Worst Case Scenario

There are thoughts in our heads that creep in when we least expect it. They can make us worried, scared and paranoid. We call these thoughts our **“Worse Case Scenario Thoughts” (WCST)**. These thoughts influence our feelings and behaviors, can make us believe things that are not true, or make us feel bad about ourselves. WCSTs lead you to think you know what someone is thinking and although these thoughts can feel true, they almost never are.

**How does this relate to bullying?** Relational bullying is often the result of a misunderstanding between friends. These misunderstandings usually happen because someone acted on their “worst case scenario thoughts”. When this happens they may react by gossiping, excluding or withdrawing their friendship.

The best thing you can do is work on recognizing your WCSTs. Once you understand that the thoughts in your head may not be true, you will be better able to change those thoughts into:

* Something positive
* A different perspective
* Something more reasonable

**GOAL:** The following activity will help you spot the WCST, understand how these thoughts can affect someone, and how to change the thought into something more positive.

*Read each statement and identify the WCST, the feeling or action that might happen because of the WCST, and then change the thought into something more positive, a different perspective, or into something more reasonable.*

**EXAMPLE**

**1) Jessica just ignored me in the hallway. She must be mad at me!**

WCST: She must be mad at me!

FEELINGS & ACTIONS: Upset, worried, might ignore Jessica now since she ignored her first.

CHANGE: There is no reason for her to be mad at me, it was loud in the hallway, maybe she didn’t hear me.

**2) My friends are whispering to each other and looking at me. They must be talking about me!**

WCST:

FEELINGS & ACTIONS:

CHANGE:

**3) Today, every time I try to talk to Lori, she doesn’t say much. She can be a real brat.**

WCST:

FEELINGS & ACTIONS:

CHANGE:

**4) Ashley is mad at me and now I can tell everyone is looking at me. She must have told everyone what happened.**

WCST:

FEELINGS & ACTIONS:

CHANGE:

***Now that you know what the “Worst Case Scenario Thought” looks like, applying this to your own thoughts will help you catch the thought in action.***

1) List two times in the past week you have had a WCST in your head

1)

2)

2) Sometimes people ask, “*Well what if they really were mad, or whispering about me, or ignoring me on purpose, the voice is right then, right?”* Not exactly. The feelings and actions that happen after WCST are almost never positive. These thoughts can make us feel bad and almost always makes the situation worse.

Think about the feelings and actions that followed each of your WCST listed above and write them down.

1)

2)

3) Why can these thoughts and feelings make the situation worse and why are they not always “right”?

4) Now, change your WCST into something positive, a different perspective, or something more reasonable.

1)

2)

**Below are answers given by students who completed this activity.**

**2) My friends are whispering to each other and looking at me. They must be talking about me!**

**WCST**: They must be talking about me; I must have done something wrong; They are saying mean things about me; They are making fun of me

**FEELINGS & ACTIONS**: Despair, pain, heartache, sad, mad, worried, paranoid, upset, confused, anxious, worried something is wrong with me or I did something wrong. **CHANGE**: “I am just going to ask”; “I didn’t do anything so what would they be talking about”; “They were looking at someone else near me, not at me”; “They are complimenting my outfit”

**3) Today, every time I try to talk to Lori, she doesn’t say much. She can be a real brat.**

WCST: Someone lied and told her something that wasn’t true and now she is mad at me; She must not like me anymore.

FEELINGS & ACTIONS: Sad, angry, confused, judged, annoyed, excluded, what did I do to her?

CHANGE: “I need to ask her about it”; “I will tell her how I am feeling so she knows”; “Maybe something is bothering her. I should ask if she is okay”; “Maybe she is having a bad day”;

**4) Ashley is mad at me and now I can tell everyone is looking at me. She must have told everyone what happened.**

WCST: She told secrets that were not supposed to be told; Everyone must hate me!; Now everyone is going to be on her side; Everyone knows something about me; Everyone is laughing behind my back

FEELINGS & ACTIONS:

CHANGE: Insecure, judged, scared, embarrassed, confused, mad, self-conscious, helpless

**Below are answers given by students who completed this activity.**

***Now that you know what the “Worst Case Scenario Thought” looks like, applying this to your own thoughts will help you catch the thought in action.***

1) List two times in the past week you have had a WCST in your head

“My friend not texting me back because she might think I am annoying.”

“I thought a subtweet was about me.”

“When I was at lunch my friend sat away from me. She must be mad at me”

“She is talking about me.”

“Everyone is looking at me.”

“My friend isn’t talking to me as much, she must be angry.”

“When my friend was mad at me, I thought everyone else must be too.”

“They all stopped talking when I showed up. They must have been talking about me.”

3) Why can these thoughts and feelings make the situation worse and why are they not always “right”?

“You're jumping to conclusions and you don't even know if it’s true or not.”

“Because they might make you approach the situation in a negative way.”

“It makes everything worse because it’s just what you've seen, not really what you know for sure.”

“They lead to you have a more negative outlook on life.”

“They make us stress out and worry about "what if's" all day.”

“They maybe you worry and maybe even act negatively for no reason.”

“Can lead us to hurt someone back. They are wan you are assuming, have no solid proof that it was towards you.”

“They cause you to be paranoid or start a whole new problem.”