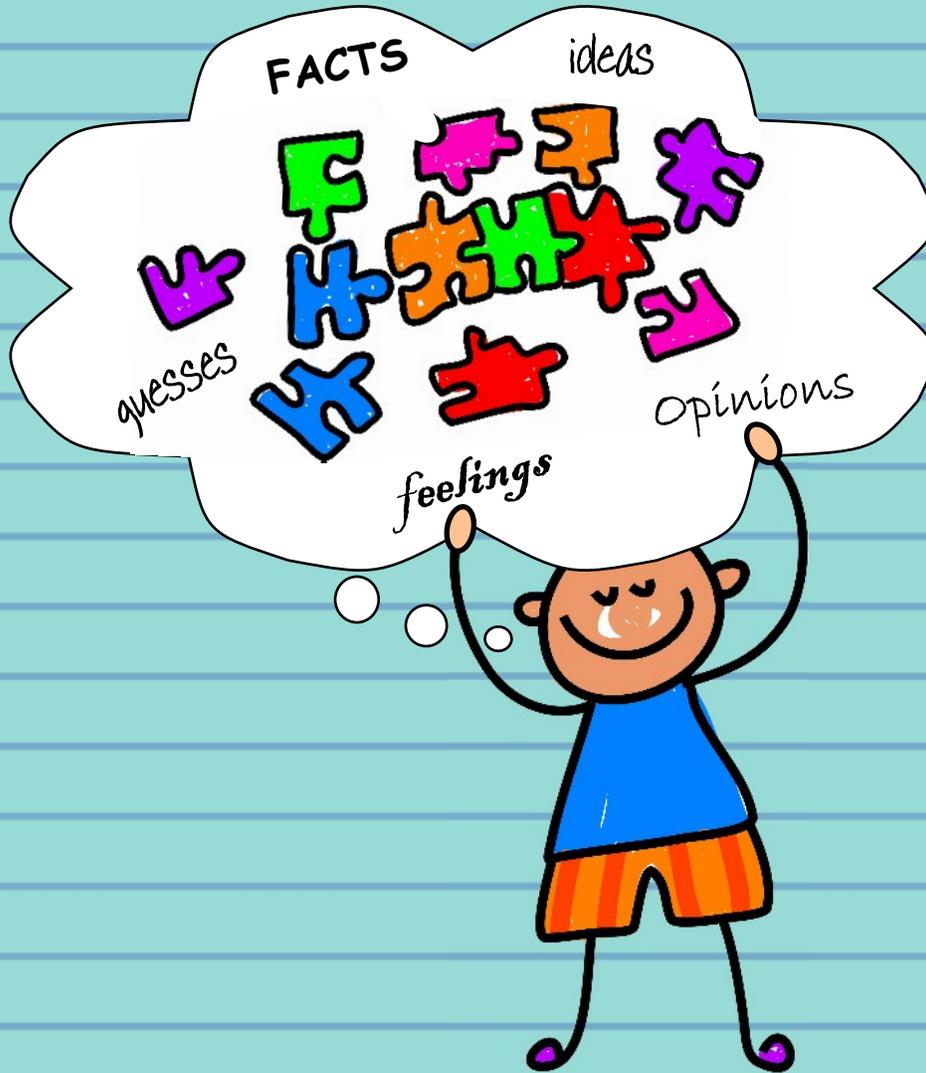


# Be a Mastermind!



A **CBT activity** to support:

- Calm Thinking
- Cognitive Flexibility
- Mastery of Emotions

Adapted from

Let's THINK About Feelings: Child-Friendly Tools for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

# Be a MASTERMIND!

## Rationale:

An important component of CBT is learning

- 1) to distinguish between **facts** and **perceptions** (*beliefs, opinions, guesses, etc.*) and
- 2) to then evaluate those beliefs, opinions and guesses: which are helpful and which are not so helpful?

The ability to make these distinctions sets the groundwork for developing **cognitive flexibility**: the ability to “master your mind” and choose the best, most helpful ways of thinking.

## Application/Treatment Modality:

In-session activity, plus home assignment.

NOTE: This activity is intended for use by therapists in conjunction with other CBT interventions. This activity should be preceded by, and followed up with, other interventions that help clients to accurately identify emotions, recognize thinking errors and automatic negative thoughts, and change unhelpful thoughts and behavior patterns.

## Goals:

With the home assignment, children can:

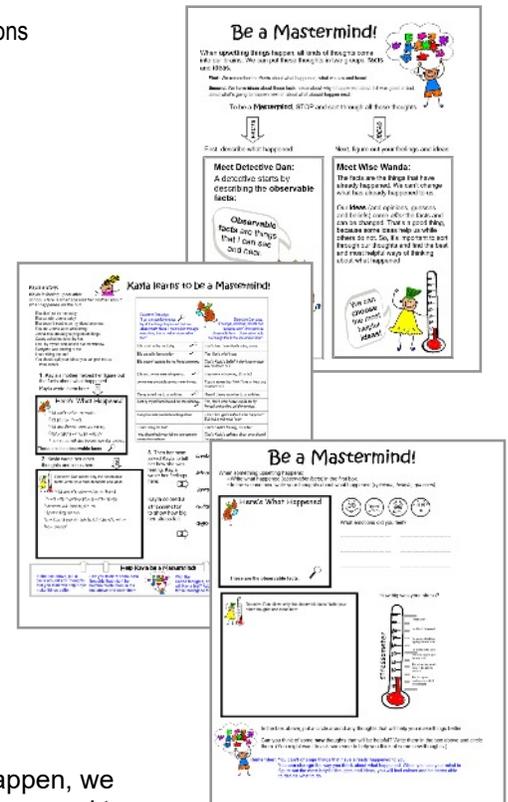
- identify a stressful or challenging situation in their lives
- identify the emotions that they experienced (and the intensity of the emotions)
- describe the facts of what happened
- identify their subsequent thoughts/perceptions (opinions, beliefs, guesses, etc.)
- evaluate their thoughts/perceptions: are they helpful or not?

## Materials:

Be a Mastermind! (Page 2)

Be a Mastermind example (Kayla Learns to Be a Mastermind) (Page 3)

Be a Mastermind! home assignment form (Page 4)



1. Review **Be a Mastermind!** (Page 2). When upsetting things happen, we experience stress. We can't change things that have already happened to us, but the way that we **think** about what happened has a lot to do with how much stress we feel and how well we cope with the stress.
2. Using a copy of **Kayla Learns to Be a Mastermind** (page 3):
  - Begin by reading Kayla's story.
  - Then read the commentary by Detective Dan explaining the difference between the observable facts and Kayla's opinions, beliefs, guesses and feelings.
  - Next, go over the 3-step process that Kayla's mother uses to help her sort through what happened and her subsequent thoughts and feelings. This is an opportunity to talk about automatic negative thoughts and common thinking errors and about the problem-solving process.
  - Finally, help the child brainstorm for other, more helpful, ways that Kayla can
    - a) think about what has happened and
    - b) move forward with realistic and helpful plans in mind.

Complete the page as directed in the bottom section. Save the completed form for the next step.

3. Give the child a copy of the **Be a Mastermind** home assignment form (page 4.) Ask that the child take the form home, and when a challenging situation comes along, complete the form. It may be helpful to review the completed copy of page 3 (**Kayla Learns to Be a Mastermind**) with a parent or other support person and give the page to the child to take home as as a reference.

4. When the form is returned (in whatever stage of completion), it can then be use as a springboard for identifying and strengthening key CBT skills.

# Be a Mastermind!

When **upsetting things** happen, all kinds of thoughts come into our minds. We can put these thoughts in two groups: **facts** and **ideas**.



**First:** We remember the **facts** about what happened: what we saw and what we *heard*.

**Second:** We have **ideas** about what happened: ideas about why it happened, about if it was good or bad, about what's going to happen next or about what *should* happen next.

To be a **Mastermind**, STOP and sort through all those thoughts.



First, describe what happened:



Next, figure out your ideas and feelings.

## Meet Detective Dan:

A detective starts by describing the **observable facts**:

**Observable facts** are things that I can see and hear.



**Facts** are different from  
*ideas • opinions*

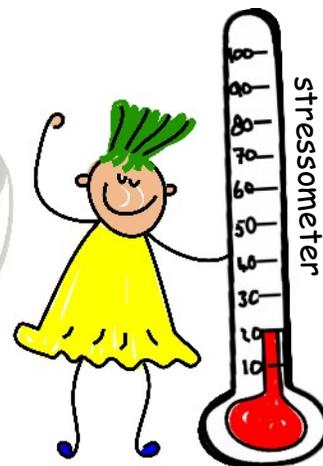
*guesses • BELIEFS • feelings*

## Meet Wise Wanda:

The **facts** are the things that have already happened. We **can't change** what has already happened to us.

Our **ideas** (and opinions, guesses beliefs and feelings) come *after* the facts and **can change**. That's a good thing, because some ideas help us while others do not.

When we **choose** the most helpful **ideas**, we can stay calm and make wise decisions.



To be a **Mastermind**,

**Start** by describing the facts.

**Then** sort through all your other ideas to find the best and most helpful way of thinking about what happened.

**Kayla's Story:**



Kayla is feeling upset after school. Here is what she told her mother about what happened on the bus:

Ella didn't sit by me today.  
 Ella sat with Jenna today.  
 Ella doesn't want to be my friend anymore.  
 Ella and Jenna were whispering.  
 Jenna was probably saying mean things.  
 Casey asked me to sit by her.  
 I sat by myself and looked out the window.  
 Everyone was looking at me.  
 I hate riding the bus!  
 You should quit your job so you can pick me up from school.

1. Kayla's mother helped her figure out the facts about what happened.

Kayla wrote them here:



**Here's What Happened**

Ella didn't sit by me today.  
 Ella sat by Jenna.  
 Ella and Jenna were whispering.  
 Casey asked me to sit with her.  
 I sat by myself and looked out the window.

These are the **observable facts**.

2. Kayla wrote her other thoughts and ideas here:



Detective Dan allows only the observable facts! Write your other thoughts and ideas

Ella doesn't want to be my friend.  
 Jenna was probably saying mean things.  
 Everyone was looking at me.  
 I hate riding the bus.  
 Mom should quit her job so she can pick me up from school!

# Kayla learns to be a Mastermind!

Detective Dan says: "I put a magnifying glass by all the things Kayla said that are <b>observable facts</b> . I drew a line through everything that is <b>not</b> an observable fact."		Detective Dan says: "Feelings, opinions, beliefs and guesses aren't the same as observable facts. Observable facts are things that I can see and/or hear."
Ella didn't sit by me today.		<i>That's true. I saw Kayla sitting alone.</i>
Ella sat with Jenna today.		<i>Yep, that's what I saw</i>
<del>Ella doesn't want to be my friend anymore.</del>		<i>That's Kayla's <b>belief</b>. I didn't see or hear any evidence of it.</i>
Ella and Jenna were whispering..		<i>They were whispering, it's a fact.</i>
<del>Jenna was probably saying mean things.</del>		<i>Kayla's <b>guessing</b>. I didn't see or hear any evidence of it.</i>
Casey asked me to sit with her.		<i>I heard Casey invite her to sit with her.</i>
I sat by myself and looked out the window.		<i>Yes, that's what I saw: Kayla sat by herself and looked out the window.</i>
<del>Everyone was probably looking at me.</del>		<i>This is her <b>guess</b> about what happened. But that is not what I saw.</i>
<del>I hate riding the bus!</del>		<i>That's Kayla's <b>feeling</b>, not a fact.</i>
<del>You should quit your job so you can pick me up from school.</del>		<i>That's Kayla's <b>opinion</b> about what should happen next.</i>

3. Then her mom asked Kayla to tell her how she was feeling. Kayla wrote her feelings here:



Kayla colored a stressometer to show how big her stress felt.



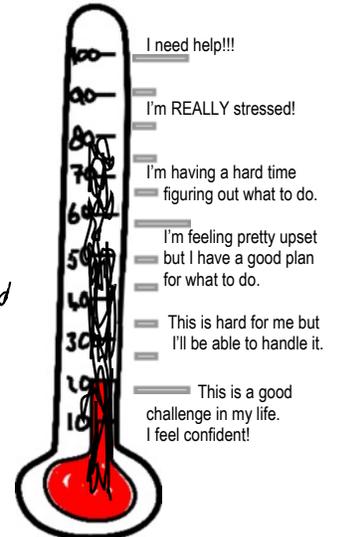
*confused*

*left out*

*lonely*

*embarrassed*

*angry*



## Help Kayla be a Mastermind!

In the box above, put a circle around any thoughts that you think will help Kayla make things better.

Can you think of some **new** thoughts that might be helpful? Write them in the box above and circle them.



With the circled thoughts, how will Kayla feel? Add those feelings to the list.

With the circled thoughts, how big would Kayla stress feel?

# Be a Mastermind!

When something upsetting happens:

- Write what happened (*observable facts*) in the first box.
- In the second box, write your thoughts about what happened (*opinions, beliefs, guesses*).



## Here's What Happened



These are the **observable facts**.



What emotions did you feel?

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Detective Dan allows only the observable facts! Write your other thoughts and ideas here:

How big was your stress?



In the box above, put a circle around any thoughts that will help you make things better.

Can you think of some **new** thoughts that will be helpful? Write them in the box above and circle them. (You might want to ask someone to help you brainstorm for ideas.)

**Remember:** You can't change things that have already happened to you. You can change the way you think about what happened. When you use your mind to figure out the most helpful thoughts and ideas, you will feel calmer and be better able to decide what to do.