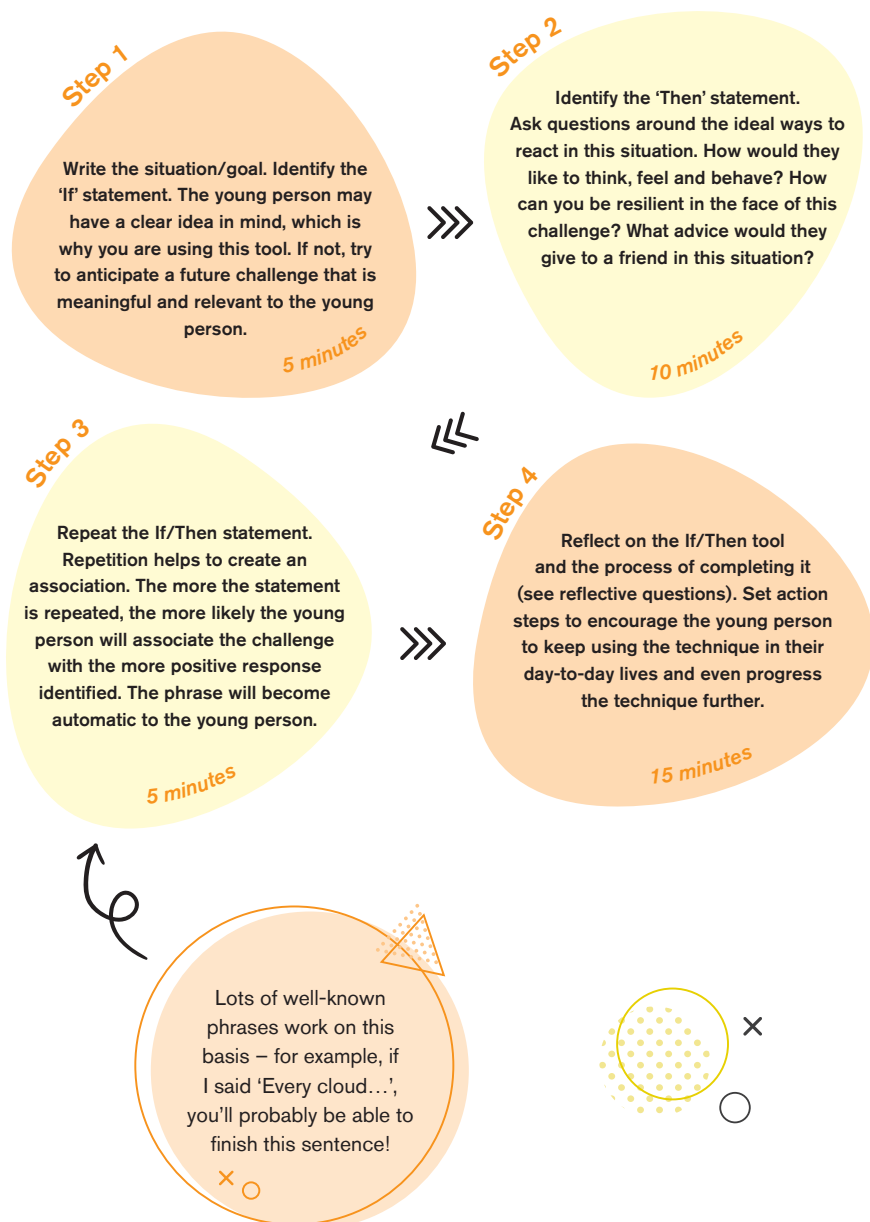# IF/THEN TOOL

This simple technique is a great follow-on from the goal-setting activity on page 16, or it can be used as a stand-alone tool.

Originating from behaviour change psychology, the 'If/Then' technique is an ideal tool to use when there are perceived barriers in the way of achieving a goal or worries about an upcoming situation.

The 'If/Then' tool helps young people to use their strengths to plan how to be resilient when facing potential challenges. Eventually, with practice and repetition, the link between the 'If' statement and the 'Then' statement will become strong enough to help you change how you react.

Planning ahead
Problem-solving
Positive mind-set
Resilience

⟫⟫⟫ Using the If/Then tool *(20–35 minutes)*

Step 1

Write the situation/goal. Identify the 'If' statement. The young person may have a clear idea in mind, which is why you are using this tool. If not, try to anticipate a future challenge that is meaningful and relevant to the young person.

5 minutes

Step 2

Identify the 'Then' statement. Ask questions around the ideal ways to react in this situation. How would they like to think, feel and behave? How can you be resilient in the face of this challenge? What advice would they give to a friend in this situation?

10 minutes

Step 3

Repeat the If/Then statement. Repetition helps to create an association. The more the statement is repeated, the more likely the young person will associate the challenge with the more positive response identified. The phrase will become automatic to the young person.

5 minutes

Step 4

Reflect on the If/Then tool and the process of completing it (see reflective questions). Set action steps to encourage the young person to keep using the technique in their day-to-day lives and even progress the technique further.

15 minutes

Lots of well-known phrases work on this basis – for example, if I said 'Every cloud…', you'll probably be able to finish this sentence!

Top Tip!
Maintain positive language. Initially, young people might associate the If statement with negative reactions, for example, 'If I feel like giving up, then I will stay in bed'. Instead, try to encourage them to reframe with a more positive lens, eg, 'If I feel like giving up, then I will think: I am up for this challenge; I will feel excited; I will smile, breathe and relax my shoulders'. For more information on reframing, revisit the solution-focused techniques on page 9.
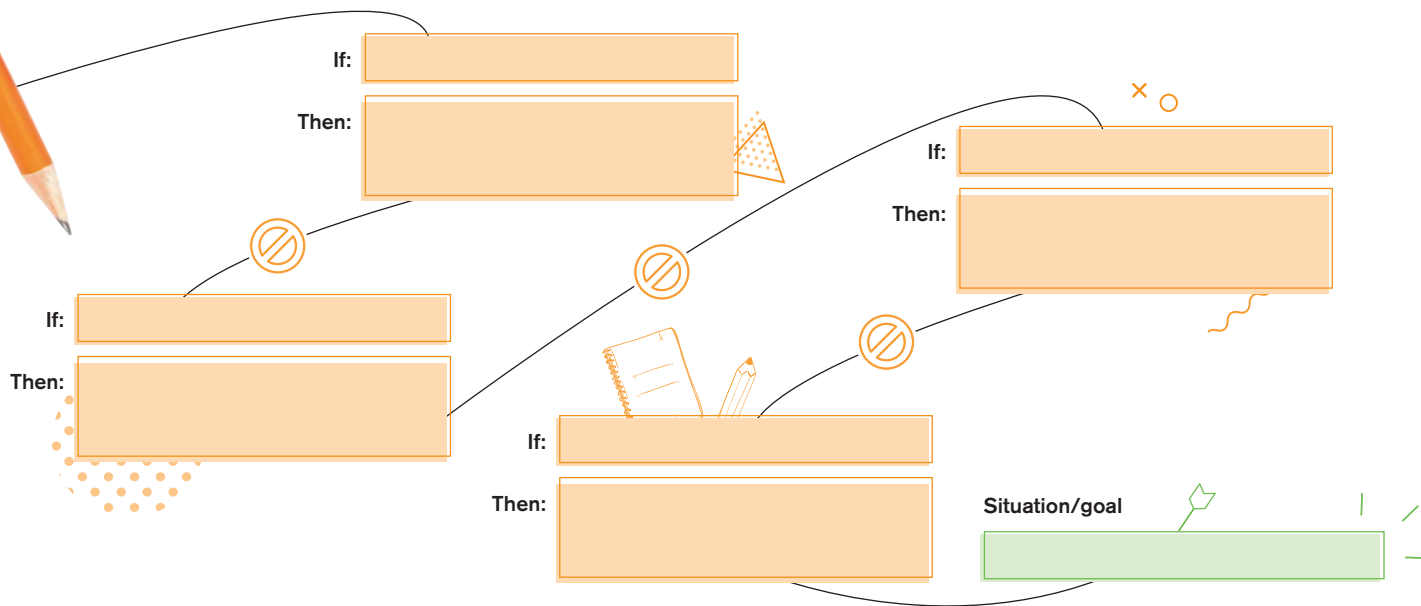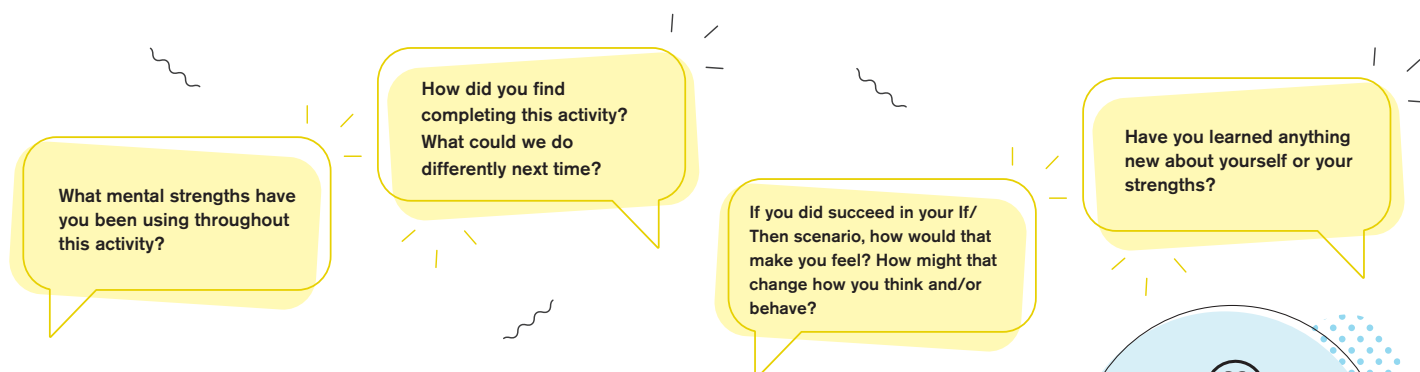
If/then…

Top Tip!
Try to relate the If statement to: 1) things that are within the young person's control (vs outside of their control) and 2) process goals (vs outcome goals).

>>>> If/Then tool

If:

Then:

If:

Then:

If:

Then:

If:

Then:

If:

Then:

Situation/goal

>>>> Reflection questions on the tool

What mental strengths have you been using throughout this activity?

How did you find completing this activity? What could we do differently next time?

If you did succeed in your If/Then scenario, how would that make you feel? How might that change how you think and/or behave?

Have you learned anything new about yourself or your strengths?

Try counting backwards from 100, subtracting seven each time!
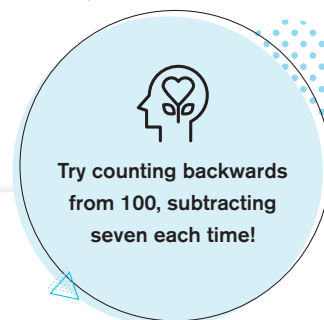
>>>> Action plan

Eat, sleep, If/Then, repeat!

Identify strategies to help the young person to remember to repeat the statement, eg, can they provide themselves with any visual prompts? How about a post-it note above their door handle?

To advance this technique, ask the young person if they can incorporate some imagery around their If/Then statement. Ask them to close their eyes while repeating their statement and imagine themselves responding to the If statement in line with their Then responses as clearly and vividly as they can – what do they notice about themselves? How do they look? How do they feel?

Remember to check in with the young person and revisit the If/Then statement after the situation has happened.

- How did it go?
- Would they change the way they created the If/Then statement for the future?

To do...