

# WORRY & ANXIETY

## SESSION 5 COURSE WORKBOOK



## BUILDING TOLERANCE TO UNCERTAINTY POSITIVE IMAGERY

Life is full of uncertainties.

If you find it hard to deal with not knowing outcomes you will worry more and have a low tolerance to uncertainty.

You will have more “What if’s”, focus on negative outcomes and overestimate the chances of something bad happening.

### Intolerance Of Uncertainty

One popular psychological theory about why people worry a lot concerns **uncertainty**. It goes like this:



## ATTITUDES AND INTOLERANCE OF UNCERTAINTY

### Task 1

Tick which ones apply to you...

I can't deal with not knowing

The worst could happen

I must be prepared for all outcomes

I need to know

I would rather something bad happens now than go on waiting for an outcome



## Behaviours

To try and cope with uncertainty you may behave in a certain way. There are two main categories, you might avoid more or you might overdo things. You can also switch between them depending on the situation.

Linked with the positive beliefs that some of these behaviours are helpful to you in some way contributes to keeping worry going.

### Task 2

**Ask yourself what you do to deal with uncertainties? give a recent example if you can.**

Avoid

Avoid doing certain things. Give an example...

Procrastinate, put things off. Give an example...

Make excuses, find reasons not to do things. Give an example...

Ask others to make decisions. Give an example...

Anything else?



Excessive checking, researching e.g. internet searching. Give an example...

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Over prepare, plan way ahead, make lists. Give an example...

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Do too much for others and not delegate. Give an example...

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Reassurance seeking from self and others. Give an example...

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Reconsider decisions already made. Give an example...

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Anything else?

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**HOW DO I CHANGE THIS?**

Challenge your thoughts around the need for certainty by asking yourself the following questions. Write your answers in the space below.

**Can you be certain about everything in life?**

**What are the advantages and disadvantages of needing certainty?**

*(has it been helpful to you and when has it been unhelpful to you)*

**Are there some uncertainties that you can live with?**

*(how do you manage this?, can you do the same thing in other situations)*



**What have you found so far about the likelihood of the things you predict happening?**  
(worry diaries) (has the likelihood mostly been low?)

**How do other people you know deal with uncertainty? (could you do the same thing)**

**What would you rather be doing with your time?**

(if you could focus on the here and now, what things would you enjoy more?)



## ACCEPTANCE OF UNCERTAINTY

Label it – notice how you are feeling, recognise your anxiety is being fuelled by the need for certainty.

Let it go- accept this is something you cannot change.

Present focus-switch your attention back to the present.

## BUILD TOLERANCE OF UNCERTAINTY

You can start to build your tolerance to uncertainty by making changes to your behaviour using the graded exposure approach.

Graded means adopting step-by-step approach to a situation, tackling the easiest step first and moving to the more difficult when ready

Exposure means exposing yourself to the situation, facing the situation that you would avoid or stopping the things you are overdoing.

Try the step-by-step approach. Start by making a list of situations you avoid/overdo.

Choose the easiest thing to tackle first and think about the steps you could do to tackle it. Look at Sally's example below and think about your own problem using a similar approach.

Certainty behaviour I want to change

Sally avoids social situations with work colleagues...

Ask someone how their weekend went and say something about what I did **1 (the easiest step)**

Go to break room for coffee

Go to break room for coffee and make a comment on something

Say yes to small invitations

Say yes to bigger events

Invite someone out with me to an event

**10 (the most difficult step)**



### TASK 3

#### MY STEPPED PLAN

1. From the previous questions on avoid or overdo behaviours chose one to start changing.

2. Make a list of all the things you do as part of that behaviour.

3. Put them in order and start with the easiest to start changing first.

4. Make a plan of what you will do and when you will do it (the more specific the more likely you will do it).

5. Note what you were thinking and feeling while doing it.

6. Note your thoughts and feelings afterwards.





Step one should be the easiest building up to final step which is the hardest.

You may have to repeat steps or add in new steps as you work through the steps.

Certainty behaviour I want to change	
When (day, time) , where, who with	

<b>1 (the easiest step)</b>	
<b>10 (the most difficult step)</b>	



## POINTS TO REMEMBER

Making changes takes time. Expect to feel uncomfortable or more anxious when you start making changes. This is normal, it does not mean it is not working.

The list below has some suggestions of other things to try that can help build your tolerance of uncertainty.

- Eat something you have never eaten before (at home or restaurant)
- Once you have bought something new, use it and keep using it
- Say yes more often to invitations
- Try out a new hobby or activity
- Delegate small tasks at home
- Go to a different shop for your groceries
- Book that appointment to the GP/dentist/bank or anyone else you have been avoiding
- Don't ask for reassurance for a decision you have already made
- Put a limit on the amount of time or information you need to make a decision
- Stop re checking emails before you send them
- Let others drive you if you always drive yourself or you drive if you always let other drive

If you make too many snap decisions take the time to have a cup of tea to think things through

Don't stick rigidly to a plan, act spontaneously if the opportunity arises.



## **USING POSITIVE IMAGERY**

When we worry we tend to think verbally about what will happen, e.g. “What if” this leads to a chain of worries that focus on threats and negative outcomes. Often when we worry there are no be no images and any images that do occur then to be negative in there outcome.

Increasing positive imagery can help reduce worry and anxiety.

### Steps to Using Positive Imagery;

1. Identify a worry and the feared outcome (this can be any worries that come up about the new behaviour step you are going to work on).
2. Rate the likelihood of the outcome.
3. Identify as many possible positive outcomes as you can.
4. Choose one or a combination of positive outcomes.
5. Imagine how this will unfold, where and when, use different senses to help with this.
6. Rehearse the image for 2 minutes.
7. Re-rate the likelihood of feared outcome.



## HOMEWORK

- ✓ Practice acceptance of uncertainty (label it, let it go, present focus).
- ✓ Carry out the first step in your graded exposure plan to increase your tolerance of uncertainty.
- ✓ Use positive imagery following the steps above.



## POSITIVE IMAGERY EXERCISE

Use this exercise to help reduce anxiety and worry about an upcoming situation or event.

Describe the situation/event and the feared outcome...

How much do I believe the feared outcome 0-100%...

What are the alternative positive outcomes...

Choose a positive outcome/or combination of outcome...

Create an image of this outcome, use as many senses as you can (what/who can you see, hear, smells, noise)



**Hold this image in your mind for 2 minutes**

Afterward rate:

How much do I believe this positive outcome 0-100%	
Now, how much do I believe the feared outcome 0-100%	