"

3. Coping with Feelings

- "Why is it harder to 'think away' a feeling compared to a thought?"
- "What helps you when you're feeling sad, anxious, or angry?"
- "Do you find it easier to share feelings with friends, family, or no one- why?"

4. The Six Steps

- "Which of the six steps do you think is the most useful?"
- "Which step do you think would be hardest for you in practice?"

5. Acceptance and Self-Kindness

- "Why do people often judge themselves harshly for their thoughts?"
- "What would change if you spoke to yourself like a best friend instead?"

6. Getting Stuck

- "Have you ever had a thought or feeling circle in your mind like a loop?"
- "What small activity (exercise, music, writing, talking) helps you snap out of it?"

7. Seeking Support

- "Why might someone feel embarrassed to ask for help with their thoughts?"
- "What would you say to a friend who felt scared by their own thoughts or feelings?"

Imaginative Group Tasks

1. Feeling Clouds (Sharing & Processing)

How it works:

Groups are given “cloud cards” with different emotions (sadness, anger, shame, excitement, worry). Each person shares a time they felt that way (real or imagined scenario) and then, as a group, brainstorms safe and helpful ways to “let the cloud drift” - through talking, writing, or activities.

Why it works:

Normalises emotions, encourages empathy, and reinforces the message that feelings need processing, not suppressing.

2. Best Friend Challenge (Self-Kindness Reframe)

How it works:

Groups are given harsh self-talk statements (e.g., I’m so weird for thinking this, I should be stronger).

{See Appendix A for self-talk statement examples.}

Their task is to rewrite each one using the **best-friend technique** — how they would respond kindly if a friend said it. Each group performs a short role-play, showing the “before and after” self-talk.

Why it works:

Brings the best-friend technique alive, while reinforcing self-kindness as a practical skill.

3. Six-Step Storyboard (Practical Application)

How it works:

Each group chooses a common scenario (e.g., I had a random scary thought in class).

{See Appendix B for common scenario examples.}

They then create a comic-strip or storyboard showing a character going through the **six steps**: Notice → Name → Normalise → Allow → Release → Ask for help. The group presents their “mini-story” to the class.

Why it works:

Transforms the six-step model into a memorable visual journey, helping students see how each step looks in real life.

Imaginative Group Tasks

4. Thought Balloons (Letting Go Practice)

How it works:

Each group is given a pack of sticky notes and a large paper cut-out of balloons. Students write down examples of “sticky thoughts” (e.g., *I’ll embarrass myself*, *Nobody likes me*) on the sticky notes, then stick them to the balloons.

{See Appendix C for examples.}

As a group, they decide how to “let the balloon go” - e.g., role-playing how to say “Thanks, mind” or acting out releasing it into the sky.

Why it works:

Turns abstract inner experiences into something visible and playful, helping students see thoughts as temporary rather than defining.

5. Loop Breakers (Getting Unstuck)

How it works:

Groups act out a short “thought loop” skit (e.g., *What if I fail?* → *I can’t cope* → *Everyone will know I’m weak* → repeat). The rest of the group has to “jump in” and use one of the Hack 12 techniques (naming the story, saying “Thanks, mind,” singing the thought, etc.) to interrupt the loop.

Why it works:

Makes the experience of getting “stuck” and then breaking free concrete, interactive, and memorable.

Torah Perspectives

Theme in Hack	Source	Hebrew & English (in same cell)	Use in Lesson
Thoughts come uninvited	Berachos 55b	ל החלומות הולכים אחר הפה – All dreams (thoughts, images of the mind) follow how we interpret them.	Shows students that not every thought has power — it depends on how much we give it.
You are not your thoughts	Chovos HaLevavos, Sha'ar Yichud HaMa'aseh 5	ההרהורים הם מעשי הלב – אבל האדם הוא השולט בהם – Thoughts are actions of the heart, but a person remains in charge of them.	Reinforces that thoughts don't define identity; you can notice and direct them.
Feelings pass like weather	Koheles 3:4	עת לבכות ועת לשחוק, עת ספוד ועת ריקוד – There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.	Helps students see emotions as temporary “seasons,” not permanent states.
Don't get trapped by obsessive thoughts	Rebbe Nachman, Likkutei Moharan I:233	התגברות המחשבות הרעות – אין עצה אלא להסיח דעתו לדברים אחרים – When negative thoughts intensify, the only advice is to gently shift attention elsewhere.	Practical strategy: don't fight thoughts head-on, but move focus.
Speak kindly to yourself	Mishlei 12:25	דאגה בלב איש ישחנה ודבר טוב ישמחנה – Worry in a person's heart weighs him down, but a kind word makes him glad.	Basis for the “best-friend technique”: counter harsh self-talk with compassion.
Inner strength sustains through struggle	Mishlei 18:14	רוח איש יכלכל מחלהו, ורוח נכאה מי ישאנה – A person's spirit can sustain his sickness, but a broken spirit — who can bear it?	Teaches that resilience and awareness of one's inner world are what carry a person through hardship.
Emotional intelligence is Torah wisdom	Mishlei 16:32	טוב ארך אפים מגבור, ומשל ברוחו מלכד עיר – Better one who is slow to anger than a warrior, and one who rules his spirit than one who conquers a city.	Links directly to EI: true strength is managing emotions, not controlling others.
Every feeling has purpose	Nesivos Sholom, Vayeira	ל מדות ו ל רגש נתנו לאדם לתכלית – אלא צריך להנהיגם בדרכי התורה – Every emotion was given to a person for a purpose; it just needs to be guided by Torah.	Encourages students not to fear emotions but to channel them constructively.
Emotions are for avodas Hashem	Rav Yerucham Levovitz, Daas Torah (Bereishis)	ל הרגשות שבאדם נתנו לו לעבודתו – All of a person's emotions were given to him to use in his avodas Hashem.	Encourages students to see feelings as tools for growth, not flaws to hide from.

Suggested 3 lesson plan

Lesson 1: Understanding Thoughts and Feelings

Learning Focus:

- Recognise that not all thoughts are chosen, some are random or intrusive
- Understand the difference between thoughts and actions
- Build awareness of emotions and practise naming them

Key Themes Covered:

- Intrusive thoughts are normal, everyone has them
- A thought is not the same as an action
- Emotional intelligence starts with noticing and naming

Discussion Prompts:

- Have you ever had a random thought pop up that surprised you?
- Why do you think people sometimes panic about a thought instead of letting it pass?
- What's the benefit of being specific when naming feelings instead of just saying "I feel bad"?

Group Activity:

- Feeling Clouds (see Imaginative Group Tasks) - exploring how to process and share emotions.

Workbook Pages:

pp. 203–205

Lesson 2: The Six Steps in Action

Learning Focus:

- Learn and practise the Six-Step Process: Notice → Name → Normalise → Allow → Release → Ask for help
- Apply the best-friend technique to harsh self-talk
- Explore practical coping strategies like "Thanks, mind," singing the thought, or letting it float

Key Themes Covered:

- Fighting thoughts makes them stronger, allowing reduces their power
- Self-kindness lowers fear and shame
- Sharing feelings with others reduces their weight

Discussion Prompts:

- Which of the six steps do you think would be hardest to use in real life?
- Why do you think people are often harsher on themselves than they are on their friends?
- What small activity helps you snap out of a thought loop?

Group Activity:

- Six-Step Storyboard (see Appendix B) - groups create a comic-strip of a scenario using all six steps.
- Best Friend Challenge (see Appendix A) - role-play rewriting harsh self-talk with kindness.

Workbook Pages:

pp. 205–208

Suggested 3 lesson plan

Lesson 3: Review and Mastery

Learning Focus:

- Consolidate understanding of intrusive thoughts and emotional intelligence
- Review the six steps as a whole framework
- Reinforce seeking support as a strength

Key Themes Covered:

- Everyone experiences uncomfortable thoughts and feelings- you are not alone
- Seeking support is a strength, not a weakness
- Emotional intelligence improves self-awareness and resilience

Discussion Prompts:

- If you had to teach one step of the process to a younger student, which would you choose and why?
- Why is asking for help sometimes the bravest step of all?
- How do you think emotional intelligence skills could help you later in life?

Group Activity:

- *Loop Breakers*- role-play “thought loops” and interrupt them using Hack 12 tools.
- Peer Quiz Swap- groups create 3 questions for each other, then swap and answer.

End-of-Hack Activities:

- **Multiple Choice Recap Quiz** (download from: masteringyourmind.today)
- **Wordsearch** (optional calming task or early finisher activity — also available on the website)

Workbook Pages:

pp. 203–208 (full chapter)

Appendix A

Harsh Self-Talk Statement Examples

- *“I’m so weird for thinking this.”*
- *“I should be stronger by now.”*
- *“What’s wrong with me?!”*
- *“Other people can handle this- why can’t I?”*
- *“I’m pathetic for feeling like this.”*
- *“If anyone knew my thoughts, they’d think I’m crazy.”*
- *“I always mess things up.”*
- *“I don’t deserve to feel upset- others have it worse.”*
- *“I’m weak for needing help.”*
- *“These thoughts mean I’m a bad person.”*

Appendix B

Common Scenario Examples

- **Random thought in class**
“What if I suddenly shouted something embarrassing right now?”
- **Friendship worry**
“My friends are whispering... maybe they’re talking about me.”
- **Test anxiety**
“If I fail this exam, my whole life will be ruined.”
- **Appearance worry**
“Everyone’s staring at me - I must look awful today.”
- **Family argument replay**
“I shouldn’t have said that to my parents, now they’ll never trust me again.”
- **Sleep-time thoughts**
“What if I never fall asleep and I’m exhausted tomorrow?”
- **Performance worry**
“I’ll probably mess up my lines in the school play and everyone will laugh.”
- **Health-related thought**
“I’ve got a headache, what if it means something really serious?”
- **Regret loop**
“Why did I say that in class? Everyone must think I’m stupid.”
- **General intrusive thought**
“What if I hurt someone without meaning to?”

Appendix C

Examples of Sticky Thoughts

- *I'll embarrass myself if I answer in class.*
- *Nobody likes me.*
- *I'm not clever enough.*
- *Everyone is judging how I look.*
- *If I make a mistake, people will think I'm stupid.*
- *I'll never be able to do this.*
- *Something bad is going to happen.*
- *I'm not as good as everyone else.*
- *They probably don't want me around.*
- *I can't cope with this stress.*
- *People will laugh at me.*
- *Things will never get better.*