



Talking Therapies

Workbook...

LTC No. 6

Wellbeing and diabetes

A self-help guide



0300 365 2000



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Tip

Work through the above contents and tick once completed.

What is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy?

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a practical type of psychological therapy that can help you to change the way that you think ('cognitive') and what you do ('behaviour'). Making practical changes to these areas can have a positive impact on your mood.

CBT has proven to be one of the most effective ways of improving our wellbeing as a self-help approach and has been endorsed by the organisation that creates guidelines for NHS treatment: the [National Institute of Clinical Excellence](#) (NICE).

How thoughts, feelings and behaviours can work together

When faced with potentially overwhelming problems in everyday life, it can be helpful to break them down into smaller and manageable pieces. This makes it easier to see how they are connected and how they might affect you.

CBT considers five main areas:

- **Situation** (a problem, event or difficult situation in any aspect of your life)
- **Thoughts** (things going through your mind)
- **Feelings** (the emotions you might be experiencing)
- **Physical reactions** (the physiological sensations in your body)
- **Behaviour** (the actions you might/might not engage in)

Each of these different areas often affects the others; the way in which you think about a problem can affect how your body reacts physiologically and emotionally. It can also alter what you do about it.



Example 1: a high glucose reading

Let's consider a situation where Ash and Ayesha both notice they have a high glucose reading.

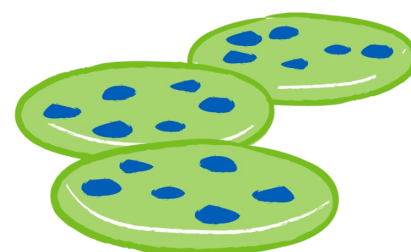
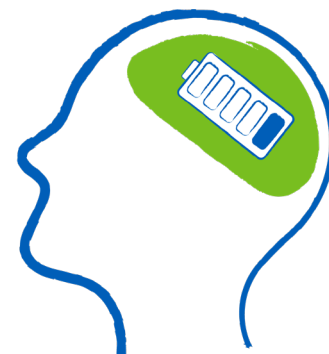
Ash

Ash has the thought, "I am useless. I will never be able to get my diabetes under control. There's no point bothering to control it if this is what happens." He then feels low and miserable.

When Ash feels low, and that there is no point in bothering to control his diabetes, he eats some chocolate biscuits. Eating chocolate biscuits increases his blood sugar levels, so that his next reading is also high.

Although Ash eats the biscuits to try to feel better, it reinforces his thoughts that he will never get his diabetes under control.

In this way, his thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are working in a **vicious circle** to maintain his difficulties and his low mood.



Ayesha

Ayesha has the thought 'Oh well! I wonder what caused that? Is there anything that I can do now or change in the future to stop it happening again?'.

She is curious about what caused this high reading and keen to learn more to improve her management of diabetes.

She feels good about herself and feels in control. She also feels compassion towards herself.



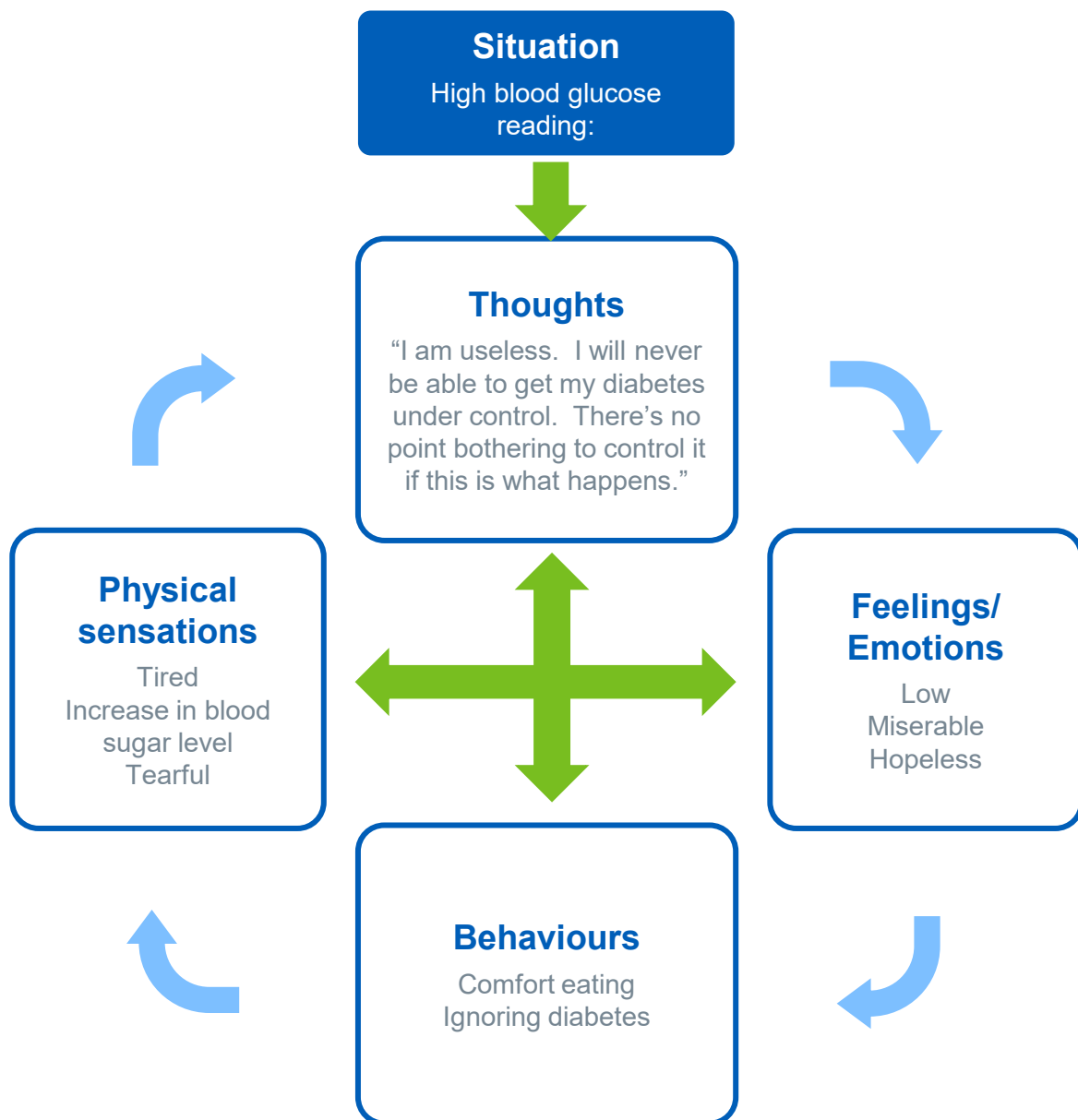
Example 1: a high glucose reading

Helpful and unhelpful responses

Situation	Unhelpful	Helpful
Thoughts	"I am useless. I will never be able to get my diabetes under control. There's no point bothering to control it if this is what happens."	"Oh well! It's only one reading. I wonder what caused that? Is there anything that I can do now or change in the future to stop it happening again?"
Feelings	Low, miserable.	Positive, in control, compassion towards herself
Physical	Tearful, increase in blood sugar level.	None – feel reasonably comfortable.
Behaviour	Comfort eating.	Review what I had for breakfast. Make a plan for next meal. Start some physical activity such as housework or go for a walk to bring blood sugars down.

The 'Unhelpful' column demonstrates all-or-nothing thinking: one high reading leads to negative thoughts and a feeling of helplessness and lack of control. This is then related to behaviour that seems like giving-up. However, recognising that it is only one reading and applying a problem-solving approach helps the person to feel more in control again, and this has a positive impact on mood.

The way in which thoughts, moods and behaviours work in a vicious circle is shown in the diagram overleaf. This is known as the '**CBT cycle**' or '**five areas model**'.



Why use CBT for diabetes?

Living with diabetes can have a significant impact on an individual's psychological wellbeing, and coping with the day-to-day demands of diabetes can be difficult.

CBT can help you to better understand the way that you think ('cognitive') and what you do ('behaviour') and help you to learn skills to interpret situations in a more helpful, more balanced way.

These changes can help you to feel better, as well as help you to feel more in control of your diabetes. Unlike some of the other talking treatments it focuses on the 'here and now' problems.

The first skill to learn in CBT

The first, very important, skill is to be able to identify these five key areas (situations, thoughts, feelings, physical reactions and behaviours) and raise your awareness as to how these may be working to maintain difficulties e.g. difficulties in managing your blood sugar levels.

To practice these skills, think about the following situations, and try to identify thoughts, feelings, behaviours and the effect on your diabetes management. It may be that you notice some thoughts which lead to low mood or worries, and in turn lead to behaviours which are unhelpful in the management of your diabetes.

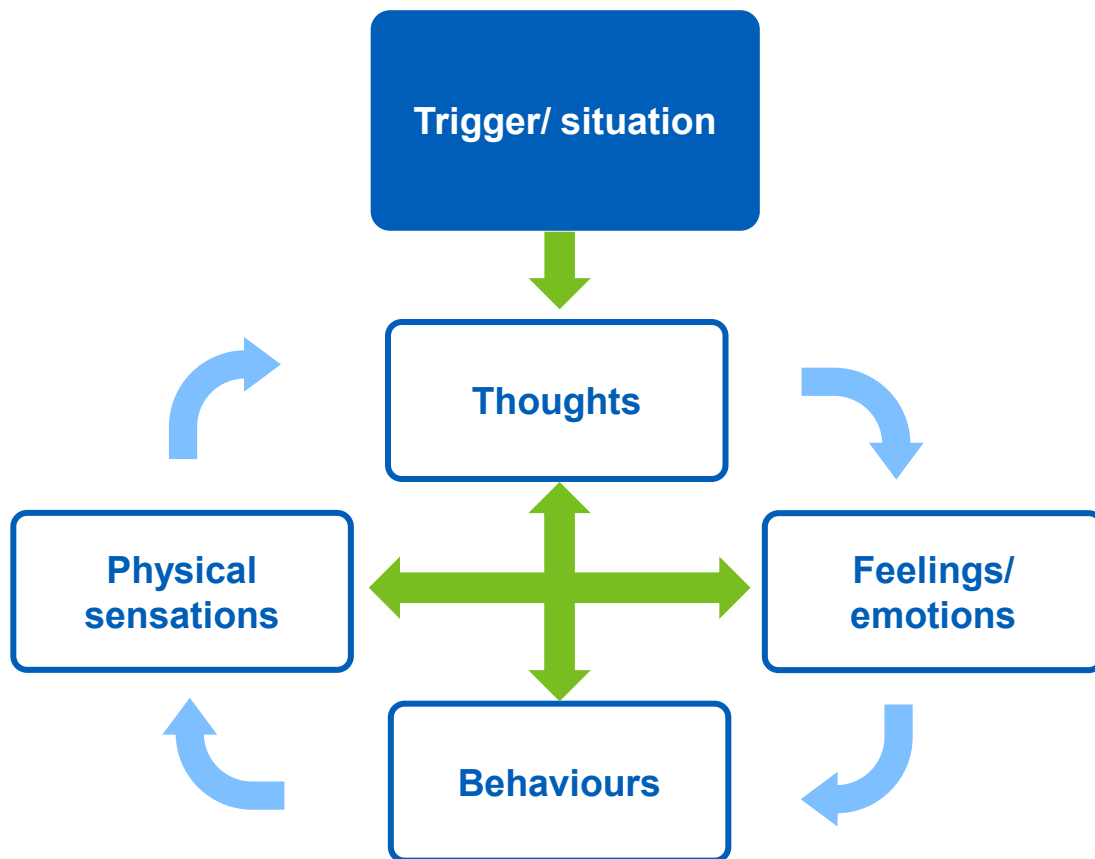
Possible situations:

- Think of a time when you felt stressed
- Think of a time when you had a bad day
- Think of the last time you had a bad blood glucose result from a test.
- Have there been any times you've felt worried about social situations e.g. where food is involved, when food may be late, when you're not sure what the food is, when people around you aren't aware you have diabetes.
- Think of a time when you've planned to do exercise and feel too tired to do it.

Think about each of these questions for each situation:

- What went through your mind?
- How did you feel?
- What did you do?
- What was the effect on how you manage your diabetes / on your blood sugar levels?





People all have their own way of coping with their difficulties, and there is no right or wrong way to cope. However, the unintended consequences of the things we do to cope can contribute to maintaining low mood, stress, or anxiety.

It can be helpful to begin to think about the strategies we use to cope with difficulties and consider whether these are helpful or unhelpful for our long-term goals by thinking about the unintended consequences.

Reflect

- Do you recognise this cycle in your life?
- What things do you avoid?



What matters to me

Values are what we find important and meaningful in our lives. They might change over time, but overall, are about how you want to behave and act.

These are different for everybody. Sometimes, things that we do to cope with or manage our condition do not lead us in the direction of what is important to us and sometimes might even lead us away.

Not living in line with the things that are important to us can have a negative impact on our wellbeing; we might feel low in mood, frustrated, or our physical health might suffer.

Leaving aside any obstacles for the time being, think about what is important to you and write a quick summary for each of the four areas overleaf.

For example: “to live a healthy life and take care of my body” (physical wellbeing), or “to be a good friend to people who need me, and to enjoy my time with the people I love” (relationships).



What matters to me

Recreation and leisure

e.g. doing activities that are pleasurable for me, helping those who are less fortunate

Family and relationships

e.g. being a loving spouse, being a supportive friend

Work, education and learning

e.g. being knowledgeable about current affairs, increasing my skillset at work

Physical and mental wellbeing

e.g. living a spiritual life, taking time to check-in with my mental health

Setting goals

Goals are very important when managing mood with CBT.

Being more aware of what is important to you may help you to live a more meaningful life. Setting goals will help you to focus on what you need or would like to work towards, and to give yourself a sense of achievement when you accomplish what you have been aiming for. When thinking about setting yourself some goals, there are some important things to remember:

Goals come in different sizes

- **Short-term goals** What you would like to achieve within the next 1-2 **weeks**.
- **Medium-term goals** What would you like to achieve within the next 1-2 **months**
- **Long-term goals** What would you like to achieve in the **next year and beyond**

You can start anywhere. Some people prefer to start by setting short-term goals and building up to long-term goals (e.g. establishing a regular jogging habit before deciding to sign up for a charity 10k, for example). Other people find it easier to start with a long-term goal and then break it down into more achievable shorter-term goals.

Make sure they are SMART

- **Specific** - What, when, where, with who?
- **Measurable** - How will you know you have completed this activity?
- **Achievable** - Do you have everything you need to achieve this?
- **Realistic** - Is it realistic? Is it possible?
- **Time-focused** - What time, what day, for how long?



Setting goals

EXAMPLE

Keeping in contact with people

is important to me

Short term goal (1-2 weeks)

Walk over to my next-door neighbour and invite her over for a cup of tea tomorrow

Medium term goal (1-2 months)

Visiting my daughter next month for two days

Long-term goal (6-12 months plus)

Go to an extended family get-together

is important to me

Short term goal

Medium term goal

Long-term goal

is important to me

Short term goal

Medium term goal

Long-term goal

is important to me

Short term goal

Medium term goal

Long-term goal

Problem Solving

Problems and obstacles appear constantly in our lives and we all have different problem-solving abilities. Some people are better at solving problems in certain areas of their lives than others. Some problems or obstacles that come up can be more difficult to solve than others and some may leave you feeling overwhelmed or helpless.

When could I use problem solving?

Problem solving can be used at any time when you have a problem or difficulty and need to identify a solution. Problem solving can also help you to achieve the goals that you have set yourself as you can use the techniques to overcome obstacles that may get in your way.

We want to be able to think of a variety of ideas to solve our problems, not just a few. For this we use brainstorming which helps to increase our flexibility and creativity. It also helps to concentrate energy on solving the task ("How can I go forward") rather than negative emotions and thoughts ("Why does everything go wrong").

The following three steps will help you to overcome these barriers:



Step 1: Write down the problem



Step 2: Write down as many solutions as you can think of



Step 3: Choose a solution to try out

Managing Worries

What is worry?

Everyone experiences worry from time to time, especially when faced with difficult or uncertain situations.

However, some people worry a lot to the point that it begins to affect their wellbeing and causes chronic feelings of nervousness, stress and anxiety.

Worry can be defined as a type of self-talk in which we predict that negative events will happen in the future and over-estimate the possibility of disaster. Worrying thoughts tend to be characterised by 'what if?' statements, for example:

- What if my sugar reading is high?
- What if I'm caught in traffic and don't have a snack with me?
- What if my manager doesn't understand my condition?
- What if I get ill?
- What if I lose my job?

The Anxiety Equation:

$$\text{Anxiety} = \frac{\text{High estimation of danger}}{\text{Low estimation of coping abilities}}$$

Managing Worries

Real vs. hypothetical worry

There are two types of worry that we will be looking at in this workbook.

One is what we call real worry. This is when your worries centre on a real life, current problem that needs to be solved. For example, if you were told that your blood sugar readings were quite high you might worry about things. With real worry we are often trying to solve the problem by worrying about it, running through different scenarios and strategies in our minds in the hope of finding a solution.

Another type of worry is hypothetical worry. This is when we worry about events that may never happen, and which we have no control or influence over. For example, you might worry about possible health difficulties from diabetes like sight loss.

This may set off a chain of further worries, for example “what if I can’t work and have problems financially, what will my children do if there is no income, and then...”. This chain can be very difficult to stop once it gains momentum, leaving you feeling anxious, nervous and tense.



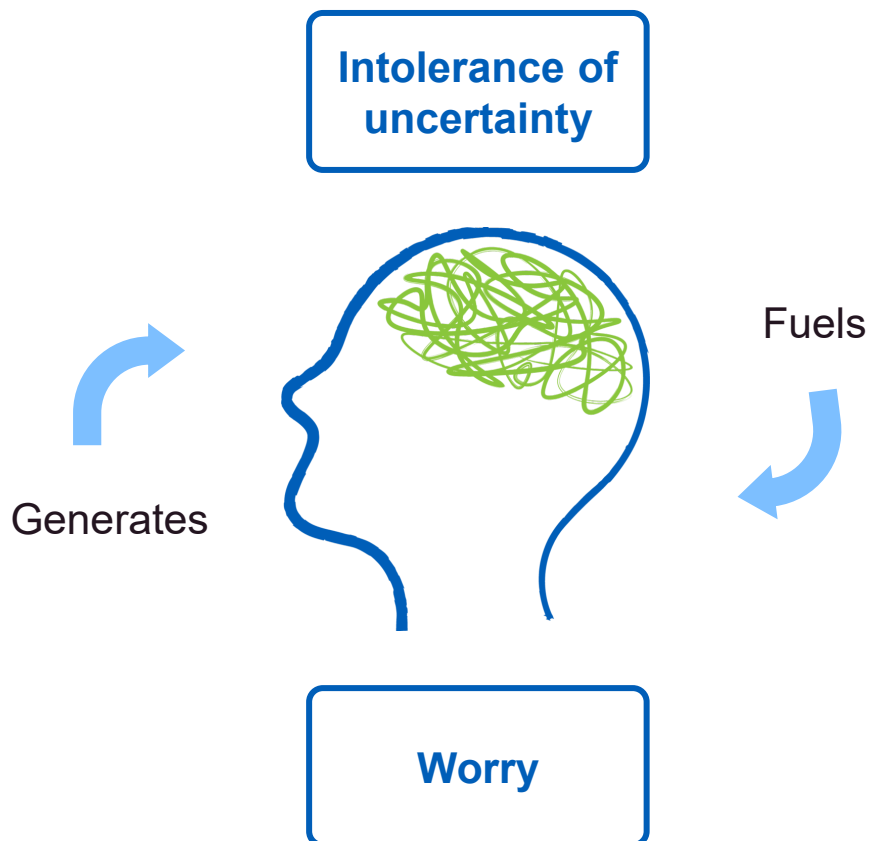
The role of uncertainty

Think about the types of things that you worry about. Would you be worried if they were completely certain?

If you could gaze into a crystal ball and know with absolute certainty what will happen with your career, your finances, your family and your health, would you still worry about them? The answer is probably no.

Worrying tends to be about future events, for which certainty is impossible.

Worrying is a reaction to uncertainty. People who worry a lot tend to have a low tolerance of uncertainty. Even a small amount of uncertainty can cause worry.



Unhelpful behaviours

In worry, our behaviours are also altered. For example, we may be trying to achieve certainty by finding out more information, or putting off making decisions until we can be absolutely certain that we will make the right decision.

Look at the list of unhelpful strategies below and tick the ones that apply to you.

☐ Looking for lots of information

Looking for lots of information to help us come to a decision only increases the uncertainty and triggers more worry.

The additional information does not necessarily make things clearer but just gives us more information to consider and worry about.

Also, with more information, there is increased risk of finding contradictory facts, which again leads to more uncertainty and worry.

☐ Scanning for uncertainty

Worriers are on the lookout for uncertainty nearly all the time.

Scanning does not mean that uncertainty is reduced, in fact the opposite happens- it increases.

☐ Avoiding committing yourself

Rather than choosing to commit or not commit, worriers avoid doing either, which leaves them hanging in uncertainty

Worriers often avoid commitments because they can't be sure how it will turn out

☐ Procrastination

This is where worriers find every excuse to avoid dealing with an uncertain problem or issue e.g. putting off a conversation with the GP about current diet because they aren't sure how the conversation will go.

Unhelpful behaviours

☐ Seeking reassurance and avoiding responsibility

It is helpful in the short term because we usually feel much better once someone has told us that everything will be ok, but it is generally short lived. Worriers can seek reassurance repetitively, but this triggers more uncertainty and worry.

☐ Overprotecting others - avoiding giving others responsibility

Worriers tend to look out for others and at the same time worry about them. This is a “just in case” strategy.

☐ Checking and re-checking-avoiding making mistakes

Worriers often feel uncertain about decisions or choices they have made and consequently revisit decisions or choices to see if they have done the right thing.

The ‘what if’ question sows a seed of doubt, so we check the answer to reduce worry, however this only creates more.

☐ Post-mortem worry

Once worriers have made up their mind about a decision, they then doubt whether they have made the right decision. They will ask “what if I have made the wrong decision?” Their questioning stimulates uncertainty.

☐ Thought suppression

One unhelpful way to deal with worries is to try and push upsetting thoughts out of your mind or trying not to think about something that is worrying you. See the Pink Elephant experiment on the next page to see why this may not be helpful.

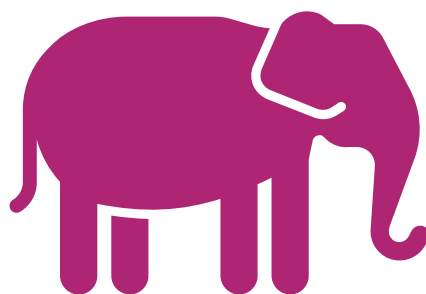
Unhelpful behaviours

The Pink Elephant experiment

Step 1: Close your eyes and try very hard **not to** think about a pink elephant for the next 60 seconds. **What happened?** Chances are all you could think about was a pink elephant! Often people find that by trying to push thoughts or images out of their mind they come back even stronger.

Step 2: Close your eyes and try very hard to keep thinking about a pink elephant for the next 60 seconds. Try and hold that image of a pink elephant in your mind. Were you able to do it, or did your mind wander?

Suppressing thoughts is not a helpful or effective way of dealing with your worries. Trying to push worries out of your mind and stop thinking about them will probably make them worse. For more effective strategies, see the next section on **Helpful Behaviours**.

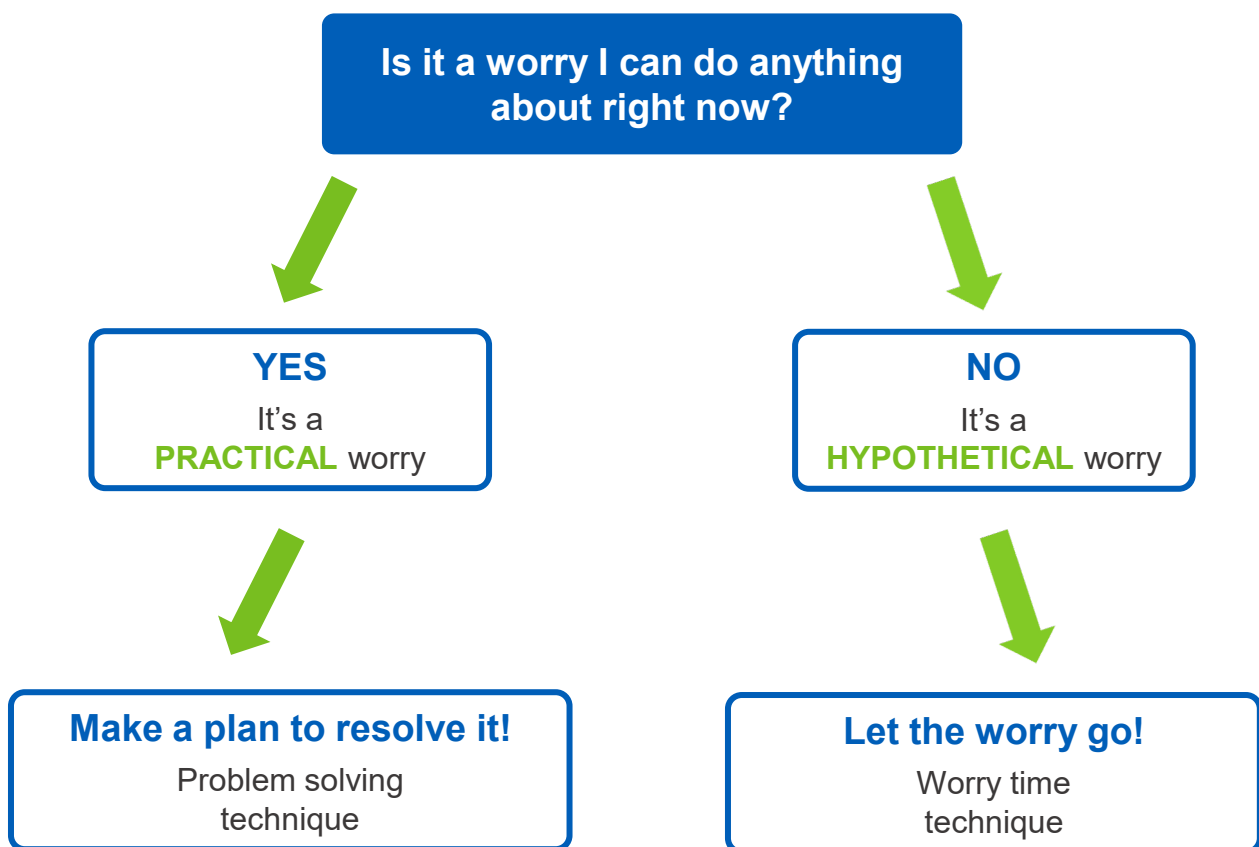


Helpful Behaviours

The worry tree

The worry tree is a good way of deciding what type of worry you are dealing with and what strategies would be most helpful.

Start at the top of the worry tree and work your way down.



Strategies for Hypothetical worry

Worry time

As we discovered in the unhelpful behaviours section, trying suppressing worries or pushing them out of your mind isn't particularly effective.

A helpful alternative is to **postpone** worry. Agree with yourself a time of day when you have permission to worry, for example at 6pm each evening. Allow yourself 15-20 minutes. If you find yourself wanting to worry about things at any other time of day or night, make the decision to worry about it later, during your pre-arranged 'Worry Time'.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhism and is about taking a non-judgemental approach to your thoughts and worries.

The idea of mindfulness is to let go of your worries without making any attempts to push them away or get involved with them. Try to become a casual observer of your worries – notice that they are there, observe them and then watch them drift away in their own time, just like watching clouds passing across the sky.



Five ways to be more mindful

- **Be aware of your worries:** Notice and acknowledge what you are worrying about
- **Observe and listen:** Try to not react to the worry. Instead, observe the worry and listen with interest to what it is about.
- **Let go:** Visualise the worry as a transitional thought, much like a passing cloud or wave on a beach, which comes and goes.
- **Focus on the here and now:** Focus on your breathing, any physical sensations you are currently feeling (e.g. your feet on the floor) and your surroundings.
- **Practice makes perfect:** This can be difficult at first but keep practising and it should get easier.



Strategies for Hypothetical worry

Relaxation

Relaxation is a helpful way for people of us to manage our mood and can help alleviate symptoms of anxiety and stress.

Relaxation can help you calm down and take a step back from a stressful situation. Relaxation is very individual. What is relaxing for some may not be to others! Although relaxation won't necessarily eliminate the cause of the anxiety, it can make you feel more able to deal with stress once you've released some of the tension in your body and cleared your thoughts.



Try to make relaxation a part of your daily routine. A good time to do relaxation exercises is before bed, as this will help with sleep.



Relaxation can be tricky at first so try not to feel too disheartened if it isn't effective straight away. .



There are different types of relaxation exercises. Some focus on breathing, some on the body and some on visualisation

You could try the exercises available on the NHS Berkshire Talking Therapies website:

[Progressive Muscle Relaxation – Brief Audio Exercise 1](#)

[Progressive Muscle Relaxation – Extended Audio Exercise 2](#)

Strategies for dealing with practical worries

Problem solving

Like uncertainty, problems are an inevitable part of life. Not recognising or dealing with problems early leads to the snowball effect. This can then make the problem more difficult to solve.

The first step to problem solving is becoming better at recognising problems early and then acting on them. We can use our feelings as early warning signs that there is a problem we need to attend to. We can also learn to notice our behaviours and use these as early warning signs.

- ☐ **Is there anything you know you do when struggling with a problem?**
- ☐ **Is there something you do habitually that is a sign there is something going on for you?**

We can also use our body by being aware of headaches, upset stomach and tension. This could signal to us that there is a problem.

Reflect

Problem solving involves taking the following steps:

- ☐ **Define the problem**
- ☐ **Think of as many solutions as possible no matter how ridiculous they may seem**
- ☐ **Consider the advantages and disadvantages of each solution**
- ☐ **Choose a solution to implement**
- ☐ **Plan how you are going to implement the chosen solution**
- ☐ **Carry out the solution**
- ☐ **Review how it went. Were there any problems? Was it the right solution to choose? What did you learn?**

Maintaining Wellbeing

What does 'maintaining wellbeing' mean?

You will have worked through one or more of the self-help guides and completed them. At this time, when you are feeling that you have introduced positive change into your life by using the cognitive-behavioural techniques and strategies, it is important to reflect and plan for the future.

This will ensure that the level of wellbeing you are experiencing now is maintained in a healthy way and you are capable of facing challenges.

My vulnerability factors

Situations or events that make us more vulnerable to our difficulties

My precipitating factors

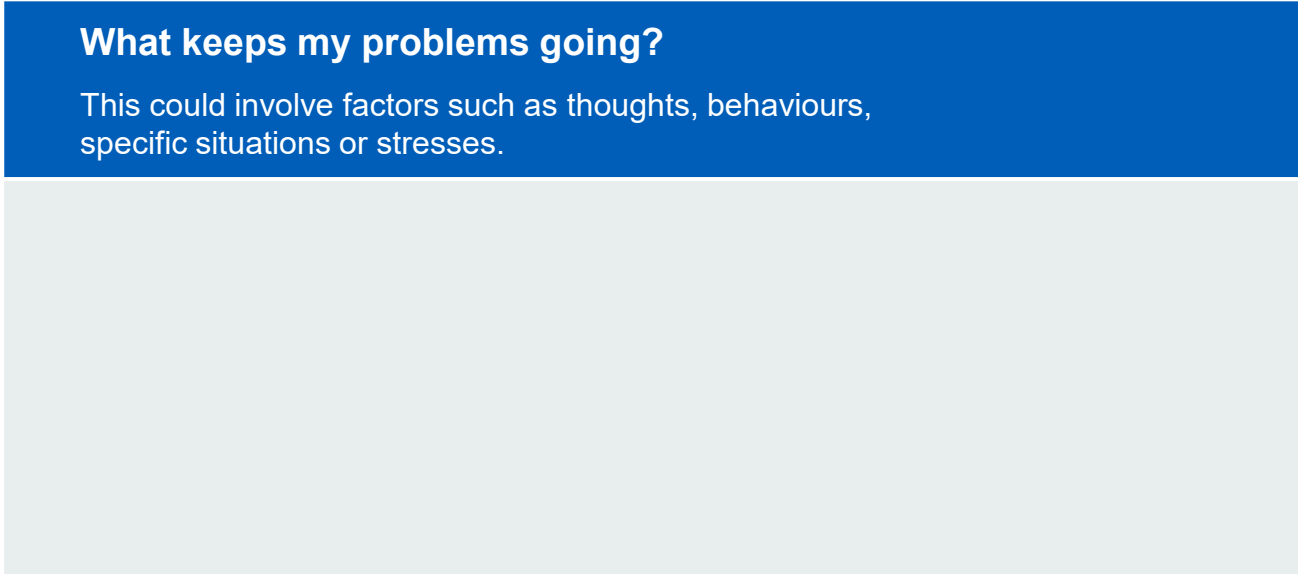
Situations or events that play an important part in the onset of our difficulties

My triggers

Situations or events in daily life that cause your difficulties

What keeps my problems going?

This could involve factors such as thoughts, behaviours, specific situations or stresses.



Maintaining Wellbeing

Stage B: My early warning signs

It can be useful to think about the early warning signs that will signal the start of the difficulties we experience. Try to think of them in relation to your thoughts, emotions, behaviours and physical sensations. Recognising them and recording them below is important for dealing with situations in the future. An example might be withdrawing from social situations or feeling unable to cope.

My early warning signs	An example	What action can I take to prevent my difficulties starting?	Why or how might this help?

Maintaining Wellbeing

Stage C: My goals

It is important for us to set goals to feel that we have something to work towards and ensure that we are making progress. An effective goal is one that is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and within a time-frame. These are sometimes known as ‘SMART’ goals. Fill in the table below making sure that you remember to factor in what the goal is, how you are going to know when you’ve achieved it, whether it is achievable and when it must be completed by.

Short term goals	Medium term goals	Long term goals

Stage D: Useful strategies

Write in the box below the techniques or strategies in the self-help guides that you have found useful and successful so you can refer back to them in the future:

Maintaining Wellbeing

Stage E: Practice makes perfect

The more that you practice the techniques and strategies you have learnt, the more you will be able to cope and master your difficulties. You may prefer certain techniques to others which is perfectly acceptable and as you become expert at applying them, you will know what works for you and what doesn't in different situations. Remember that it takes time and effort to learn these techniques and they have been proven to help individuals to manage and overcome symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Stage F: Overcoming setbacks

Experiencing setbacks is part of everyday life for everyone. Good days and bad days are a feature of our daily lives and it is important that we focus on coping with them and not overreacting if things don't go as planned. It is extremely common for people to experience fluctuations in their recovery which means that you might feel as if you have reached a plateau, are slipping backwards or are progressing faster than you thought. Overall, remember that a gradual improvement in your ability to manage your symptoms is what you are working towards. If you experience a setback, this is not a failure but a normal part of the recovery process. Try to view setbacks as learning opportunities which you can use to help devise a new plan of how to tackle the problem if it arises again.

Stage G: Keeping track of your progress

Continue to use the self-help guides to refer to and fill in the diaries and record sheets to monitor your progress.

Reward yourself if you have succeeded with a technique as if you were encouraging someone else to learn a new skill. Don't dwell on past difficulties but focus on what you have achieved and the targets you are working towards to overcoming your difficulties.

Notes

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Further resources



Workbooks

Centre for Clinical Interventions (CCI) - <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/>

A range of detailed resources and PDF workbooks available to download for free focusing on a range of depression and anxiety related difficulties.

Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS – <https://web.ntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp/>

Self-help guides free to download by PDF and print on a range of difficulties including anxiety and depression.

Smartphone apps (found on Apple and Google Play store)

WRAP – Wellness recovery action app

Mood Tools – Depression aid

Fear Tools – Anxiety kit

Insight Timer – Meditation app

Websites

Mind – <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Mental Health Foundation - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/>

Useful contacts...



Talking Therapies:

0300 365 2000

(Open 8am to 8pm Monday to Thursday
8am to 5pm Friday)

Email:

talkingtherapies@berkshire.nhs.uk

Other contacts:

Berkshire Crisis Team:

0800 129 9999

(24 hours, specialist service for
immediate mental health crisis)

Samaritans:

116 123

(24 hours, confidential listening service)

NHS Direct / out of hours:

111

(24 hours, physical and mental
health concerns)

In an emergency always call 999

