

“Magic Detective” Game

The following imaginative play helps children learn and understand that unhelpful thoughts can be tested and often turn out to be untrue.

Younger age groups thrive on imagination. So, by making it fun and non-threatening, we can show them they can safely “investigate” their fears and thoughts.

Try out the following steps with your child (client). Modify the following language as appropriate to the child’s age, likes, and dislikes:

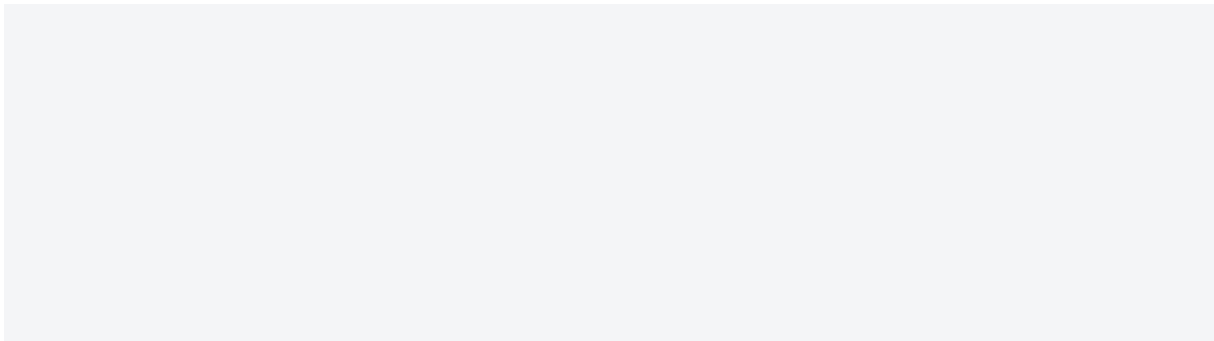
1. Mystery thought:

What thoughts are causing you an issue?

Think of a ‘silly’ thought you have, like ‘Monsters are under the bed!’

How real does it feel?” Super real, sort of real, or not real?”

Ask the child to draw or write down their thoughts:

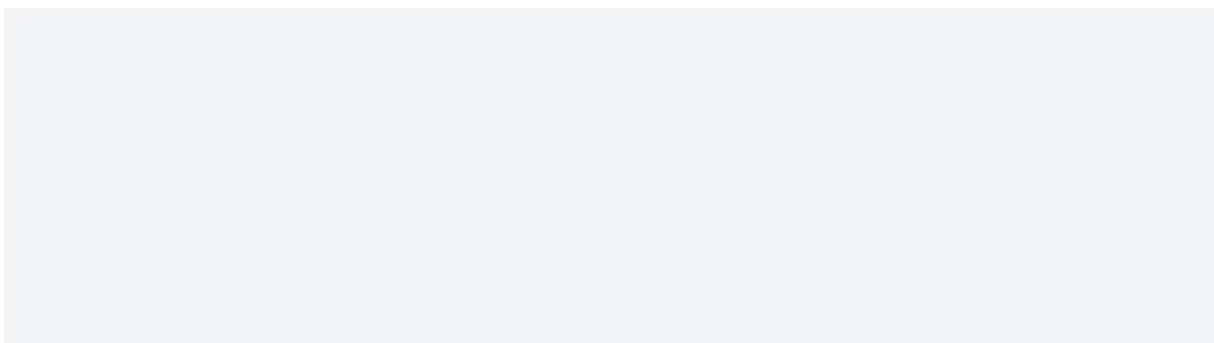


2. Detective plan:

Pretend to be detectives, exploring what is there.

Let’s be detectives! What can we do to find out if it’s real? Maybe we can look under the bed with a flashlight?

Ask the child to draw or write down their thoughts:

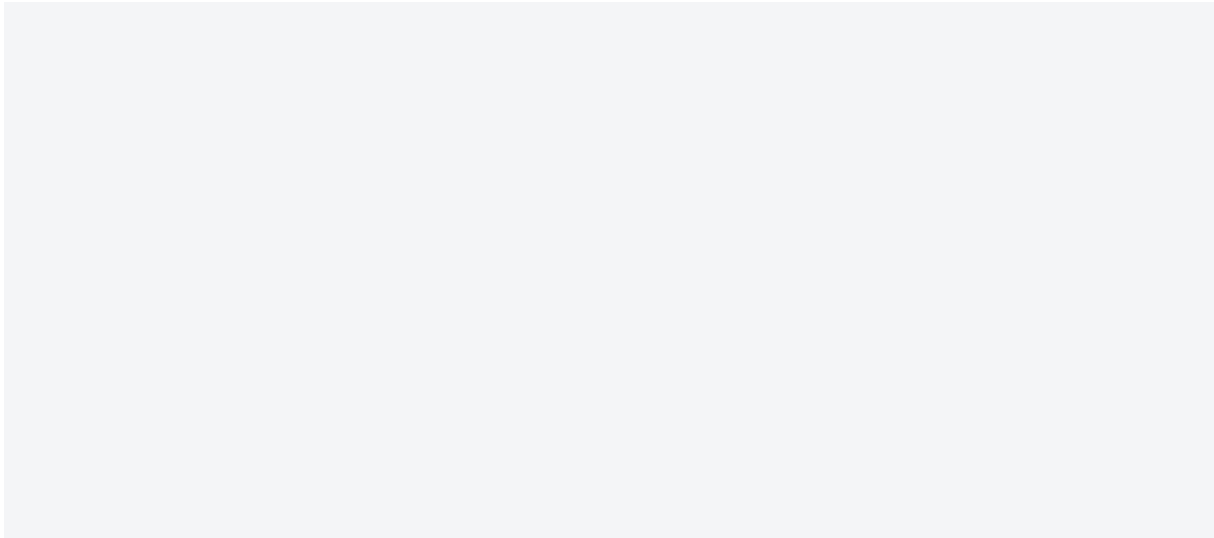


3. Guess what:

Discuss what you might find:

Before we search, what do you think we'll find? Big monsters? Or maybe something else?

Ask the child to draw or write down their thoughts:



4. Magic search:

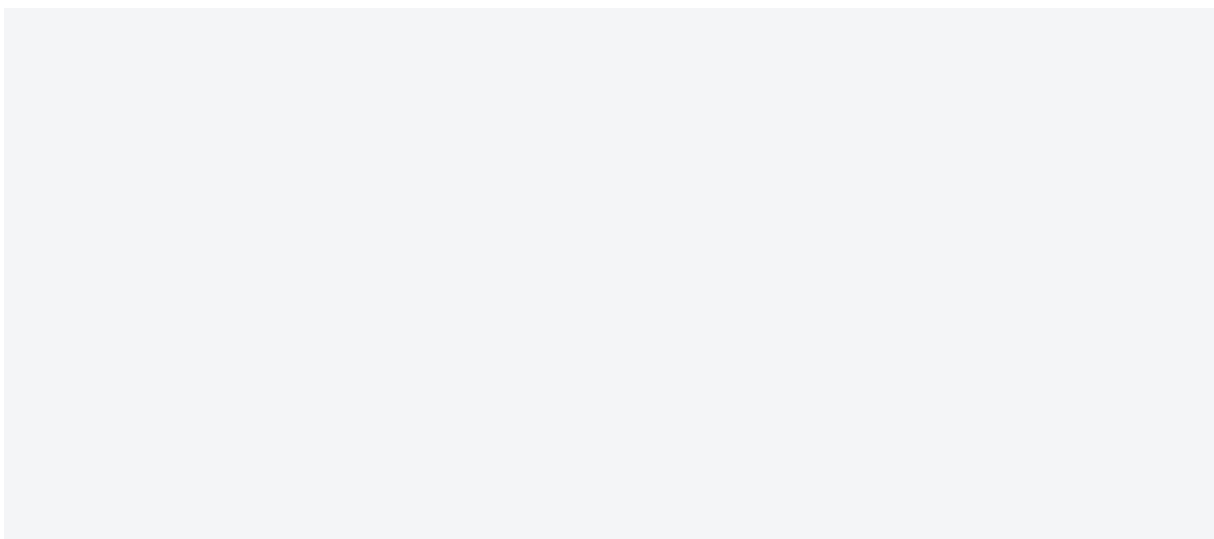
Perform the experiment together, looking for 'evidence.'

5. Surprise find:

Capture what was real rather than imagined.

"What did we find under the bed? Was it the same as you thought?"

Ask the child to draw or write down their thoughts:

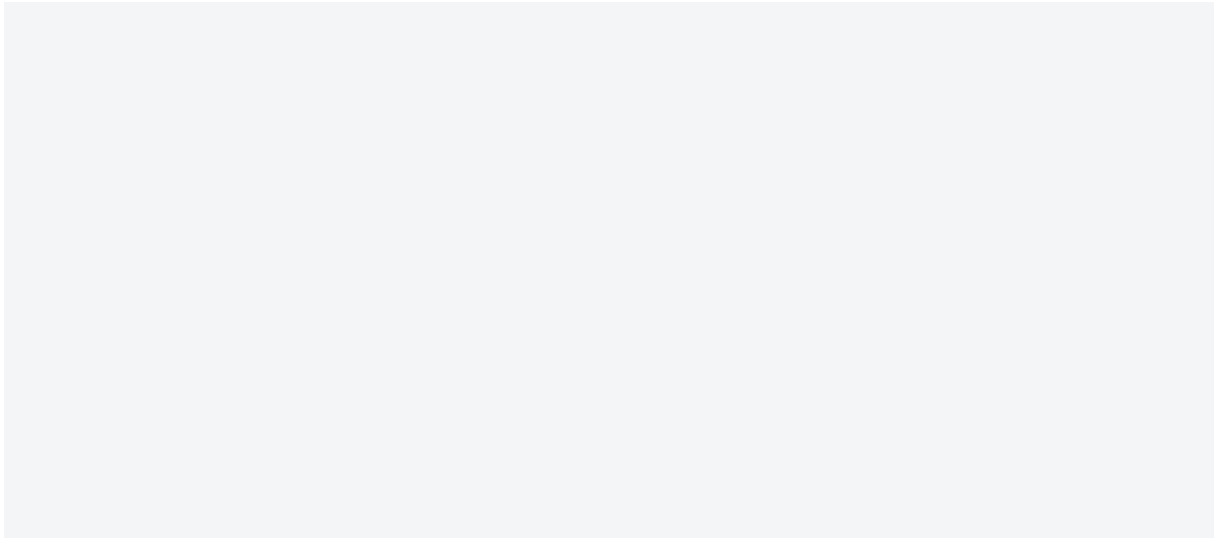


6. Mystery solved:

Are their initial thoughts still causing an issue?

“Now, how real does our first thought feel? Super real, sort of real, or not real?”

Ask the child to draw or write down their thoughts:



Useful references

- Stallard, P. (2019). *Thinking Good, Feeling Better: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook for Adolescents and Young Adults* (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Stallard, P. (2021). *A clinician's guide to CBT for children to young adults: a companion to think good, feel good and thinking good, feeling better* / Paul Stallard. (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.

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