



Managing Worry Group Handbook

Developed by Tia Coles and Emily Breeze

Session Outline

Session 1:

This session will be an introduction to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and anxiety. We will discuss how anxiety is maintained, and what the common symptoms are. We will also look at how our thoughts and behaviours impact on how we are feeling and maintain our anxiety. We will introduce the fight or flight response and discuss SMART goals.

Session 2:

Here we will delve into worry a little more. We will discuss two different types of worry and how we can start to differentiate between them. We will focus on becoming more aware of our worries and how we can start to manage them. We will practice relaxation techniques for high anxiety situations or when worry is just feeling too much.

Session 3:

During this session we will focus on different strategies for reducing the amount of time we spend worrying. We will focus on introducing worry time for our hypothetical worries and learn how present moment focus techniques can help to train our attention away from worries.

Session 4:

During this session, we will look at practical worries and introduce problem solving to help to identify practical solutions in particular situations. We will practice progressive muscle relaxation to help release tension from our muscle groups that can be caused by worry.

Session 5:

During this session we will focus on negative thoughts that we may experience together with anxiety. We will discuss common patterns of negative thinking and how to challenge negative thoughts.

Session 6:

Here we will focus on bringing everything together, and how we can maintain the progress we have made so far. We will look at how deal with relapses and how we can stay well.

Client agreement

Client Records and Confidentiality

Anything you tell us is confidential within the Mind in Bexley team. Relevant information about your care will be shared between your allocated therapist/PWP, and your employment advisor, if you are accessing our employment services. If we have concerns about the safety of you or someone else, we may need to inform other agencies, and we will inform you if appropriate.

Digital records are maintained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Please refer to the Mind in Bexley and East Kent Confidentiality Statement and Privacy Policy for further information.

Reasonable appointments

The service offers most appointments between 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday. We have a small number of evening appointments, but they usually involve a longer waiting time. You are asked where possible to attend the same appointment time each week.

If you reach the top of our treatment waiting list and are unable to accept an appointment within 6 weeks, then you may be asked to re-refer once you can engage in regular treatment sessions. We will prioritise you on our waiting list if you contact us within 6 months of discharge.

If you decline appointments offered on more than 2 occasions you may be discharged from the service.

Attendance at sessions and non-attendance

For therapy to be consistent and effective research suggests it is important to attend regularly.

Please give us at least 24 hours' notice if you are unable to attend your scheduled appointment.

Cancelling with less than 24 hours' notice will be treated as a missed appointment. 2 missed appointments will result in your being discharged from the service.

Please attend on time. Sessions will not be extended if you arrive late and you may not be seen if you arrive more than 15 minutes after your scheduled appointment time.

If you fail to attend your first treatment/therapy appointment and haven't called to cancel or re-arrange, you will be discharged from the service.

We are unable to offer assessments or treatment sessions outside of the UK. Please inform us in advance of any planned absences. Extended breaks exceeding 6 weeks may result in a discontinuation of therapy. You are welcome to re-refer if you wish to engage in the future.

Employment Support

If you are engaging with our employment support service, please refer to their client agreement.

Clients receiving talking therapy from other services or privately

Receiving multiple forms of therapy is unlikely to be beneficial. You may engage in other talking therapy whilst on our waiting list however this needs to be completed before attending any sessions with us. Your case will be reviewed to assess next steps. If on completing therapy elsewhere you no longer require support, please email talkingtherapies@mindinbexley.org.uk.

Clients re-referring recently after being discharged

We encourage clients to put in to practice what they have learnt before re-referring to us. If you are re-referring for a similar problem within 6 months of discharge, you will be offered a review appointment in the first instance to discuss suitability and agree next steps.

Abuse towards staff or other service users

We understand at times that therapy can bring up difficult emotions however, abuse in any form directed towards staff or other service users will not be tolerated. Treatment may end if your behaviour is deemed inappropriate.

Complaints Procedure

We encourage clients to provide both positive and negative feedback. Our complaints procedure is available on our website and making a complaint will not affect the service you receive.

In-session guidance

- If your session is conducted via telephone or video, you will access sessions from a place where you cannot be overheard and can speak freely with your therapist
- You agree to complete our standard questionnaires ahead of your session, if this is not done you will be asked to complete at the start of the session.
- You will not attend under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- You agree to engage in the therapeutic process, including any between session tasks
- Recording and photography is not permitted unless agreed with your therapist
- Unless beneficial to therapy, we do not allow others to attend 1-1 sessions with you

If you are a group participant, please see our 'Psycho-educational group FAQ' or 'treatment group FAQ' pages for more information.

If you are receiving one-to-one therapy remotely, please see our 'preparing for your telephone or video appointment' leaflet.

Consent to the Recording of Sessions

Some sessions may be recorded for training, research or development purposes. Verbal consent will be obtained prior to the start of the session and will only take place with your permission.

I consent to the recording of sessions:

Client's Name :

Client's Signature :

Date:

Welcome to the NHS Bexley Talking Therapies service. Please retain this leaflet as it contains important information.

Attendance

Regular attendance at therapy sessions or in groups is important to get the best out of the sessions. Please tell your therapist or group leader in advance of any planned unavoidable absence. If there is a reason why you cannot attend on the day, please leave a message on 020 8303 8932 (option 1). Messages are being monitored regularly by our administration team.

Taking Care of Yourself

It is particularly important to engage in self-care. Remember to give yourself time and space to make use of the therapy or classes and ensure you are getting enough rest and nourishment. Sometimes during therapy, difficult emotions can come up or events can happen which can cause more distress. Your safety and support are very important to us. If emotions are becoming very overwhelming, it is important that you let someone know how you are feeling. Think about who you could tell (e.g., friends and relatives), to support you.

Emergency and out of hours support is available below:

NHS 111 including Mental Health Support on option 2

Sane Line 0845 767 8000

Samaritans 116 123

Umbrella Crisis Nightline 020 7226 9415, a night-time phone line for anyone with difficulties relating to a mental health problem, open every night from 12:30am – 6am

In the unlikely event that the feelings get worse and if you feel that you are at risk of harming yourself, or others, at any time, please make an urgent telephone appointment with your GP or call 111 for advice.

We have a 'Get Help Now' section on our website which provides crisis information, including details of support lines and the Mind in Bexley Crisis Café which remains open from 6pm – 10pm.

Group rules

- Personal disclosure and insight are welcomed during the group; however, it is important to be mindful that the sessions are structured and at times we may have to move on due to time constraints. This is not to invalidate your experience; it is to ensure that the therapeutic structure and protocol is followed. The groups contain case studies that we are going to use, this also helps with us completing all the items on the agenda in a timely fashion.
- Here at Mind in Bexley, we have a strict policy on confidentiality. We would therefore like to ask that all group members respect each other's privacy, and ensure that we keep everything confidential. Also, we would like to ask that everyone is mindful of each other when out and about in Bexleyheath, and again respect each other's privacy. As group facilitators, we will also respect your privacy, but please note that we may break this confidentiality agreement if we have any immediate concerns about your safety, or the safety of anyone else around you.
- We also ask that we all treat each other with respect, and ensure that we refrain from any offensive language. Furthermore, please respect each other's opinions and beliefs, and act in a non-judgemental manner. Please listen to each other, and allow people space and time if they wish to share their concerns.
- As our therapy groups are held remotely, we understand that whilst you may be in a confidential space to begin with, this could change. For example, another member of the household may unexpectedly come home. At the beginning of the first therapy session, the group facilitators will inform you of a 'safe word' that should be said or typed in the group chat should you no longer be in a confidential space. Should this word be said or typed in the group chat during the session, it will indicate to all others to stop speaking until the group facilitators can ensure confidentiality again.

Session 1

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is experienced by *all* people at some point in their lives. It is a response we experience when we think we are being *threatened*. For example, we may feel anxious during exams or during a driving test; this can help us to take action and can be helpful.

However, there are some occasions when anxiety is not helpful. These include:

- When the anxiety is so severe that it stops people from doing what they want to do, e.g. shopping, using public transport
- Causes physical problems, including stomach issues or high blood pressure
- Overestimating danger in a situation and underestimating our ability to cope
- Physical feelings are misinterpreted to be more dangerous than they are

What causes anxiety?

There may be any number of causes for anxiety. Some causes include:

- Early experiences
- A series of stressful life events such as bereavements, redundancy and divorce
- Positive life events can also cause us anxiety: such as career progression, becoming parents, moving house, and marriage
- Under pressure at work
- Financial difficulties

Impact of anxiety

Anxiety can affect us in 4 different ways, these include:

1. The way we *feel*:
 - Anxious
 - Worried
 - Frightened
 - Tense
 - Uptight
 - Detached
 - Nervous
2. The way we *think*:
 - Constant worrying
 - Racing thoughts
 - Jumping from one thought to another
 - Imagining the worst is going to happen
 - Specific thoughts include: "I am losing control", "I am going to faint", "I can't cope"
3. The way our *body* works:
 - Heart racing

- Chest tightness
 - Stomach churning
 - Stomach butterflies
 - Needing to go to the toilet
 - Dizziness
 - Muscle tension
 - Sweating
 - Tingling or numbness in hands and feet
4. The way we *behave*:
- Pacing up and down
 - Starting jobs and not finishing them
 - Cannot sit and relax
 - On the go all the time
 - Talk quickly or more than usual

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

The Worry Group is based on CBT principles. CBT stands for *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy*.

CBT is based on the idea that how we think (cognitions), how we feel (emotions and physical sensations) and how we act (behaviours) all interact together. Specifically, how our thoughts determine our feelings and our behaviour. Meaning, when a person suffers with psychological distress, the ways in which they interpret situations becomes skewed, which in turn has a negative impact on the actions they take.

CBT is a structured therapy that focuses on the present moment. We do not dismiss the past and how this may have had an influence on the person we have become, however this is something we cannot change.

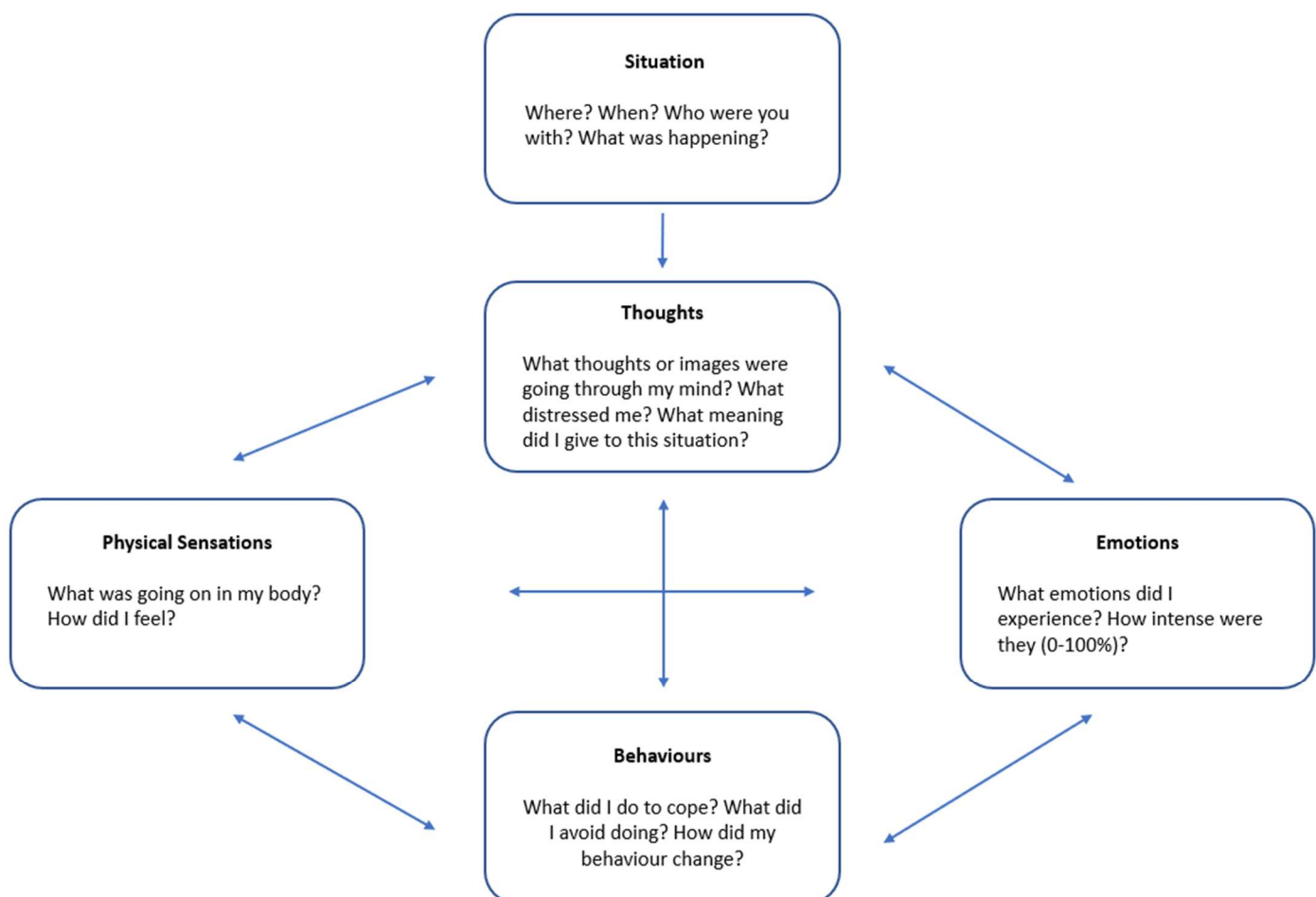
CBT aims to help people become more aware of when they are making negative interpretations and of the behavioural patterns which reinforce this distorted thinking. Once we have this awareness, we use CBT techniques and self-help materials to help people to develop alternative ways of thinking and behaving, which aims to reduce their psychological distress.

CBT is made up of 5 specific areas: Situation, thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and behaviours. These areas can be defined in the following ways:

- **Situations:** The trigger. Situations are neutral. It's the thoughts, behaviours, physical sensations and emotions that make a situation, good or bad, positive or negative, helpful or unhelpful.
- **Thoughts:** These are the statements that you make to yourself in your mind, they act as a dialogue and add context to the situation that you are in, and they are often opinions rather than fact.
- **Emotions:** These can often be described in one word and can be communicated by facial expressions and communicate how you feel in a situation.

- *Physical sensations*: These are the feelings we experience in our body. These feelings are internal, we have no control over these and they involuntary
- *Behaviours*: these are how you decide to behave. You have control over this, it might not seem that you do, but it's the choices that you make in relation to the way you feel and think.

Recognising how we respond and interpret events is one of the most important steps in treatment. Once we can identify our own 5 areas, change can take place. This, however, takes time and practice.



The Fight or Flight Response

The physical sensations we experience in anxiety are caused by what is called the 'fight or flight response'. This is an automatic response that has evolved in us over thousands of years, and its purpose is to keep us safe in situations that could be dangerous. This is done by either triggering a fight response (to ward off dangers) or a flight response (to run away). Both these options require

our body to prepare for action, so our body releases adrenaline, which results in many physiological changes.

Our fight or flight response often bypasses logic – it would be dangerous for us to be indecisive about a threat to our survival, so the brain always listens to instinct and emotions first (such as anger and fear). When we feel fearful or angry, the brain triggers this fight or flight response automatically.

This response is ideal for times when we are in physical danger, however with people living in a safer environment in the modern world, the fight or flight response is triggered by situations that are not necessarily dangerous. It can even be triggered by thoughts or interpretations of the world around us that we may find threatening. For example, if our boss gives us more work to do and needs it by the end of the day, we might be thinking ‘How am I going to manage? What will happen if I don’t get this done?’ These thoughts would probably make us feel at risk of failure, which can be threatening - this can cause us to feel fearful and anxious, which in turn triggers our fight or flight response.

A good analogy is a smoke detector in our homes. A smoke detector is designed to alert us to the danger of fire, but it cannot distinguish between steam from the shower, burnt toast or a house fire. The first two situations would not need any further action, but the alarm cannot tell the difference and is activating just in case. Think of this in regards to our anxiety, when we experience different situations that cause us stress or anxiety. The body cannot tell if it is a real danger or not, therefore it is activating just in case. And at times our bodies become this over sensitive fire alarm.

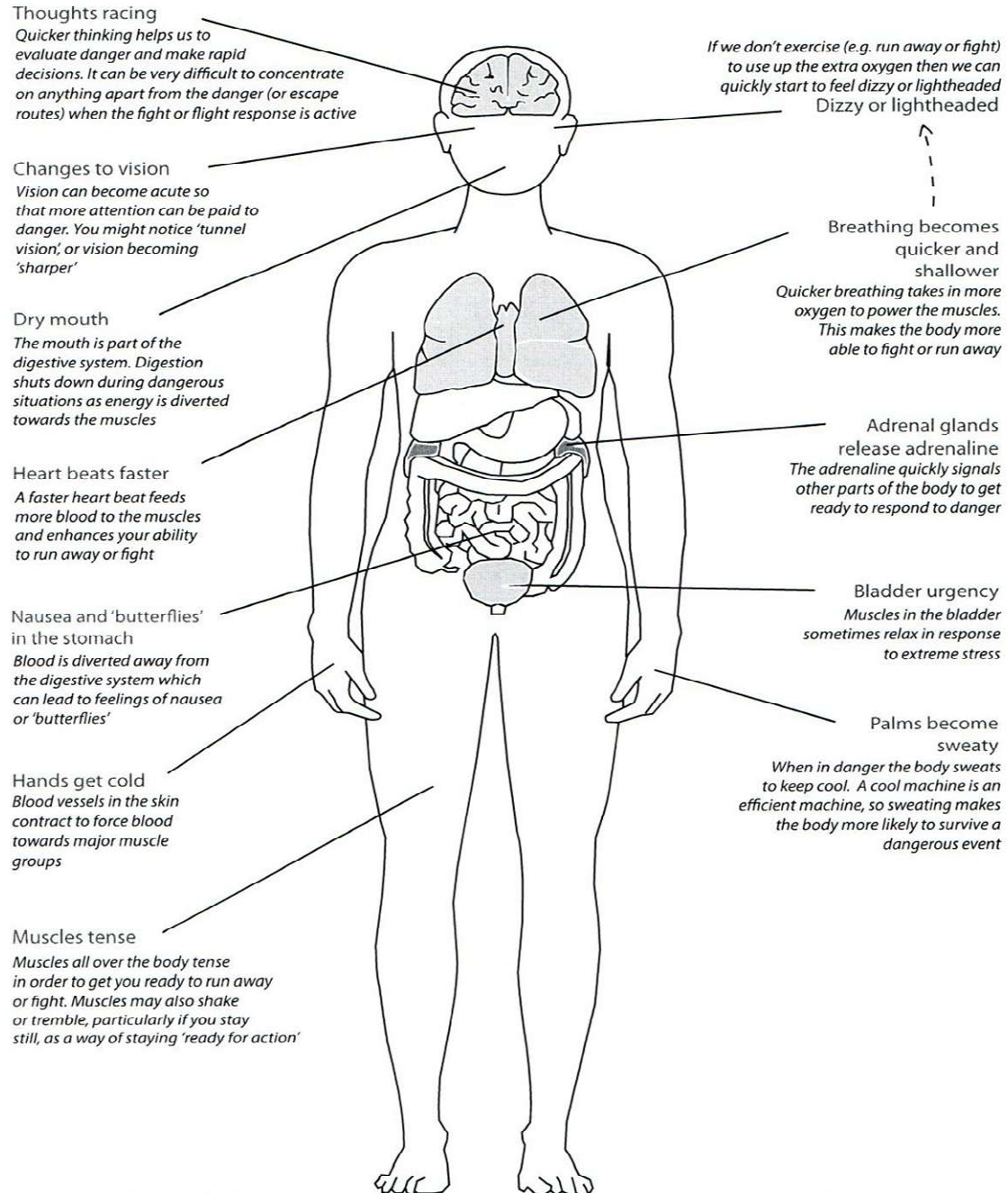
People experience many different physical symptoms, some common and others not. Here is a list of different physical symptoms. Tick the ones that are most common for you:

Thoughts racing	Hands get cold
Changes to vision	Muscles tense
Dry mouth	Dizzy or lightheaded
Heart beats faster	Breathing become quicker / shallower
Tightness in our chest	Frequent need to use the toilet
Nausea	Palms become sweaty
‘Butterflies’ in our stomach	

When we experience the fight or flight response, it can be very unsettling. The physical symptoms we experience can make us worry that something is medically wrong. However, our fight or flight response is a protective automatic reaction - when managing these physical reactions, it is important to remember that they are not harmful, as they are a common response designed to keep us alive. Understanding this can often help to reduce our anxiety. See the diagram for more information as to what changes are happening in our bodies, and how that may feel to us.

Fight Or Flight Response

When faced with a life-threatening danger it often makes sense to run away or, if that is not possible, to fight. The *fight or flight response* is an *automatic* survival mechanism which prepares the body to take these actions. All of the body sensations produced are happening for good reasons – to prepare your body to run away or fight – but may be experienced as uncomfortable when you do not know why they are happening.



SMART Goals

Facing difficulties or challenging times, can force us to change or revise the goals we have set ourselves. Making changes to our thoughts, and behaviours can be very difficult. One way to increase our motivation for change, is to think about what we want to achieve from therapy. Goal setting can help keep us motivated towards change, and can help us to plan on how we are going to achieve them. When setting ourselves goals, it is important to keep in mind the following three rules:

1. Set yourself no more than three goals to begin with. Setting ourselves too many goals can be overwhelming. Don't forget that we can review our goals regularly and can always add more goals in the future.
2. Focus on short-term goals to begin with. Achieving our goals can help improve our sense of achievement, and increase our confidence. Short-term goals can always be amended once we have achieved them
3. Set positive goals. Focus on what we want to be doing more of, rather than on what we want to stop or reduce doing. For example, setting ourselves a goal of 'weeding the garden for 10 minutes a day', is more helpful than 'stop watching television all day'.

In addition to these 3 rules, it is also a good idea to make our goals SMART:

S	Specific: Try and make your goals as specific as possible. Wherever you can, set dates, times, resources etc. that you will need to achieve them
M	Measurable: Goals should be capable of being measured to allow you to know when you have met them
A	Achievable: Your goals should be just out of reach, but not out of sight. If you cannot achieve your goals, then you have set yourself up to fail.
R	Realistic: Try to set goals that are relevant to your life, and to the things that will help you to get back on track. Think about any obstacles that might get in the way, and how you will overcome these.
T	Time boundaried: Set a time by which you would like to achieve your goals. Initially you should seek to set no more than 3 goals, to help focus your journey.

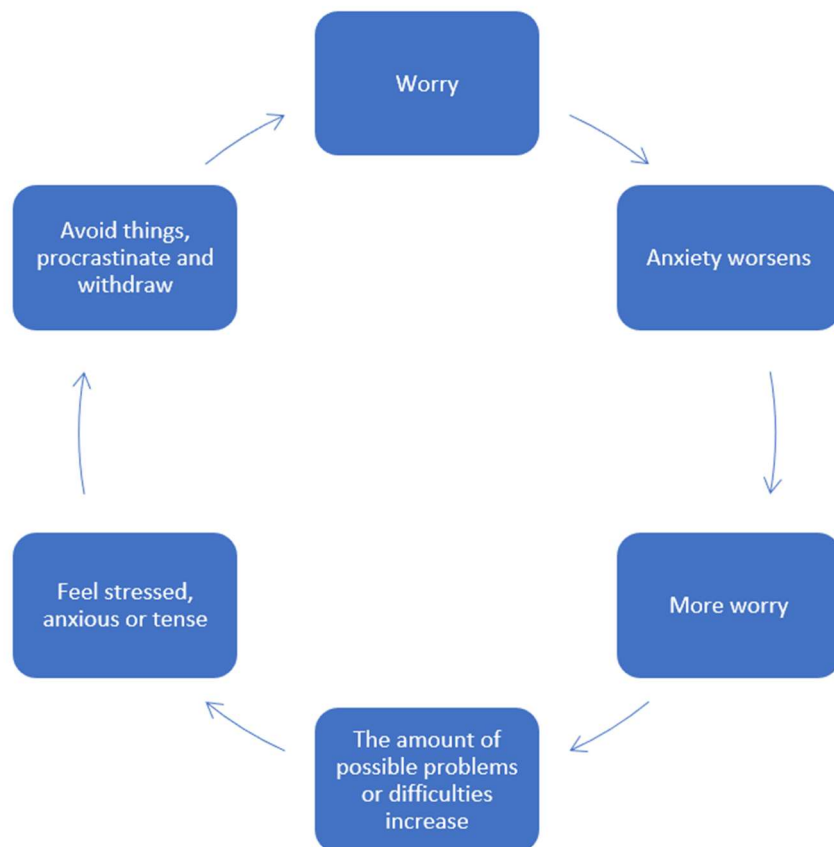
Session 2

What is worry?

Worry is a normal process, and we can all experience worry at some point. Some worry is very helpful and causes us to act appropriately. For example, if worrying about an exam causes you to prepare and revise a bit more, then it has helped you to achieve your goals. However, worry can also cause us to feel anxious, and we can become caught in a vicious cycle of anxiety when we worry excessively. Worrying too much can interfere with a person's ability to do everyday things that they may want to do. People who worry may start to worry about the fact they are worrying and what this may mean about their health. They may also find it hard to stop worrying as it can make them feel that things are under control.

Worry becomes a problem when you worry too much, or when you worry about things that are out of your control, or when your worries become frequent and take over a larger part of your day. Worrying is spending time thinking about potential problems that may happen in the future. When we are worrying, we are usually trying to problem solve situations that might arise, or are trying to prevent something from happening. This can become a vicious cycle: The more we worry, the worse our anxiety becomes, and the more time we spend worrying. As we worry, the number of possible problems or difficulties further grows. This can lead us to feel tense, stressed, and anxious. When we feel this way, we are more likely to avoid things, procrastinate, and withdraw from others.

Vicious cycle of worry



Types of worries

Our worries can be broken down into two types:

Practical worries: These are worries that are often affecting you now, and are those which have a practical solution. For example, needing time off work, or if there is a strange rattling noise in the car.

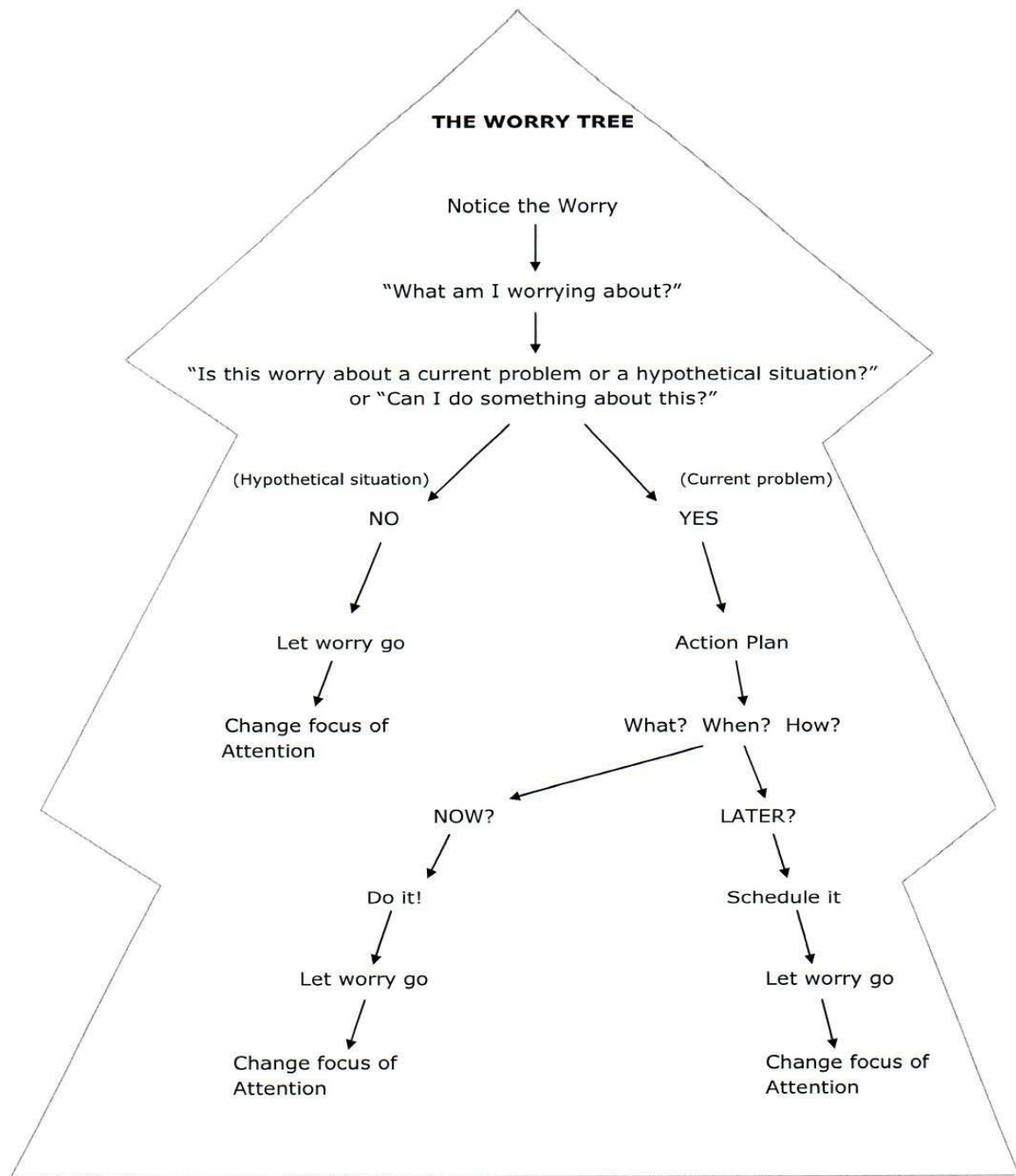
Hypothetical worries: These worries are often about things that may be well in the future and may not have a solution. For example, what if the bus is late? What if there is an accident on the way to work?

Difficulties tend to arise when we are trying to deal with all of our worries in the same way. When this happens, our worries can start to feel overwhelming, and we may get caught in the vicious cycle. This can get in the way of us taking appropriate action to sort out our practical worries, and we may start putting things off.

The first step of managing our worries more effectively, is to start separating these into hypothetical and practical worries. Once we can identify these, we can start dealing with them differently. We will cover focus on how we can deal with these worries later in the course.

To help us to classify our worries into practical and hypothetical, we can use the Worry Tree.

The Worry Tree



Classifying our worries

Our worries can be very overwhelming at times, and one small worry tends to escalate into many larger worries. The first step in trying to make sense of, and identify, our worries is to make a note of them. Writing them down can be helpful, as we can take a step back and use our worry tree to identify whether it is hypothetical or practical.

Have a go at writing your own worries down, in the worry diary handout overleaf. Try and use the worry tree to identify what type of worry it is.

Try and record your worries as actual thoughts that go through your mind as they arise. If you worry more at night, keep this diary next to your bed. Then, if you find yourself worrying at night, write the worry down, turn the light back off and try to get to sleep, knowing that you will come back to the worry in the morning.

Worry diary

Date and time	Situation (where are you; what are you doing; what is going on around you)	Your worry	How anxious did you feel? (Using a scale of 0-10; 0 being not anxious at all, 10 being the most anxious)	Practical or hypothetical worry (use the worry tree to help classify)
<i>Wednesday 20th June</i>	<i>On the bus going to work</i>	<i>What if I am late for my meeting</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Hypothetical</i>

Relaxation Techniques

When we experience anxiety, we are often so tense throughout the day that we do not recognise what being relaxed feels like. Relaxation exercises are important to reduce some of the physical sensations caused by our fight/flight response.

Relaxation exercises can help alleviate tension in our muscle groups, as well as help us to become more mindful as we are changing our focus of attention away from our thoughts. They can also help to improve sleep and alleviate other physical symptoms we experience such as stomach aches and headaches.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

When our fight or flight response is triggered our breathing speeds up in order to get our body ready to face danger. By calming our breathing, we signal to the body it is safe to relax. This helps to reduce the levels of adrenaline in the body which leads to a reduction in some of the physical symptoms of anxiety.

There are two main types of breathing; chest breathing which we tend to use when exercising and when feeling tense or panicked and diaphragmatic breathing, which is much slower and calmer.

Session 3

Hypothetical worries

Negative thoughts are completely normal, we all have them and research actually shows that we all have very similar negative thoughts. From an evolutionary perspective, our mind is meant to find worrisome things in our environment. Our mind is built to be a detector of threats and dangers.

Our minds are also very busy and we are constantly thinking. It is common to have over 4000 thoughts in a day, so it is very likely that some of these will be negative. We cannot control what pops into our mind- thoughts are automatic.

We will go through difficult times, and there will be some situations that cause more worry. It is only reasonable that these problems will be on our mind.

Our initial negative 'what if' thoughts are perfectly ok. These are not the problem and are not something with which we can control. These thoughts will automatically pop into our minds, and we cannot change this. They only become a problem when we respond to them in a way that gives the thoughts lots of importance, time, energy, and attention, and hence they spiral into more negative thoughts and worries. Therefore, it is not the 'what if' thought that causes the problem, instead it is how we are responding to them.

We tend to respond to the worries by either pulling them closer by listening to them, or by pushing them away and trying to ignore them. Both of these methods lead us to worry more.

Exercise: Try *not* to think of a pink elephant for the next 60 seconds.

Learning point: Mental and thought suppression rarely works. Telling ourselves to ignore worry or suppress worrying actually causes us to think of it more. When we try and ignore and suppress worries by telling ourselves not to worry, we end up worrying more, which leaves us feeling that the worry is uncontrollable. This can cause us to then feel fed up and exhausted.

Worry postponement vs Thought suppression

As mentioned before, we tend to either pull worries closer, or attempt to push them away. As we know from the last exercise, suppression does not work, and the thought we are trying to suppress tends to keep coming back.

Instead of suppressing our thoughts, we can try postponing our worry. When we postpone our worries, we firstly accept the 'what if' thought and remind ourselves that it is OK and natural. However, we make a decision to not chase the thought any further at that particular time. Instead, we decide to park the 'what if' thought and put it to one side. This is something we call *Worry Time*.

Worry Time

Remember, worrying can distract our attention away from the present moment, and it can keep us in a vicious cycle of worry. This can then prevent us from enjoying what we are currently doing, can

inhibit our productivity, and can impact on our time with family and friends. Worry time is a certain part of the day which we dedicate to our worries. This is usually a less important time of the day.

Worry time is allowing ourselves the space and time to worry, but we are choosing when to do it. Worry time allows us to have more control over our worries during the day, and can allow us more time and effort for more important tasks.

Worry time helps us to reduce the amount of time we spend on our worries, and will free up more time for other, more important, activities. Also remember that worry time is a way of us regaining control over our worries. See the handout below for more information on how to practice worry time.

1. *Plan your worry time*

Each day, plan a time for yourself to worry in. Consider how long you will worry for; at first you may want to set aside a longer period of time, but you can always review this over time. You may find that you wish to shorten this period as you get more practiced with worry time.

It does not matter what time of day you choose, but remember that it must be used for your worries only. Therefore, try and find a time where you will not be distracted or interrupted. Perhaps think of a less important time of your day, like early evening before dinner or after the children have gone to bed. However, ensure worry time is not too close to bedtime, as you will need time to relax and unwind before trying to sleep.

2. *Write down your worries*

When you notice you are worrying outside of your planned worry time, write them down in your worry diary, noting whether they are practical or hypothetical worries. If the worry is hypothetical, try not to judge yourself or evaluate it further, but remind yourself that you can worry about this later during your worry time. If you worry a lot at night when trying to get to sleep, you may find it helpful to keep a worry diary by your bed to write them down then.

3. *Refocus on the present moment*

Once you have written your worry down, refocus on the present moment. This means paying attention to what is going on around you and the task at hand. You may find it helpful to start a new activity, and really pay attention to it using your senses. For example, if you are walking, take note of the sights around you, the smells in the air, and how the ground feels under your feet. If you get more worries, just repeat this process, ensuring that we are writing them down and refocusing back to the present moment. If you notice that the same worry returns, that is ok, just write them down and focus back onto the present.

4. *Worry time*

Once it is time for worry time, open up your list from the day. Choose the worry that you would like to start with, and allow yourself that time to worry about it. For each worry that you have chosen, consider how you felt when you wrote it down, and compare this to how you feel about it now. Has the thing that you were worrying about happened? How did you deal with it if it did happen? Spend some time reflecting on these worries, and think about what you would have missed out on if you had worried about during the day.

Remember to end worry time after your allocated time. Keep a timer to hand or an alarm clock to remind yourself.

Present moment focus

Present moment focus is based on the practice of mindfulness.

Mindfulness is a way of training our attention. Our mind wanders about half of the time, but every time we practice being mindful, we are exercising our focus of attention. We choose what to focus on, rather than passively allowing our attention to be dominated by that which distresses us and takes us away from the present moment.

Once we know how to do something, the brain can *switch off* and we will do that activity automatically. A good example of this is driving. If we always drive the same route to and from work, we tend to drive automatically without really being aware of our surroundings. We might get to a certain part of our journey, and wonder whether we passed a certain landmark already? This is something we often refer to as being on 'auto-pilot'. When on auto-pilot we are less likely to be in the present moment, and we are more likely to think of those things that are troubling us.

Present moment focus is the exact opposite to auto-pilot. The aim of present moment focus is to be more aware of our thoughts, feelings, and body sensations, but to not engage with them. Instead, we accept that we have these thoughts and feelings, without judging ourselves or evaluating them further, and choose to pay attention to something else.

Mindful activity

Any activity can be done mindfully. For example, if we were to wash the dishes our mind will probably be thinking about what we have to do, or what we've done during the day, or worrying about future events. Washing up, or any other routine activity, can become a mindful activity if we notice and pay attention to everything around us. We could notice the temperature of the water, the texture of the soap bubbles on our skin, and we could even listen to the sound of the bubbles as they pop.

A mindful walk can be a great chance to practice this present moment focus. Instead of 'being in our heads', we could observe the sights around us, listen to the noises, smell the air, and feel the weather on our skin.

To engage in an activity, and to be mindful of our surroundings, we need to listen to our senses. What are our senses experiencing?

All of these details would usually be 'filtered out' by our brain, all we need to do is bring it to the forefront of our attention. The more we practice, the more we will notice our thoughts and feelings trying to intrude and steal our attention away. This is ok, the aim of mindful activity is to bring our attention back to the activity continuously. It is normal for thoughts and feelings to enter our awareness, and it is common for our mind to wander. With mindful activity, we do not berate ourselves for having these thoughts or feelings, we are gently noticing them and then bringing out

attention back to the present moment. As with everything, this is a skill that requires practice. Don't be discouraged if you find this difficult at first.

Don't forget to engage as many senses as you can. In total we have 5 senses:

1. Sight
2. Smell
3. Sound
4. Touch
5. Taste

Session 4

Practical worries

Practical worries are the types of worries that have a solution. These are worries that are often affecting you now, and are those which have a practical solution. For example, needing time off work, or if there is a strange rattling noise in the car.

Some practical worries are a bit harder to solve, and sometimes we may need to spend more time with them. Sometimes, when we are depressed or anxious, we can feel so overwhelmed that we can find it more difficult to find solutions to our practical worries. Sometimes our hypothetical worries might prevent us from doing something practical to solve the problem. Read through the example below, and consider the reasons why problem-solving might be helpful.

Remember that the problem-solving technique is only helpful for practical worries. We should not use this for our hypothetical worries, as they tend to not have a solution.

Problem solving is an evidence-based intervention that helps us to distance ourselves from difficult problems. It can allow us time and space to think about the different types of practical solutions that may be available. Problem solving has 7 stages, which can be found in the following handout.

Step 1: Identify the problem

- Identify what it is that you are worrying about (try to be as precise as possible).
- Choose a practical worry that you want to get sorted or one you absolutely need to address.
- If your practical worry is large, break it down and treat each part separately.

Step 2: Identify the solutions

- Try and identify as many solutions as possible. At this stage, nothing should be rejected no matter how ridiculous some solutions may seem.
- Ensure you write all of these ideas down, as we may forget or lose track of some really good options. Use table A to help with this.

Step 3: Analyse the strengths and weaknesses

- For each of the solutions identified in step 2, analyse their strengths and weaknesses.
- Use table A to help with this

Step 4: Select a solution

- Based on the analysis of strengths and weaknesses, choose a solution

Step 5: Plan implementation

- The solution may require planning. Think of the 4Ws: what do I need; where do I need to go; when will I do it; who can help me.

Step 6: Implement

- Put the plan into action.

Step 7: Review

- How well did the plan work? If the plan worked well, you can continue to apply it.
- If not, the advantage of problem solving is that there are still other options available.
- If the plan did not work, go back to step 5 and select a new solution. You can then repeat stages 6 and 7 with the new solution.

Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis			
What are the strengths and weaknesses for each solution? For each solution considered write these below			
Solution	Strengths	Weaknesses	Choice Yes/no/maybe

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) – A relaxation technique

Make sure that you are sitting comfortably, relax your arms by your sides and uncross your legs. Allow your attention to focus on your body. During this exercise we will be relaxing different muscle groups, by tensing each muscle for about 5 seconds, before relaxing and releasing the tension. The exercise should not be painful at any point, so if you notice any pain, omit that muscle group. We should not be straining any muscles and we should not experience any cramps.

Start by bringing your attention to your breathing. Focus on your breath as you continue to breathe in and out... allow this to relax you. Then start focusing on individual muscle groups within the body.

Recommended sequence:

Right hand and arm – clench one hand tightly for a few seconds as you breathe in, then relax as you breathe out. Bend an elbow and tense all the muscles in the arm as you breathe in, then relax as you breathe out.

Left hand and arm – repeat as above.

Right leg – tense the leg by lifting the knee slightly, then relax.

Left leg – repeat as above.

Stomach and chest – tense the stomach muscles as tightly as possible, and then relax. Take a deep breath in and hold it for a few seconds, and then go back to normal breathing.

Back muscles – pull the shoulders back as you breathe in, relaxing and bringing them back down as you breathe out.

Neck and throat – slowly roll your neck from side to side.

Face – frown as hard as you can for a few seconds, then relax. Raise your eyebrows as high as you can, then relax. Clench your jaw for a few seconds, then relax.

Session 5

Negative thoughts in anxiety

It has been estimated that we have anywhere from 25,000 to 50,000 thoughts a day, and people generate thoughts so automatically they are unaware that it is happening.

When we are feeling low or anxious, our thoughts tend to be negative and biased. However, people tend to accept their thoughts 'facts' and 'truths', as opposed to 'opinions'.

One of the most powerful actions you can take in combating our negative thoughts is to notice and acknowledge the impact that they have on our mood, and make a conscious choice to challenge and change the way we think. Often enough we can't control how we feel, but we can choose to control how we think. There's an active choice you can take—if you are aware that changing your thinking is important for your wellbeing.

The thought train

People get in to a habit of thinking negatively much like they get in to the morning routine when heading to work. We wake up in the morning at a certain time, we get dressed, have breakfast and a coffee, leave the house at 7:17 every morning and walk down to the station to get the 7:25 train every morning. There are lots of different trains that run through the station but we always get on the 7:25 train. We don't pay attention to the other trains coming in and out as we know that the 7:25 is coming along and we are used to that train.

We have thoughts come in and out of our mind all day every day, thousands of them, some helpful, some bad, some negative, some positive, some completely neutral, some important and others not.

However much like our morning routine we have got in to a pattern of listening to those negative thoughts, we don't pay any attention to those other thoughts coming in much like the train, because we always end up on the same train the same pattern of thought. However, what would happened if we were to jump on a different train, a different thought? This metaphor is to encourage you to think about getting on a train – or engaging with a negative thought – as a conscious choice we are making.

It is possible to take action and to change patterns of thinking on your own. The first step is to understand the types of thinking and patterns that we fall in to.

Unhelpful thinking traps

Over time we tend to get into the habit of falling into unhelpful thinking traps. There is often a pattern to these traps meaning that the often seem like an automatic habit. In order to challenge our thoughts, we first need to understand the way we think, as being able to do this allows us to recognize patterns and gives us the ability to take a step back and really consider what we are doing.

Read the list of thinking traps below and thinking about when you might have used them. It is likely that you will relate to some more than others, but some might seem very familiar. Once we can identify our unhelpful thinking traps, we can then respond to them more helpfully, telling ourselves that “this is a thinking trap (i.e. Mind Reading) and I can let go of this habit”.

<i>Mental Filter</i> Noticing only what the filter allows us to notice, and dismissing anything else. Like looking through 'gloomy specs', only catching the negative stuff, while anything more positive or realistic is ignored or dismissed. Am I only noticing the bad stuff? Am I filtering out the positives? Am I wearing those 'gloomy specs'? What would be more realistic? What am I ignoring?	<i>Mind-Reading</i> Assuming we know what others are thinking (usually about us). Am I assuming I know what others are thinking? What's the evidence? Those are my own thoughts, not theirs. Is there another, more balanced way of looking at it?
<i>Prediction</i> Believing we know what's going to happen in the future Am I thinking that I can predict the future? How likely is it that that might really happen?	<i>Compare and despair</i> Seeing only the good and positive aspects in others, and comparing ourselves negatively against them. Am I doing that 'compare and despair' thing? What would be a more balanced and helpful way of looking at it?
<i>Critical self</i> Putting ourselves down, self-criticism, blaming ourselves for events or situations that are not totally our responsibility. There I go, that internal bully's at it again. Would most people who really know me say that about me? Is this something that I am totally responsible for?	<i>Shoulds and musts</i> Thinking or saying 'I should' (or shouldn't) and 'I must' puts pressure on ourselves, and sets up unrealistic expectations. Am I putting more pressure on myself, setting up expectations of myself that are almost impossible? What would be more realistic?
<i>Catastrophising</i> Imagining and believing that the worst possible thing will happen. Thinking that the worst possible thing will definitely happen isn't really helpful right now. What's most likely to happen?	<i>Emotional reasoning</i> I feel bad so it must be bad! I feel anxious so I must be in danger Just because it feels bad, it doesn't necessarily mean it is bad. My feelings are just a reaction to my thoughts.

<i>Mountains and molehills</i> Exaggerating the risk of danger, or the negatives. Minimising the odds of how things are most likely to turn out, or minimising positives. Am I exaggerating the risk of danger, and minimising the evidence that it's most likely to be okay? How would someone else see it?	<i>Evaluations / Judgements</i> Making judgements about events, ourselves, others, or the world, rather than describing what we actually see and have evidence for. I'm making an evaluation about the situation or person. It's how I make sense of the world, but that doesn't mean my judgements are always right or helpful. Is there another perspective?
<i>Black and white/ all or nothing thinking</i> Believing that something or someone can be only good or bad, right or wrong, rather than anything in-between or 'shades of grey' Things aren't either totally white or totally black – there are shades of grey. Where is this on the spectrum?	<i>Memories</i> Current situations and events can trigger upsetting memories, leading us to believe that the danger is here and now, rather than in the past, causing us distress right now This is just a reminder of the past. That was then, and this is now. Even though this memory makes me feel upset, it's not actually happening again right now.

Thought challenging

When we challenge thoughts, it is important to remember that we cannot challenge the following:

- Statements of fact
- Questions
- Thoughts that are not specific, but are general and/or global

Taking your thought to court

Step 1: Identify the thoughts and write them down (be specific on what the thought is).

Step 2: Identify the emotion and rate the intensity of the emotion (0-10 scale; 0 being not at all and 10 being most intense).

Step 3: Pick which thought you want to challenge

Step 4: Identify evidence to support the thought (remember, only facts that would stand up in a court of law).

Step 5: Identify evidence against the thought (remember, only facts that would stand up in a court of law).

Step 6: Weigh up the evidence and write down an alternative, more realistic and balanced thought.

Step 7: Re-rate the intensity of your emotion.

Thought diary template

Thought	Emotion and intensity (0-10)	Evidence <i>for</i> the thought	Evidence <i>against</i> the thought	New alternative thought	Re-rated emotion and intensity (0-10)

Session 6

Relapse prevention

Well done for all of the hard work you have put in throughout the course! Hopefully you will have learnt different skills that you can continue to implement in the future. We also hope that you have started to make progress towards the goals you originally set.

The next step is to keep the progress going, and to think about how you will continue to stay well. Difficulties will come up in the future, but now you have your own toolkit to help deal with these obstacles. Remember that the skills we have learnt should be practiced regularly, even when we are feeling well. These are new skills, and will require regular practice and fine-tuning.

It is common to feel anxious about ending treatment and to have concerns about anxiety returning after the group ends. Even though you have been coming along to the group, it was your individual effort at home which has helped you to feel better. Don't forget that it is the work you have done in between sessions that helped you to make progress!

Relapse vs lapse

It is very common for people to worry about becoming unwell again, and fear that their symptoms will return. This anxiety can cause us to watch out for any signs of anxiety or depression. When we notice these signs, we are more likely to react negatively to them, and misinterpret them as a sign that things are slipping back. Always remember that it is normal for our mood to fluctuate regularly, and that we should expect that this will happen at times. A lapse does not necessarily mean that we have relapsed.

Lapse: A lapse is a brief return to feeling anxious or down, or changes in our behaviour as a result. A lapse in how we feel or what we do is normal. As long as we don't let it maintain itself in a vicious cycle, and we put back into practice the techniques we have learnt, we can get back on track. A lapse can become a relapse if you allow it to take control due to seeing it as a sign of failure. The key thing is to see a lapse for what it is, just a temporary thing and not let it make you give up. Continuing to do and act against any off-putting thoughts and continuing to do things despite feeling like avoiding them can help a lapse not turn into a relapse. Don't give up.

Relapse: A relapse is when negative thinking and unhelpful behaviours creep back over a longer period, and things start to spiral again making you feel worse. Often when a relapse occurs it is easy to think of it as a total setback, rather than the fact you have the skills and techniques that helped before to help again. The key thing is to notice early warning signs of the symptoms. If these are starting to impact you again, you can work your way out of it using the strategies that helped previously.

Making a staying well plan

It is important to consolidate what you have learned over the past five weeks and to create your own *staying well plan* which you can use in the weeks and months ahead.

1. What difficulties did I ask for help with? What things did I want to work on?

2. What was keeping the problem going? (behaviours, thoughts, difficult situations/life events)

3. What progress have I made towards my goals?

4. What ideas and tools have I learned which have helped me?

5. What are the positive consequences of these improvements on different areas of my life?
(work life, home, family life, friendships, social life, hobbies and interests)

6. What obstacles might lead to a setback, make it harder for me to stay well? (stressful life events/situations, motivation, negative thinking)

7. My early warning signs: what would I notice first if I started to have difficulties again?
(changes in my thoughts, changes in my behaviour, changes in my emotions, or how I feel physically)

8. What can I do to start using the strategies that I have learned to help me feel better again?

9. How can I build on what I have achieved? What further goals could I set up to keep me well?

Scheduling a review time

Once we have completed a course of therapy, and completed our staying well plan, it is important that we regularly check in on ourselves. This can help us to monitor our progress, and check for any signs that we are slipping back into old habits.

Having a regular review slot with ourselves can be a really helpful way of monitoring our progress, and can help us to catch any warning signs early on. We would always recommend keeping to a regular weekly timeslot to help you to keep on track, for example, every Friday at 7pm.

During this review, check in on how your mood has been, and whether it has been a good week. Use the template below as an example of what you can include in this review.

Even if you are feeling well, still continue with your review. This way we can learn from things that went well, and can use this again in the future. Think about how you made it a good week, and how you dealt with difficult moments. Consider how you have used the techniques during the week, and how this may have helped make it a good week.

Although it can be difficult to do, it is important to reflect on things that have not gone so well. When doing reflecting on difficulties, remember to always be compassionate towards yourself. Use the setback as a learning experience, think about what you could have done differently or how you would manage this again in the future.

Remember that it is common to have setbacks, the important thing to do is recover from it. Use your staying well plan that you created earlier to help you to build an action plan to get back on track.