



# Healthy Minds Plan



## Aims/overall plan

You may need more than one session to cover this adequately. Add props wherever you can to help them to visualise this and therefore understand better.

1. **Introduction:** Show that, as food affects our physical health, so what we think, our self-talk, affects both our physical and mental health and well-being.
2. **Identify** our self-talk; whatever goes round and round in our minds feeds 'thought trees'.
3. **Reprogramme:** What influences our thoughts? To see how memories, misunderstandings and self-image affect our feelings and how we can change that.
4. **Relaunch:** How can we keep our thoughts healthy?

Select the activities from each section that will work best with your group.

## Key verse

Proverbs 4:23

## Bible verses

Proverbs 4:20-27

I Samuel 18:5-16; 20:30-33

## Resources

Props for food game

Paper plates at least 2 each, or plain drawing paper; pens etc

Other props to help visualise the points

## 1. Starter games

Charades

Take it in turns to mime something they do to stay physically healthy. The group has to guess what they are doing.

Celebrity Jungle game

Create a food challenge game based on the Celebrity Jungle bush tucker trial idea.

Find a variety of foods that are both appealing and unappealing, disguise some and make up names for them. Include food that looks good but could be harmful.

Encourage them to try anything that won't harm them. This is a long game but fun!

***Beware of food allergies and cultural sensitivities.***

Opening discussion

- What are your favourite foods?
- Have 2 plates of food or pictures of food – one good and one bad.  
Which of these most appeal? Which are better for you?

**Discuss**

What might happen if you ate unhealthy food?

Some food looks and tastes good, but it is contaminated with bugs such as salmonella, so we get food poisoning. If chicken or egg dishes are left at room temperature for too long, they still taste good but can make us ill.

Feeding our bodies is obvious – what about feeding our minds?

In what ways do we feed our minds?

Can feeding our minds negative thoughts make us ill? Doctors tell us that it can!

What do you think your brain looks like? Well parts of it look like miniature trees.

**Show the video clip** or explain self-talk and how our thoughts look like miniature trees.

Dr Leaf | Anatomy of Thought Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dirU-zlYhho> 2 minute video clip

We all talk to ourselves. We have around 30,000 thoughts a day racing through our brains.

Some thoughts are gone in a flash. Others go round and round in our minds repeatedly.

These are the ones that make us into who we are. The more we choose to dwell on a thought, memory or problem, the more we feed that particular thought tree. Some trees will be positive, some negative and others neutral. Each type of thought, triggers certain chemicals. This will affect our mood, attitude and health, both physically and mentally.

**2. Identify** our self-talk; whatever goes round and round in our minds feeds ‘thought trees’.

**Activity:** Develop either the tree idea or the food on plates idea. Same questions for either.

**Trees**

Picture your thoughts as miniature trees. Draw some trees to represent different things you think about. Write or draw your different thoughts on different trees. Keep the negative thoughts away from the positive ones.

**Food for your mind**

Give out at least 2 paper plates each, one for good thoughts and one for bad.

Ask them what thoughts go round and round in their minds. Tell them to write or draw them on their circles, especially the negative ones.

Invite them to share if they feel comfortable to do so.

What food do you put into your mind?

What drags you down or pulls you up?

**3 Reprogramme:** What influences our thoughts? To see how memories, misunderstandings and self-image affect our feelings and how we can change that.

Relate some stories to prompt discussion on these.

**a) Memories**

Shrink memories. Something that was a threat to you when young may no longer be so but the fear remains. A frightening incident with an animal perhaps.

**b) Misunderstandings**

Look out for misunderstandings – try to see the ‘bigger picture’.

Bethany’s friends were planning to go shopping without her!

What different feelings could she have about that and why?

**c) Self-image**

Many ideas are circulated about what gives us value as a person. Such as our body image. If we believe that we have to be the 'perfect weight' to be happy for example, we will always be unhappy. Why? And who has the right to decide these things for us? Because whoever it is, has power over us, so we should choose carefully!

Simon had been bullied at primary school and despised himself as a 'wimp' until one day someone said 'you have a good heart', because he was always doing things for people. He had been basing his self-image on the lies. He began to see himself differently.

Take another look at your trees/plates.

Ask – is this thought good for me? Is this a healthy or poisonous or a mix?

Decide whether to let this thought tree stay, grow, prune it, or uproot it.

Whatever you decide to do with it will affect the neural circuitry of your brain. If you accept it your brain will grow more branches. If you reject it, it should eventually disappear.

**Suggested Antidotes to harmful self-talk**

Poisons require antidotes. How could you complete these thoughts in a positive way?

1. I would like .....but .....
2. I don't like .....but .....
3. It's okay to make mistakes because .....
4. I'm different to other people which is .....

Think of some appropriate antidotes for your own toxic thoughts.

**4. Relaunch: How can we keep our thoughts healthy?**

- 'Guard the gates of your mind'. What are these? How can we guard them?
- Have a box of treasures with items and quotes such as Bible verses that have good memories or encouragements.
- Look for a 'bigger picture' to help dispel misunderstandings
- Choose your own attitudes, don't just react to others. See Harris story
- Forgiving people and praying about things that hurt us as they arise.
- Good social media if you use it.

What else can we do to keep our mental health good?

Being active; creative; connecting with others – face to face if possible; new interests

**Reflection time**

Long before doctors started to tell us that our thoughts can affect our health the Bible said this. Read from Proverbs 4:20-23. There is a paraphrase of this in the leaders notes.

**Prayer ideas**

Lead a 'thank you' prayer activity

Pray for healing for memories if needed

Ask God to show you something you say to yourself that he would like to change