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.

“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.
Activities

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.

- ___________________________________________________________
- ___________________________________________________________
- ___________________________________________________________
- ___________________________________________________________
- ___________________________________________________________