

# WORRY & ANXIETY

## SESSION 3 COURSE WORKBOOK





## PROBLEM SOLVING AND CHALLENGING WORRIES

### TACKLING WORRYING THOUGHTS

Make a note of how you tend to deal with worrying thoughts?

Most people try to push worries out of their mind by mentally thinking about something else or keeping themselves busy on doing tasks. This might work for a short time but mostly the thoughts will bounce back later, usually when trying to relax or sleep. It can take a lot of mental effort not to think about something. Therefore, it would be helpful to find a more effective, practical way of dealing with worries rather than just trying to shut them out.

The first step is to work out the type of worry your thoughts fit into and try the approach most suited to that type of worry. If you are not sure that is ok, you can use both approaches if you need to and see which one has been the most helpful. The worry tree at the end of this workbook is a useful tool to help work out what is the best approach to use

#### **Types of worry (today's focus is on type 1 and type 2)**

**Type 1.** Current issues, a problem that exist, e.g. no money to pay a bill

**Type 2.** Potential "What if" (not yet happened, might never) e.g. Plane crash

**Type 3.** Worry about worrying, e.g. "worrying is going to make me ill" (we will cover this next week)

### Task 1 and 3

Make a note of recent worries and what type they would fit in to:

### Worrying Thoughts

(What are you predicting is going to happen?)

### ADDRESSING TYPE 1 WORRIES

**Attitude to problems:** People who worry tend to see problems as threats and underestimate their own ability to deal with problems. They are also more likely to focus on the worst outcome and avoid directly addressing the problem. Having a different attitude and seeing problems as part of everyday life can be more helpful, along with being proactive in finding solutions.





## **PROBLEM SOLVING**

If you think you can do something about your worries, but you are not too sure where to start you can use the 8 step problem solving technique. Problem-solving can help you approach things in a different way. Being proactive and finding solutions makes you feel better. The more problems you solve, the less you will have to worry about!

### **Steps to problem solving**

1. Clearly state the problem
2. Ask yourself “What will happen if I don't solve this problem”?
3. Ask yourself “What will happen if I do solve this problem”?
4. Brainstorm solutions (ask for help if you get stuck) and think of the pros and cons of each solution
5. Choose the best option
6. Work out the plan
7. Put it into action
8. Review

### **Example...**

Mark feels anxious. His boss asked him to write a report which is due in a couple of weeks and hasn't started it yet. His work colleagues have nearly finished theirs which makes him feel worse. He worries about what will happen if he doesn't get it finished on time and thinks that even if he does it will not be to the standard it should be. The more he thinks about it, the more anxious he becomes...



Let's work through Mark's issue using problem solving skills :0)

### **1. Define the problem**

I have a report due in a couple of weeks and I have not started it yet.

### **2. What if I don't solve the problem?**

I will annoy my boss as it will affect his own deadlines.  
I will feel disappointed in myself for not trying.  
I will be worried about what my boss will say/think.

### **3. What if I do solve the problem?**

I will feel better about myself.  
I won't be worried about the problem anymore.  
It will give me the confidence to problem-solve in the future.  
I might get my report finished and handed in on time.

### **4. Brainstorm**

Contact my boss and ask for more time.  
Make a start on it – I might still get it finished on time.  
Set aside time each day to work on it.  
Try to re-use an old report and hope no one notices.  
Ask my colleagues for help with it.  
Don't do it at all and leave my job.

### **5. Choose the best option(s)**

Make a start on it – I might still get it finished on time.  
Set aside time each day to work on it.  
Ask my colleagues for help with it.  
Contact my boss to ask for more time (keep in mind).



## **6. Work out a plan**

I will ask my colleagues for help. They might give me some tips to help me get started. I will set aside 3 hours each day to do my report. I will make a start on it on Thursday. I will aim to do 400 words each night which still gives me extra time to read over it and make any changes that might be required. If I stick to my plan I will finish my report on time and make the deadline.

## **7. Put into action – Do it!**

## **8. Review**

I finished my report on time. Next time, I will make a plan once I'm given a task to complete. Leaving it to last minute makes me miserable and anxious. I found others' support really helpful as it's easier to come up with a good solution with help from others.



## Task 2

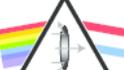
<b>Think of a specific problem you are facing and look for possible solutions! What would be your first step?</b>
<b>Clearly state the problem. Make your problem specific.</b>
<b>What will happen if you don't resolve it?</b>
<b>What do I think will happen if I solve this problem?</b>
<b>What ideas can you think of to solve the problem? Think about pros and cons of each.</b>
<b>Choose the best option based on the pros and cons of each. Make sure it's realistic and achievable.</b>
<b>Work out a plan. What will be your first step? When? With whom? What could cause problems and how could you prevent them?</b>
<b>Put it into action. Do it!</b>
<b>Review! How did it go? Did you achieve what you set out to achieve? If not how could you have done it differently?</b>
<b>What have you learnt?</b>

## ADDRESSING TYPE 2 WORRIES

These are typically the type of worries that start with “What if...” question in your mind and are about things that might never happen. The outcome imagined is usually negative with a focus on the worst outcome possible along with the belief that you cannot cope or deal with this outcome.

## UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

Often worries and other types of negative thoughts are result of unhelpful thinking styles. When we are anxious we can view things in a different way, and these thinking patterns can fuel worry and anxiety. However being aware of them can help us stand back from worrying thoughts and challenge them.

<p><b>All or nothing thinking</b></p>  <p>Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'</p> <p><i>If I'm not perfect I have failed</i></p> <p><i>Either I do it right or not at all</i></p>	<p><b>Over-generalising</b></p>  <p>Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw</p> <p><i>"everything is always rubbish"</i></p> <p><i>"nothing good ever happens"</i></p>
<p><b>Mental filter</b></p>  <p>Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.</p> <p><i>Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes</i></p>	<p><b>Disqualifying the positive</b></p>  <p>Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another</p> <p><i>That doesn't count</i></p>
<p><b>Jumping to conclusions</b></p>  <p>There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mind reading</b> (imagining we know what others are thinking)</li> <li>• <b>Fortune telling</b> (predicting the future)</li> </ul> <p><math>2 + 2 = 5</math></p>	<p><b>Magnification (catastrophising) &amp; minimisation</b></p>  <p>Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important</p>
<p><b>Emotional reasoning</b></p>  <p>Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.</p> <p><i>I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot</i></p>	<p><b>should must</b></p> <p>Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed</p> <p>If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration</p>
<p><b>Labelling</b></p>  <p>Assigning labels to ourselves or other people</p> <p><i>I'm a loser</i></p> <p><i>I'm completely useless</i></p> <p><i>They're such an idiot</i></p>	<p><b>Personalisation</b></p> <p><b>"this is my fault"</b></p> <p>Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.</p>



## **WORRY CHALLENGE WORKSHEET**

When you are worrying about something and feeling anxious it can be hard to remember what was going through our mind at the time. You can train yourself to notice your worries using the worry challenge worksheet. The worksheet can provide a way of recording worries, identifying unhelpful thoughts, and by challenging them getting a more balance view of the potential outcome.

When learning a new skill, it's useful to go back to basics. Writing it down helps!

## **CHALLENGING WORRIES**

It is important to remember that it is not the situation itself that makes us feel anxious; it is our perception of that situation. Changing the way we think about situations and seeing different perspectives can help us to feel less anxious.

When you are worried you look for (and find) threats that keep you feeling anxious.

- You zoom in on 'threats'
- You find 'evidence' for your fears
- You ignore 'evidence' against your fears

Once you have identified type 2 "What if" worries, the next step is to challenge them. You can think of it like a jury in a court case. You are looking at all the evidence to come to a balance view.

What is the evidence FOR your thoughts? – refers to information that you feel backs up your thought. It may be how you feel or previous experiences.

What is the evidence AGAINST your thoughts? – refers to all the information that contradicts your thought such as remembering the worst hasn't happened and how you coped before.

When you have weighed the evidence for and against your thoughts, try to come to a more realistic, balanced perspective. Sometimes it can help to ask your partner or a friend to help you with this task.

The goal of this task is to teach you to recognise, unwind, and tackle worries and negative predictions which make you anxious. It is hoped that in time you will become an expert in identifying and challenging your worries. It is a new skill and will not happen overnight; it will take and practise! In time you may find that you no longer need to record your worries in the worksheet, which you will learn to do this in your head.

### **CAMERON'S EXAMPLE**

**What am I worried about?** Work, what my boss said about being quicker.

**Specifically what am I prediction will happen?** I will get a warning or get sacked.

**How much do I believe it will happen (0-10 most likely)** 8 out of 10.

**How anxious am I feeling (0-10 worst)** 9 out of 10.



**What unhelpful thinking style does this fit into?** I am mind reading and fortune telling, also I am really catastrophising and jumping to the worst conclusion.

**What's my evidence for this prediction?** Well my boss did say to me to try and go quicker next time.

**What's my evidence against this prediction?** So far he has always been pleased with my work, he spoke to me later that day and did not mention it, I remember now he said to ask for help if I am not sure about things, my appraisal was good.

**What's the worst outcome?** I will get sacked.

**What's the best outcome?** I will keep my job, he will not mention this again.

**What's the most likely outcome?** I will keep my job, once I've had the time to do that task again it will get easier and I will get quicker.

**What can I do to cope with this?** Remind myself of the most likely outcome, focus on the task and my confidence will grow, ask for help when I need it, let my boss know if I need extra time to do things . If I did get sacked at the end of the day I would cope, it would be hard but I would get by until I found something else.



**How many times in the past have I worried like this, what was the outcome?** Lots of times and it has always been okay in the end.

**Is this way of thinking helping or hindering me?** It holds me back, stops me from concentrating on things and enjoying the present.

**What advice would I give a friend?** If your boss was not happy they would have let you know, take your time and do not be so hard on yourself.

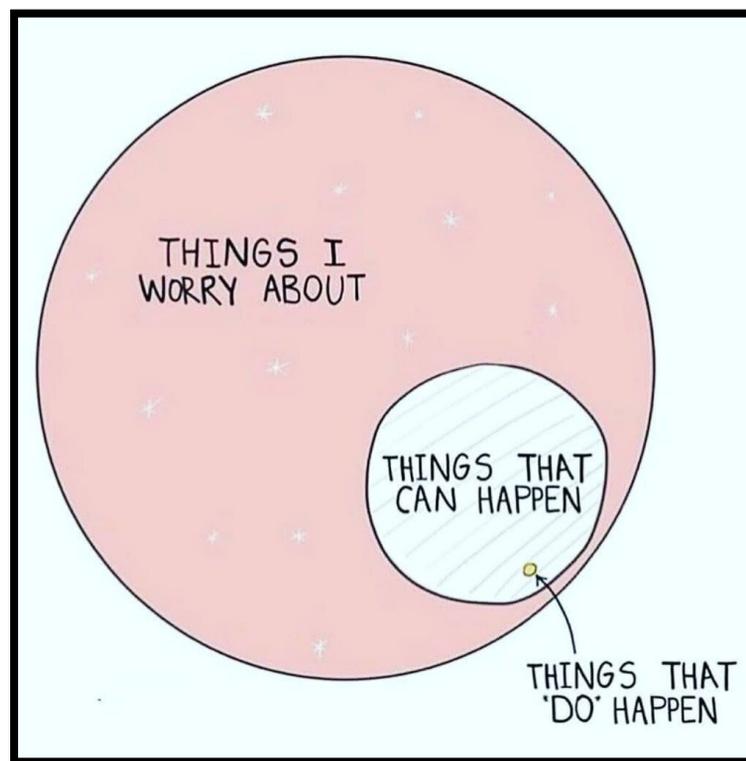
**Are there any actions I can take?** If I have got too much to do and this slows me down let my boss know and we can agree priorities.

**My balance conclusion is ...** I will not get sacked, one comment does not mean my work is not good enough and if I am ever struggling to do things I will ask for help.

**How much I believe this (0-10 most likely)** 3 out of 10.

**Re rate original prediction (0-10 most likely)** That I will get sacked or a warning, this is now 2 out of 10.

**Re rate Anxiety feeling (0-10 worst)** 2 out of 10.





## Task 5

### WORRY CHALLENGE WORKSHEET

What am I worried about? (general topic/situation)	
Specifically, what am I prediction will happen?	
How much do I believe it will happen (0-10 most likely)?	
How anxious am I feeling (0-10 worst )?	
What unhelpful thinking style does this fit into?	
What's my evidence for this prediction?	
What's my evidence against this prediction?	
What's the worst outcome?	
What's the best outcome?	
What's the most likely outcome?	
What can I do to cope with this?	
How many times in the past have I worried like this, what was the outcome?	
Is this way of thinking helping or hindering me?	
What advice would I give a friend?	
Is there any actions I can take?	
My balance conclusion is...	
How much I believe this (0-10 most likely)	
Re rate original prediction (0-10 most likely)	
Re rate Anxiety feeling (0-10 worst)	



## HOMEWORK

1. Over the next week try out the problem-solving steps to address any type 1 worries you may have.
2. Use the Worry challenge worksheet for type 2 worries and by looking at evidence that supports the thought and evidence to challenges the thought try to come to a more realistic, balanced way of thinking.

**Remember the worry tree can help a guide to which approach will work best.  
Worksheets and the worry tree are on the last two pages of this workbook.**



## PROBLEM SOLVING WORKSHEET

Think of a specific problem you are facing and look for possible solutions! What would be your first step?

<b>Clearly state the problem. Make your problem specific.</b>	
<b>What will happen if you don't resolve it?</b>	
<b>What do I think will happen if I solve this problem?</b>	
<b>What ideas can you think of to solve the problem? Think about pros and cons of each.</b>	
<b>Choose the best option based on the pros and cons of each. Make sure it's realistic and achievable.</b>	
<b>Work out a plan. What will be your first step? When? With whom? What could cause problems and how could you prevent them?</b>	
<b>Put it into action. Do it!</b>	
<b>Review! How did it go? Did you achieve what you set out to achieve? If not how could you have done it differently? What have you learnt?</b>	



1. Notice the worry



2. Ask 'What am I worrying about?'



3. Ask 'Can I do anything about it?'



No

Yes

Let the worry go

Make a plan!

Think about something else

What, When, How?

Now

Later

Do it!

Decide 'when?'

Let the worry go

Let the worry go

Think about something else

Think about something else

