

RealQuestions RealSolutions

ChristianFamilySolutions.org

We asked teens to submit their most pressing questions about mental health and wellness.

The serious submissions we received reveal the serious state of youth mental health.

The U.S. Surgeon General has sounded the alarm with a [mental health alert](#):

We need to rally around our young people.

We can start by listening to their questions.

How should I deal with sudden thoughts of sadness and depression that I may have out of nowhere?

By Melissa Silbaugh, MSW, APSW, School-Based Therapist, Christian Family Solutions

Thanks for asking that question. It's good to hear that you want to confront your negative thoughts and deal with them.

Here are my questions back to you:

How flexible is your mind?

Do you believe that every thought is true?

Believe it or not, God created your mind to be very flexible. You have some control over the thoughts that enter your mind, and you can choose what to do with them.

Here's an analogy for how you can take control. Imagine your mind is like an Etch-a-sketch – that old-school drawing toy. An Etch-a-sketch has those two knobs you move back and forth to make lines in the sand on the screen. To clear the Etch-a-sketch screen, you shake it up, and the lines disappear. The darker the lines, the more vigorously you have to shake the Etch-a-sketch to erase them.

Now imagine that your thoughts related to depression or sadness are like lines you are drawing on the Etch-a-sketch. The more you move the knobs back and forth, the thicker and darker the lines get.

You'll notice you'll have to do lots of shaking to remove the darker lines. Your thoughts are exactly like that. The more we think on a thought, the deeper that thought gets, and the harder it is to clear it away. AND the easier it is to keep thinking about it!

Take a look at your relationship with your thoughts. Is your mind flexible? Are you believing every thought to be true? We have a lot of thoughts that pop in and out of our minds, automatically. We can treat our thoughts as temporary visitors and picture them however we like. We can treat them like that Etch-a-sketch, or like sand gently falling through our fingers, or like leaves going down a stream.

In Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, we use something called a Thought Record to help individuals manage the depressive thoughts, then identify reality-based thoughts that encourage positivity.

Some questions to ponder that produce reality-based thoughts:

“How likely is it that my worry will come true?”

“What facts in my environment prove this thought to be true?”

“What facts in my environment prove this thought to be false?”

“How about I will visit that thought later when I am feeling less sad?”

Our minds are full of thoughts. Practicing these thinking skills can help you turn negative thoughts around, so they don't grab hold and take up permanent residence in your mind.

Christian Family Solutions has a team of professional counselors deployed to schools, partnering with school staff to offer clinical level services to youth.

- **Clinical assessment to uncover the source of the hurt and create a treatment plan**
- **Sessions with an experienced clinician on site or through telehealth**
- **Access to higher levels of care if needed to address more serious concerns**
- **The unconditional love of Christ to build trust and offer hope beyond healing**

ChristianFamilySolutions.org | 800-438-1772