



# Using My Mind Star™

My Mind Star is designed to be used with young people who are experiencing poor mental health, including low mood, stress, anxiety, anger, sleeplessness or self-harming, or who have a diagnosed mental health condition. It is intended for use in early intervention services that aim to prevent the onset or development of a mental health condition wherever possible, and to fill the gap in mental health services before one is diagnosed. This Star may also be used to support young people in managing a mental health condition.

Although aimed at those aged 12–21, My Mind Star has been piloted with those younger than 12 and over 21 and it is a decision for workers and managers whether it is the right tool for a particular service, client group or individual.

My Mind Star resources consist of:

- My Mind Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan for completion by workers and young people
- My Mind Star User Guide, with both brief visual scales and detailed scale descriptions and a detailed description of the Journey of Change
- Short, illustrated Scales and Flashcards for use with young people
- An illustrated summary of the Journey of Change
- This Guidance for Workers
- A web application for online completion at [www.staronline.org.uk](http://www.staronline.org.uk)
- A Development Report, describing the development process and presenting the pilot findings.

My Mind Star was developed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise in collaboration with Action for Children. The process involved workers, managers, young people and associated professionals. It was also piloted by HeadStart Kernow Community strand at the Learning Partnership for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Completing My Mind Star is intended to be a helpful, engaging and empowering process that stimulates and focuses discussion and provides a useful, shared basis for an action or support plan. It is a flexible tool that relies on the skills of the professionals using it, as well as on a degree of understanding and trust between them and the young person. The Star is designed to be used one to one; the aim is to have a genuine interaction and complete it collaboratively.

Background and further information about the Outcomes Star suite of tools can be found at [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk)

or 020 7272 8765

I like the collaboration with the young people and it was useful in exploring their issues.

**Worker, Action for Children**

## Before you use My Mind Star™

### Make sure that you have received training in using My Mind Star

and that you are familiar with the materials and know when and how they are used in your service. It is vital that you understand and use the Journey of Change underlying the scales – **stuck or unsafe, talking about it, believing and taking action, learning what works** and **managing well**. This will ensure consistent and reliable information as a basis for support planning and for use by your service. You also need to be familiar with all the scale descriptions, so you can unpack and rephrase them as needed.

I like the fact that it made me more aware about issues in my life that I didn't realise before. It also made me realise that certain areas are better than I expected them to be."

Young person, Action for Children

## How to introduce My Mind Star™

Before you introduce the Star to someone for the first time:

- Devise a short script to introduce the Star in a way that feels natural to you and clear for those you are working with
- If you meet with the young people you support in groups, it can be useful and save time to explain the Star to the group before starting one-to-one work within individual sessions
- Consider giving young people who are interested a copy of the User Guide to read before the session. Although this is quite detailed and relies on someone being comfortable with reading, the whole document is worded in accessible language, so it can be shared.

When introducing the Star:

- Explain that people may start anywhere on the journey and can move both up and down on the scale. Point out that 5 is the top of the Star scales and signals that they and the workers can be confident that things are going as well as possible, but that they will continue to have aspirations and make progress beyond that point
- Be clear that this is about exploring where they are and building up a map of their world, experiences and journey – it is not about being judged or being awarded an overall number
- Avoid using the term "score" – refer to where someone is on the Journey of Change using the stage names, colours and/or numbers, depending on what works best for each individual
- Encourage the young person to ask questions so they feel as comfortable as possible about My Mind Star and reassure them that they will have choices about the pace and the process
- Let the young person decide which scale to start with or choose one that is concrete and may be easier to discuss, such as "School, training and work".

Overall, the skills and approach needed to introduce and use My Mind Star well are likely to be in keeping with being person-centred and

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trauma-informed, as well as with other good practice in your service. Some suggested phrases for introducing the Star include:

*“My Mind Star is a way of tracking your journey and finding out about your strengths and the areas where you need more information or support.”*

*“The Star tells us where you are now and what needs to happen next, and it helps you and me plan our work together.”*

I like the way it gets me to think about myself.

Young person, Action for Children

## How to complete My Mind Star™

**Complete the Star collaboratively with young people** in a way that responds to their needs and abilities. The aim is to engage them in meaningful discussion, and to listen and learn about them, rather than to complete the Star as quickly as possible.

**Use the scale descriptors as a basis for discussion** about the chosen area, or have an open discussion about the area, and then use the scale to place the young person on the Journey of Change. The brief visual scales in the User Guide and the short illustrated Scales and flashcards are designed to be used directly with young people, so you can choose which option works best. Although the detailed scales are intended primarily as a resource for workers, they are written to be accessible, so feel free to refer to specific points for clarification with young people. Avoid reading them out in their entirety because of their length.

**Always use the scales and be aware of the Journey of Change when deciding where someone is on the scales.** These are designed to reduce subjectivity, otherwise one person's 2 could be another person's 4 and the completed Star won't be a useful basis for completing the action plan and your service won't be able to treat collated Star data as reliable for reporting purposes.

**If you don't agree, have a discussion** – this can help you learn about the young person and help them reflect on their situation and see it in new ways. If a young person is able to engage meaningfully and is at 3 or above for most of the My Mind Star areas, encourage them to take the lead in placing themselves on the scales. You may need to be more directive for young people in the **talking about it** stage. Those who are **stuck or unsafe** in all or most areas will not discuss the Star meaningfully and you may need to do a worker-only reading.

This process requires good keyworking skills, some knowledge of the person and a relationship with them. You will need to encourage young people with low confidence to see their strengths, and others to be more realistic.

**If you can't reach agreement, record both views on the Star**, labelling which is your opinion and which is the young person's, using the Star Notes to record points from your discussion. Use your professional judgement to decide when further discussion is not helpful.

**Recognise external and other factors.** While the Journey of Change focuses on the young person, there may be societal factors or other conditions beyond their control – and beyond the control of your service – which make it harder for things to improve. These may include poor housing, financial difficulty or lack of suitable mental health provision or other services. These also need to be acknowledged and recorded when using the Star. Your service may then be able to use this information to identify gaps in provision, plan future developments or raise issues with policy-makers.

While the emphasis in My Mind Star is on where someone is now and how they can be supported to make progress, there may be trauma or other factors that contribute to their mental health issues and/or to what they need now. As with external factors, these need to be acknowledged and will affect how you work with someone, in line with good practice in your service.

**When you have completed all of the scales, join the points to create a shape.** Mark each reading on the Star Chart and join the points. Encourage the young person to do this themselves and create the shape. This applies whether you and the young person are completing the Star on paper or on screen, for example using the Star Online.

### **How to use the completed Star as the basis for a support plan**

Look at the shape of the completed Star together and prompt the young person to reflect on it as a basis for what to do next. Ask questions such as:

- Is the shape of the Star an accurate picture of how things are for you now?
- What does it tell you about what is and is not going well?
- What are the strengths that you bring to the areas that are going well? How might you apply those strengths in other areas of your life?
- What does your Star tell you about areas where you need to make changes or where you could do with more support?
- What is most important to address first?

Once you have chosen the areas to be included in the support plan, further questions for each area include:

- Where on the journey do you want to get to and by when?
- What needs to be done to bring about this change?
- Who is responsible for these actions? When can they be completed?

**Complete the My Mind Star Action Plan** or use your service's support planning documentation. The Journey of Change provides valuable pointers for thinking about the goals of support with the young person and achievable, realistic actions:

It was good to see everything mapped out – it made issues easier to tackle.


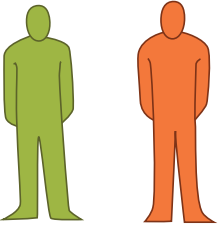
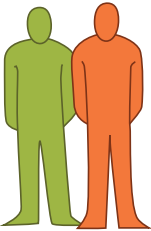
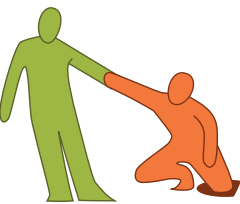

**Young person, Action for Children**

Not for use  
Sample for information only

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Journey of Change stage	Goals of keyword
<p><b>Managing well (5)</b></p> 	<p>At this stage, young people are <b>managing well</b>. They can cope with the normal ups and downs of life and bounce back when things go wrong, so the main actions will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing to reinforce the learning</li> <li>• Building and reinforcing support networks outside of the service</li> <li>• Ensuring young people know how to spot the warning signs and seek help again if needed in the future</li> <li>• If you are still supporting them, doing what is needed to help them keep managing well.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning what works (4)</b></p> 	<p>At this stage, young people are overcoming setbacks and <b>learning what works</b> to keep themselves on course in difficult times. The focus of support may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping them to reflect on how they have overcome problems and how they can learn from this</li> <li>• Celebrating their achievements</li> <li>• Supporting them to deal with manageable difficulties themselves and offering more support through setbacks or larger difficulties.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Believing and taking action (3)</b></p> 	<p>At this stage, young people <b>believe</b> things can change and start to <b>take action</b> themselves, but it's early days and often things won't go well so they won't yet experience much benefit. Goals and actions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offering sufficient support and encouragement</li> <li>• Helping young people to identify what is working or just needs more time and to keep trying new things or making changes where approaches are not working</li> <li>• Helping young people to take action themselves rather than doing it for them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Talking about it (2)</b></p> 	<p>At this stage a young person recognises that they need help and starts <b>talking about it</b> with a worker, teacher or other trusted adult. The approach may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving the situation by giving practical support</li> <li>• Setting up appointments and perhaps accompanying them</li> <li>• Helping young people to set achievable goals with guidance on practical steps</li> <li>• Building on any signs of greater confidence and initiative.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stuck or unsafe (1)</b></p> 	<p>At this stage, young people are having a hard time emotionally or mentally and do not recognise that this is something that they can get help with or lack hope that things can change. Actions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focusing on safety – preventing or minimising harm</li> <li>• Providing feedback and information</li> <li>• Providing practical and proactive help, even where the young person is resistant</li> <li>• Developing trust and starting to build a relationship.</li> </ul>

## Revisiting My Mind Star™ at regular reviews

Make sure you know the timing and frequency of Star reviews in your service; these work best when integrated with support plan reviews, for example every 6 – 12 weeks. At each review, repeat the process of discussing each of the Star areas and agreeing where the young person is on each scale, preferably without reference to the previous Star readings. Once completed, you can show the current and previous readings to give an instant visual picture of change, either on paper or on screen if using the Star Online.

**Encourage open discussion, looking at the new Star shape.** Possible review questions include:

- How do you feel about the shape of the Star now?
- Where do you see the progress you have made?
- What has helped you to make progress? What strengths have you brought to this? What can you learn from this and apply to other areas?
- What areas do you want to address now – the same as before or new ones?
- Where do you want to get to by the next review? What actions will it take to make this happen?

**Complete a new action plan** and, if working on paper, file the Star Chart and Action Plan and enter the data as required. If you complete the Star on screen with the young person, for example using the Star Online, the data should be captured automatically, but make sure you are familiar with your organisation's policy. You may need to print the Star Chart, Notes and Action Plan for your files and/or give a copy to the young person to take away.

When positive change occurs, reviews can be encouraging and motivating for you and the young people you work with, as the Star makes progress very evident. Seeing progress on the Star can help reinforce change.

I like that it gives the young people the opportunity to see where their priorities are, not what someone else thinks we should work on. This gives them some ownership and increases motivation.

**Worker, Action for Children**

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