

Taking Control of My Illness

One morning, I woke up and couldn't breathe. I was having a bad asthma attack. My chest felt so tight, I thought I was going to die. It felt like forever until the ambulance came.

In the hospital, my parents made all the decisions. After I got home, they acted as if I would have an attack at any moment. I felt angry and argued a lot with them. I even stopped taking my meds at times, and went back to playing football at the rec center. When I started to wheeze, I played through it. I just wanted to be like the other kids.

I got mad at my coach when he pulled me aside. He said he was worried about my wheezing. But he was also worried about how I was feeling on the inside. He said it's normal to want to act like nothing's wrong, but he wanted me to talk to my school counselor first.



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The counselor taught me that my thoughts and feelings about my asthma can affect how I act when I'm mad or upset. She drew a triangle on a piece of paper. On one side, she asked me to write down my thoughts about my asthma. On the other side, I wrote down my feelings. And at the bottom, I wrote down what I normally do when I have those thoughts and feelings.

For example, under “thoughts,” I wrote: *I am different from my friends because of my asthma.* Under “feelings,” I wrote: *I feel angry and alone.* As a result, I learned that I stop taking meds and get mad at others when I am reminded that I am different.

My counselor said that now that I know my thoughts, feelings and actions, I can make better choices. Together, we made a “stop and think” list of better ways to act when I'm feeling different or angry about my asthma.

Now I know that stopping my meds is not a good idea — and that there are other things I can do and people I can talk to when I'm feeling mad or alone.

Fill out this triangle.

STEP
1

What thoughts do you have about your illness?



STEP
2

How do you feel when you have these thoughts?



STEP
3



How do you act when you have these thoughts and feelings?
Do you get mad, sad, or withdraw from others?

Look at your actions above.

Make a list, below, of what you can do that might be better or more helpful.



- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____
- ◆ _____