



Talking Therapies

# Workbook...

LTC No. 1

## Living with a long-term health condition

An Introductory Workbook



**0300 365 2000**



# Contents of this booklet

<input type="checkbox"/> Living with a long-term health condition.....	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Introducing Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.....	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem statement.....	8
<input type="checkbox"/> Five areas formulation.....	9
<input type="checkbox"/> My values.....	12
<input type="checkbox"/> Setting goals.....	14
<input type="checkbox"/> Notes.....	15
<input type="checkbox"/> Further resources.....	16
<input type="checkbox"/> Useful contacts.....	17



Work through the above contents and tick once completed.

# Living with a long-term health condition

**Living with a long-term physical health condition, or persistent physical symptoms, can bring challenges which affect many areas of your life on a day-to-day basis. These may include things you enjoy doing, family relationships, your ability to work or study, your living arrangements, and your finances.**

Not everyone living with a long-term physical health condition will have the same experience, but many people living with health conditions, including some conditions that cause persistent physical discomfort say that they can struggle to manage at times. Some people may find that they only have to make small adjustments in order to live with the health problem, while others may feel that they need to change more aspects of their day-to-day life. Some people say that they worry about symptoms, about what they can and cannot do, or about the future. People also talk about feeling low and frustrated by living with a health problem. These are all common feelings and fears.



# Living with a long-term health condition

**This booklet aims to help you better understand the difficult emotions that you might experience as a result of your long-term health problems.**

When we feel down, we are more likely to see things in an unhelpful way; we become more self-critical and tend to interpret things negatively. During periods when we are feeling particularly low and unsettled, we change what we do and how we relate to others; some of the changes we adopt can have unintentional consequences that make us feel worse

'Low mood' can mean different things to different people. Commonly, it is characterised by feeling down, hopeless or just not enjoying activities the way you used to do.

When people feel low, they often also experience a lack of energy and motivation, finding it more difficult to concentrate and experience changes to their appetite and sleep.



# Introducing Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

## How can CBT help?

**CBT is one form of psychological treatment that focuses on the 'here and now'.**

Sometimes, when we feel low or anxious, we're more likely to see things in a negative way and our thoughts can become unhelpful.

Similarly, our behaviour can change and the things we do, or don't do, also become unhelpful or negative.

We can't directly change how we feel emotionally or physically, but by identifying, challenging and changing our unhelpful thoughts and behaviours, we can make changes indirectly.

Often, it is our response to a certain trigger or situation that causes us to feel the way we do.

It's not the trigger or situation itself that causes us to feel low or anxious, it's the way we interpret the situation or act because of it.

The ways we think, and act, are often our way of coping with the trigger or situation.

Although they can be helpful in the short-term, these coping mechanisms can end up being unhelpful in the long-term, especially if left unchanged.



# Introducing Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

## Why use CBT?

**CBT helps us to learn techniques to change our unhelpful coping mechanisms and gives us the tools to implement more helpful ways of coping.**

For example, we can learn ways to restructure negative thoughts, manage worries and solve problems more effectively, and change our unhelpful behaviour.

CBT, as a self-help approach, has been proven to be one of the most effective ways of improving wellbeing, and has been endorsed by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE; [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)) as a recommended treatment option for anxiety and depression.

### Reflect

- CBT does not tend to focus on the trigger or situation itself, as we want to focus on what we can control and change; our thoughts and behaviours.
- These are what maintain our cycles of low mood and/or anxiety in response to the trigger or situation.



# Introducing Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

## What is treatment like?

CBT is different from other therapies in that it relies on the person engaging with it to complete tasks outside of the sessions in order to learn the skills and techniques required to make changes to how they think, feel and behave.

These skills and techniques give us a toolkit for use now, and in the future, the next time life gets difficult.

## How do I get started?

### Step 1

Identify the trigger or triggers (for examples see pages 6 and 7).

### Step 2

Identify your symptoms under the following areas:

- Thoughts
- Feelings
- Physical
- Behaviour

Each of these different areas often affects the others.



### Step 3

Use techniques learnt throughout your sessions with your therapist to help break these cycles.



If you have any questions about how CBT works, please speak to your therapist.

# Problem statement

Complete the below to reflect your main difficulties currently:

My **main problem** is...

This is **triggered** by...

I **think** that...

I have **stopped / started**...

**Physically** I feel...

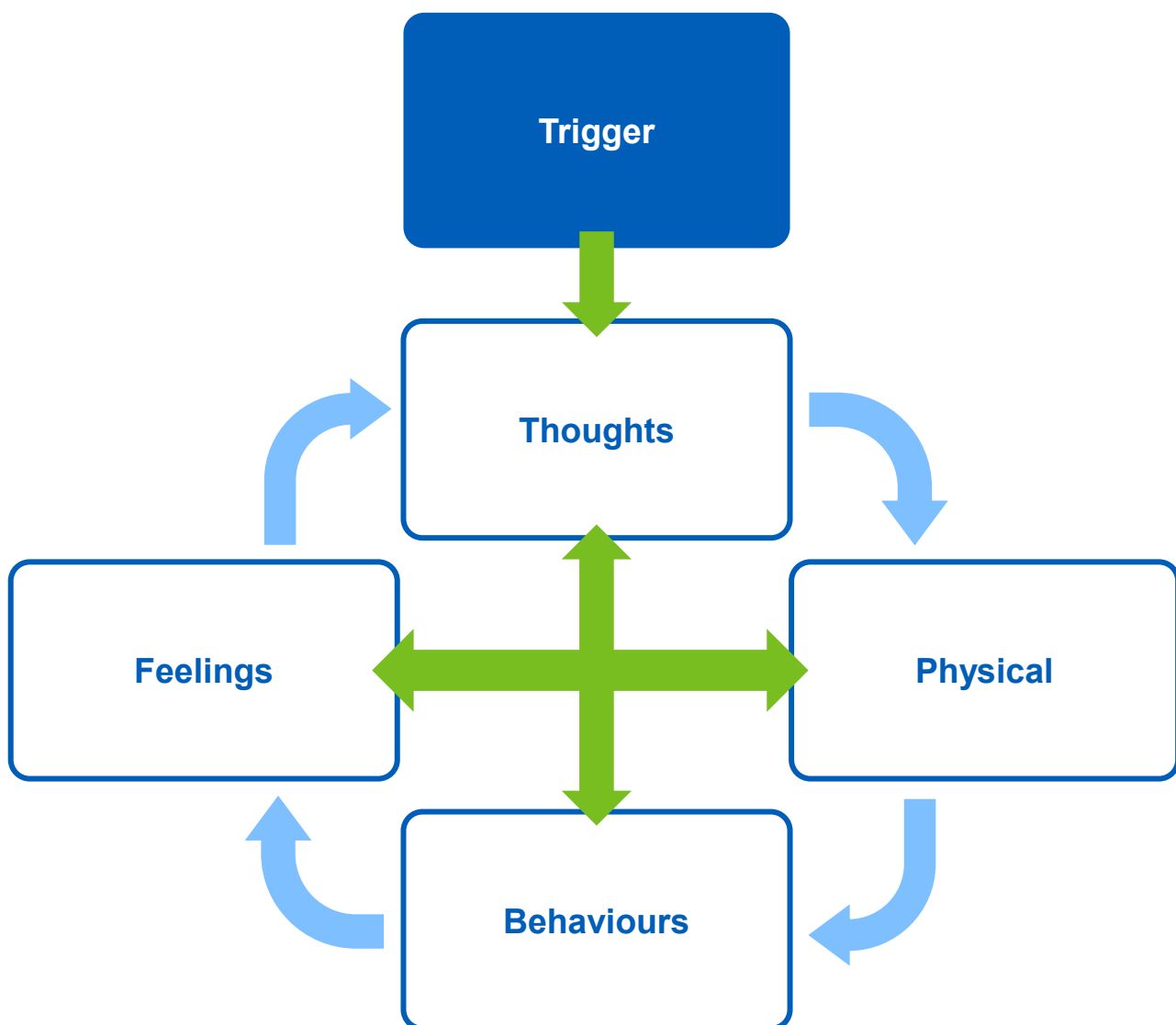
This has **all impacted** on...



# Five areas formulation

The way you think about a problem (**thoughts**), can affect how your body reacts (**physically**) and emotionally (**feelings**). It can also alter how you might act in response to that trigger (**behaviour**).

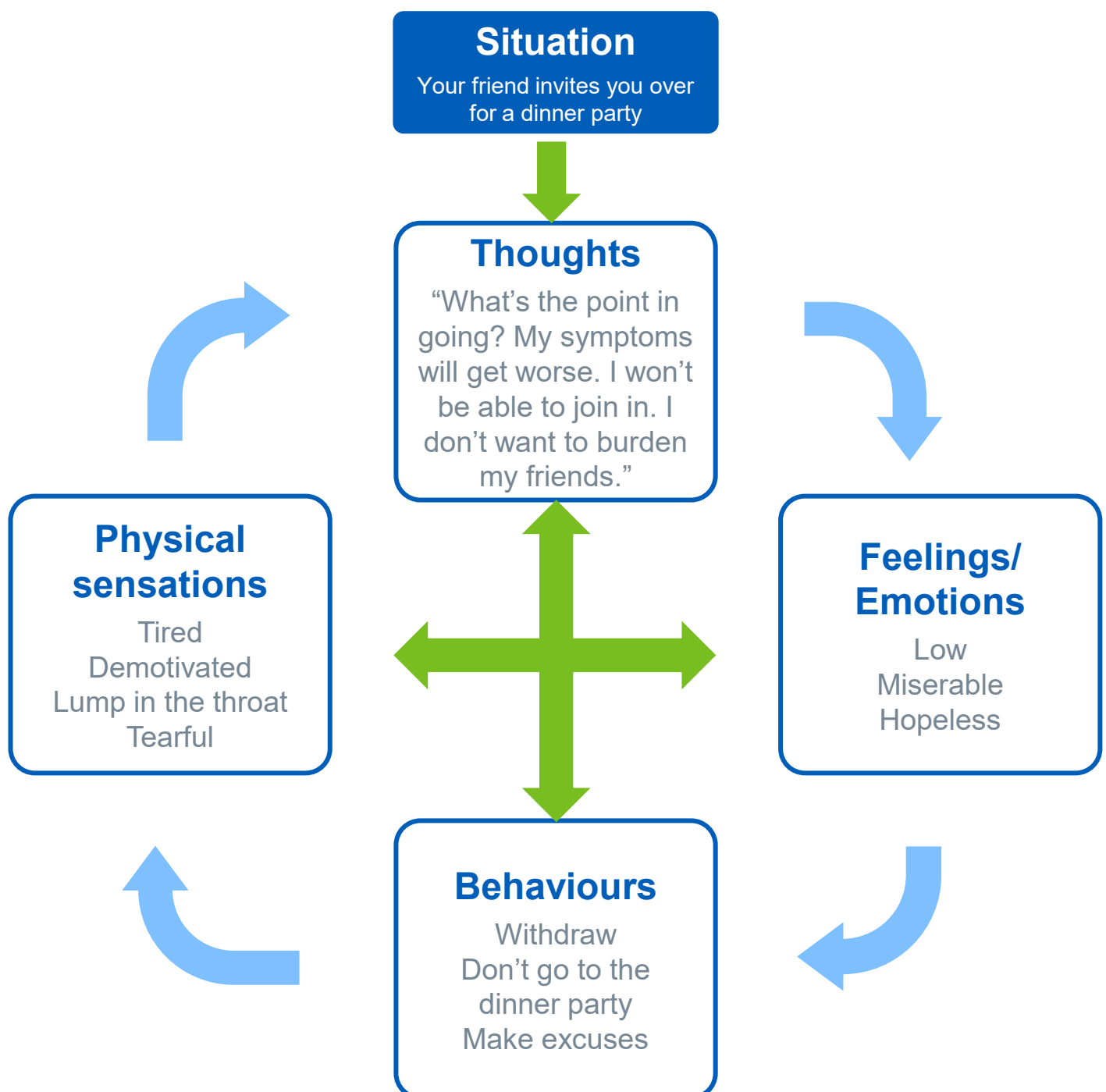
A simple way of showing this process is in the 'five areas' diagram below, which is the core of how CBT understands how difficulties can be maintained and resolved.



# Let's consider the following situation

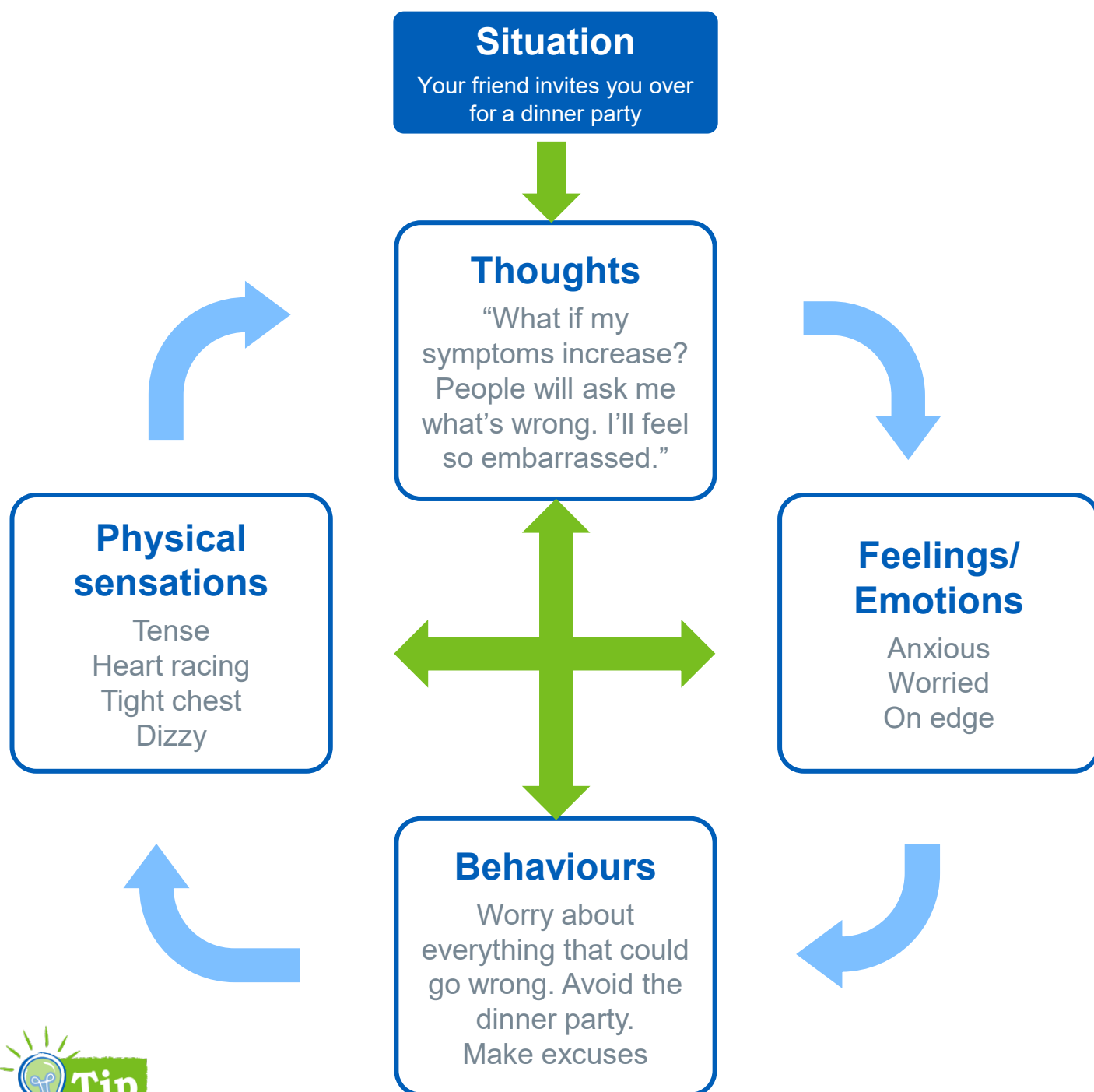
**Your friend invites you to a dinner party. How might you react?**

There are many ways of interpreting this situation, and your mood at the time is likely to influence how you think about it. If you were already having a bad day, you might react in the following way:.



As a result of missing out on the dinner party, you might feel lonely and even lower in mood, because you have missed out on seeing your friends. If you regularly decide not to go out, you might lose some physical fitness. By withdrawing from the situation, you won't find out whether your initial thoughts were true or not - and so could continue to think in this negative way.

The Five Areas model on the previous page is an example of a vicious cycle that can maintain difficulties with low mood. Another way to react to the situation, perhaps if you were feeling on edge that day, might be as follows:



We all have their own ways of coping with our difficulties. There is no right or wrong way. You may find that an unintended consequence of the things we do to manage in the short term can work to maintain low mood, stress, or anxiety in the longer term.

# My values

**Values are what we find important and help us live a meaningful life. 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 can sometimes take us away from our sense of purpose.

Not living in line with our values can have a negative impact on our wellbeing; we might feel unhappy, unfulfilled, frustrated, or our physical health can suffer.

## What matters to me?

### Consider what is important in your life

- What **relationships and people** in your life are important?
- What **roles** do you have that mean a lot to you?
- What **projects** do you engage in?
- What gives your life the most **meaning**?
- What gives you a sense of **satisfaction**?

Leaving aside any obstacles you have right now, think about what is important to you and write a quick summary in each of the four domains on the next page.

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).

**Use the next page and write down what's important to you in different areas of your life**

# 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 skill set at work

## **Physical and mental wellbeing**

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

# Setting goals

**We can now start to identify goals in line with your values.**

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 consider...

## Think of goals in three steps:

- **Short-term goals:** What you would like to achieve in the next 1-2 weeks.
- **Medium-term goals:** What would you like to achieve in the next 1-2 months.
- **Long-term goals:** What would you like to achieve in the future.

It is important to make sure your goals are **SMART**:

- **Specific**            What, when, where, with who?
- **Measurable**        How will you know you have completed this activity?
- **Achievable**        Is it beneficial given your symptoms?  
Do you have all you need?
- **Realistic**            Are you likely to manage this?  
Is it possible with your current symptoms?
- **Time-focused**      What time, what day, for how long?

### Example:

“Go for a walk” would become a SMART goal of:

“At 2pm go for a 30-minute walk with the dog around the block twice”.



If you are changing or building up activities, please check this with your doctor, and only do things that are within your current energy and comfort levels

# 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](mailto: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**

