# MANAGING YOUR WORRIES

A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy evidence based approach
to help you overcome your Generalised Anxiety Disorder.

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# MANAGING YOUR WORRIES

## Welcome!

Well done for getting this far to get on top of your worry and anxiety. Seeking help can be one of the most difficult steps to make!

The Managing your worries workbook is based on an evidence based psychological treatment know as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). It will guide you through two specific CBT based techniques called Worry Time and Problem Solving. These techniques have been shown to help many people experiencing difficulties with worry and anxiety.

This workbook is designed to be supported by a mental health professional trained to help people get the most out of it. This may be a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner, often shortened to PWP, working within the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme in England. Given the success of this way of working, similar roles to that of the PWP have also become increasingly available in other countries.

**You are in control of the way you choose to work through this workbook. Therefore, the speed you want to go using the workbook is down to you alongside how you put the techniques you'll learn into practice.**

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# So what is Worry Time and Problem Solving?

Worrying is something we all do. At times it can be something that may be helpful, helping us feel more in control and prepared. For example, being anxious before a job interview can help us feel alert and ready for the challenge ahead.

However, the danger of believing worrying to be helpful across all situations is that a **vicious cycle of worry** can be created. If this cycle is created, we can find ourselves worrying about lots of different things a lot of the time. The worry may then start to feel uncontrollable and have a significant impact on our daily life. This constant, hard to control, worry and anxiety is called Generalised Anxiety Disorder. We'll talk more about Generalised Anxiety Disorder and the **vicious cycle of worry** later in the workbook.

The techniques presented in this workbook are based on two evidence-based approaches for the treatment of worry, called **Worry Time** and **Problem Solving**. These techniques can help break into that **vicious cycle of worry** and a lot of research has found these techniques to be effective, especially for people experiencing difficult life events and other problems.

**Worry Time** is a technique to help you stop being a slave to your worries as they occur throughout the day, and instead manage them better by scheduling specific time to dedicate to worrying about them.

This will also give you the space to solve any worries that need solving, and indeed can be solved! **Problem Solving** helps you deal more effectively with practical problems you experience in life and may be worrying about. Providing you with a structured way to think about different practical solutions that may exist to help solve your problems and stop them causing you to worry.

Before we get started, it's important to find out a little bit more about the approach used in the *Managing your worries* workbook. You are then more able to decide whether using these techniques is best for you. You will also be helped to identify if there's anything that may be in the way of you getting the most out of the workbook.

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*To find out more about the Managing your worries, let's hear a little about Amanda's story and how she used this approach to overcome her worry and anxiety*

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## Amanda's story

I am 34 years old and guess I've always been a bit of a worrier. Looking back, ever since school I thought I found worrying helpful, making me feel better prepared for exams and coursework. Also at work, I felt worrying to prepare for the worst case scenarios made me feel more in control and ultra-prepared for anything that may come my way.

I can't really pinpoint exactly when my worry started to become really unhelpful and have a negative impact on my life. I suppose about 18 months ago I found myself worrying more about lots of different things. My mum lived on her own and I constantly worried things were going wrong with her house or she may fall and not be able to get help. Then things started to become tough at work. I lost a big contract and worried my boss was going to sack me. I found it harder to concentrate, so ended up working longer and longer hours to get through things. I became really exhausted and started to worry about my health and also found myself in situations at work where my boss would ask me something and my mind would just go blank. You guessed it, that made me worry even more that my boss thought I was useless at my job and I could get the sack!

My persistent worry then also started to cause a strain on my relationship with my partner Ben. He works away from home most weeks as a foreman on a construction site. I'd worry constantly until I knew he'd arrived at work safely, then I'd be worrying there would be an accident on site. So, I often sent him lots of messages during the day to check he was OK. This would annoy him and we'd have big arguments when he got home, with him calling me 'irrational'. All this would just make me worry he'd leave me. Though it wasn't just the big things I was worrying about, I found myself worrying about lots of smaller things too.

Over time I found most of my day was taken up by worry and it was having a real impact on all aspects of my life. So one day, after a full night of worrying, I decided I needed to get on top of my worry but had no idea where to start! I went to speak to my GP about how I was feeling and she recommended I saw a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner who worked in the practice. At first I was really unsure, I just couldn't see how speaking with someone

could help with all my worries. However, about a month later I had an appointment with Mike. He asked me a lot of questions about the things going through my head, how I felt in my body, things I was doing more or less of and my emotions. At first all these questions seemed a bit odd and I couldn't see how they were really that relevant to me.

However, when Mike related my difficulties to something called a **vicious cycle worksheet**, it started to make sense. For the first time, I could see that what I did, what I was thinking and how I felt physically and emotionally all impacted on one another and made things even worse. We spent time talking about how worry and anxiety may be helpful in some circumstances. However, when people find themselves worrying constantly about lots of things, some of which simply can't be solved, this can negatively impact on lots of areas of life. We also spoke about how some people believe that worrying is always really helpful and therefore constantly worry to prepare for the worst case scenario. In turn, our worries start to feel out of control, impacting on our sleep and we might even start trying to avoid the things we are worrying about, rather than trying to solve them! We also discussed how all the anxiety caused by constantly worrying makes us feel restless and affects us physically, often people report feeling like they have a 'knot in their stomach'. Too much anxiety can also upset our stomachs, and if too bad can even make us go to the loo a lot more.

I began to see how my worry was clearly affecting me in many different areas of my life and I was keen to find out what could be done. Mike explained how he worked using a supported self-help approach based around a self-help workbook called *Managing your Worries*. He explained how this approach

was based on a psychological therapy called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, or CBT for short. The approach was based around two main techniques called **Worry Time** and **Problem Solving**. I liked the sound of **Problem Solving** as it seemed like a practical way forward and I could identify having a lot of problems I was worrying about. **Worry Time** sounded a bit odd at first, the idea I would actually make time to worry. However, it did make some sense that scheduling a specific time just to worry might help control my constant worrying throughout the day. Mike explained how I would work through the workbook in my own time, but that he would support me every week to keep me on track and help me overcome difficulties if I ran into them.

> Each support session would last about half-an-hour and given how busy work was for me, this sounded just about manageable.

Over the coming weeks, Mike helped me work through the workbook. When I started to write down all my worries I realised just how many there were and it all seemed a bit much. However, Mike explained a good first step was to think about my worries in terms of those that were: *Not important, important and can be solved (practical worries)* and those that were *important but*

*cannot be solved (hypothetical worries)*. I immediately noticed a lot of my worries where *hypothetical*, and I was having a lot of worries about work, such as *"What if I miss the deadline"*; *"What if I get ill and cannot meet my deadline"* and *"What if I get sacked"*. Mike explained 'What if' worries were very common in people experiencing generalised anxiety disorder but **Worry Time** was an approach that could help. First, I had to schedule a specific time to dedicate to worrying each day, for about 20 minutes. Each time I had a worry during the day I needed to write the worry down and try to refocus on the present. When it came to my scheduled **Worry Time** I could use this time to worry about the worries I had written down and afterwards I had to review what I had learnt. I tried the technique out during the week but noticed I had quite a bit of trouble refocusing on the present after writing my worry down. During my next support session, I chatted to Mike about this and he explained this was quite common. But he then went on to say that one way of refocusing on the present was to focus on the task I was doing using my senses. For example, if I was doing the washing up, focus on things like the water temperature, shape of each dish I was washing up and the scent of the washing up liquid. He also explained using **Worry Time** takes practice but over time many people find it a really helpful technique. As I continued to use **Worry Time** it became

easier and easier and noticed that although it seemed like I was having hundreds of worries each day, I was actually having a lot of the same worries. I also noticed that quite a few of my worries were actually practical worries with a solution. Mike helped me use **Problem Solving** to tackle these worries. I also realised that by the time it came to my scheduled worry time, many of the worries I wrote down no longer actually bothered me!

Over time things really started to improve for me.

> I managed to start taking control of my worries, rather than letting them control me!

I noticed I was becoming more productive at work and argued far less with Ben. Of course I still worry now and again. However it is a lot less overwhelming, I have learnt new ways to manage my worries and am better able to problem solve the practical ones.

# What is Generalised Anxiety Disorder?

**Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is common.**

During their lifetime, around 1 in 20 people will experience GAD to such an extent that it has a significant impact on their lives. People with GAD experience uncontrollable worry and anxiety about lots of different things, alongside having difficult physical symptoms, such as sleep difficulties, problems concentrating or feeling restless.

Although there are lots of theories about what causes GAD, experts are still uncertain as to any one specific cause. But here are some possibilities:
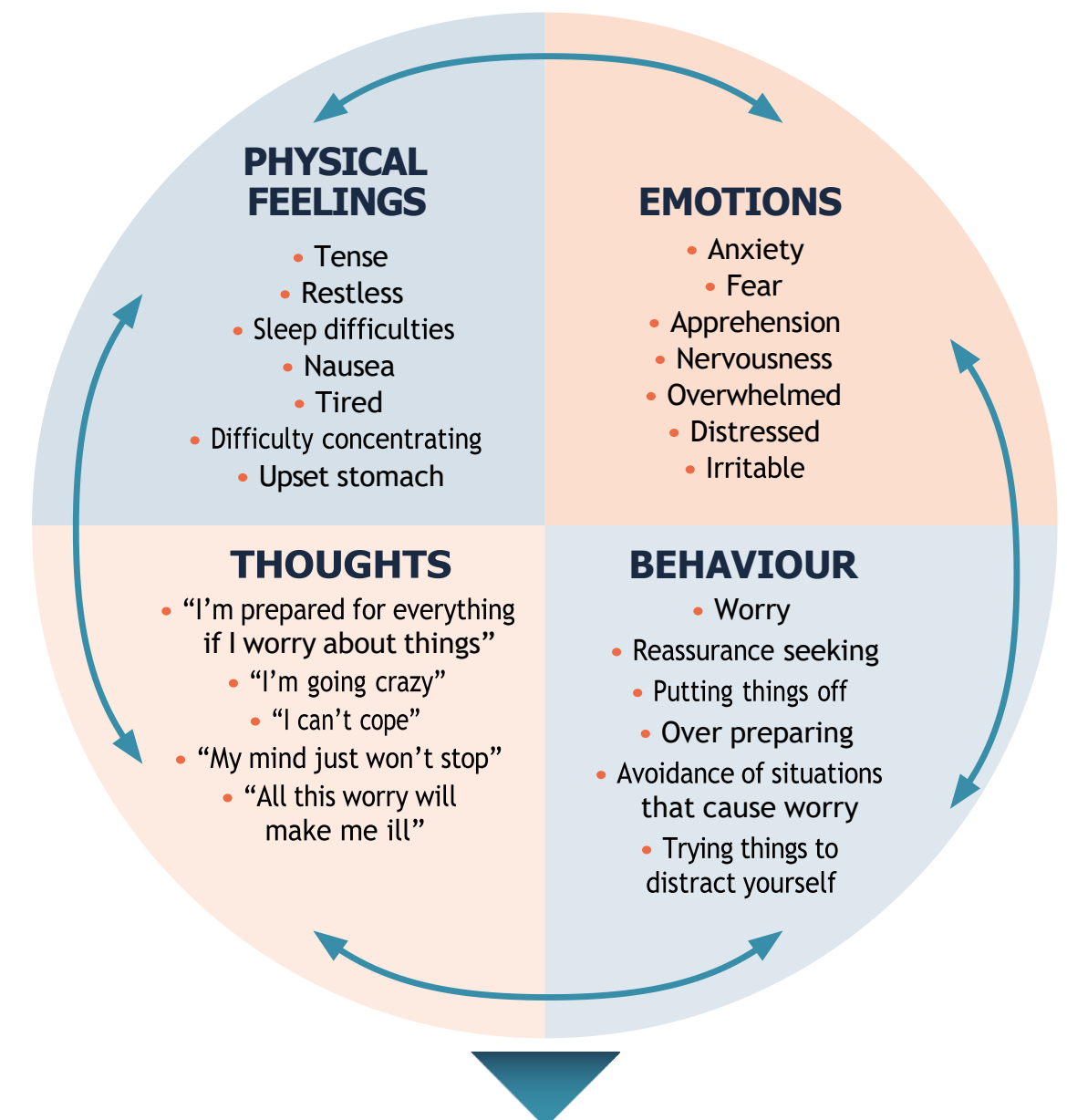
- Triggered by difficult and stressful life events.

- Family history of mental health difficulties.

- An imbalance of neurotransmitters (brain chemicals) such as serotonin, norepinephrine and gamma-aminobutyric acid.

**Whilst any of these possibilities may contribute to GAD, it's likely the way we feel is influenced by a mixture of them.**

# What does Generalised Anxiety Disorder look like?

**Although GAD is experienced by people in different ways, there are a number of common signs and symptoms.**
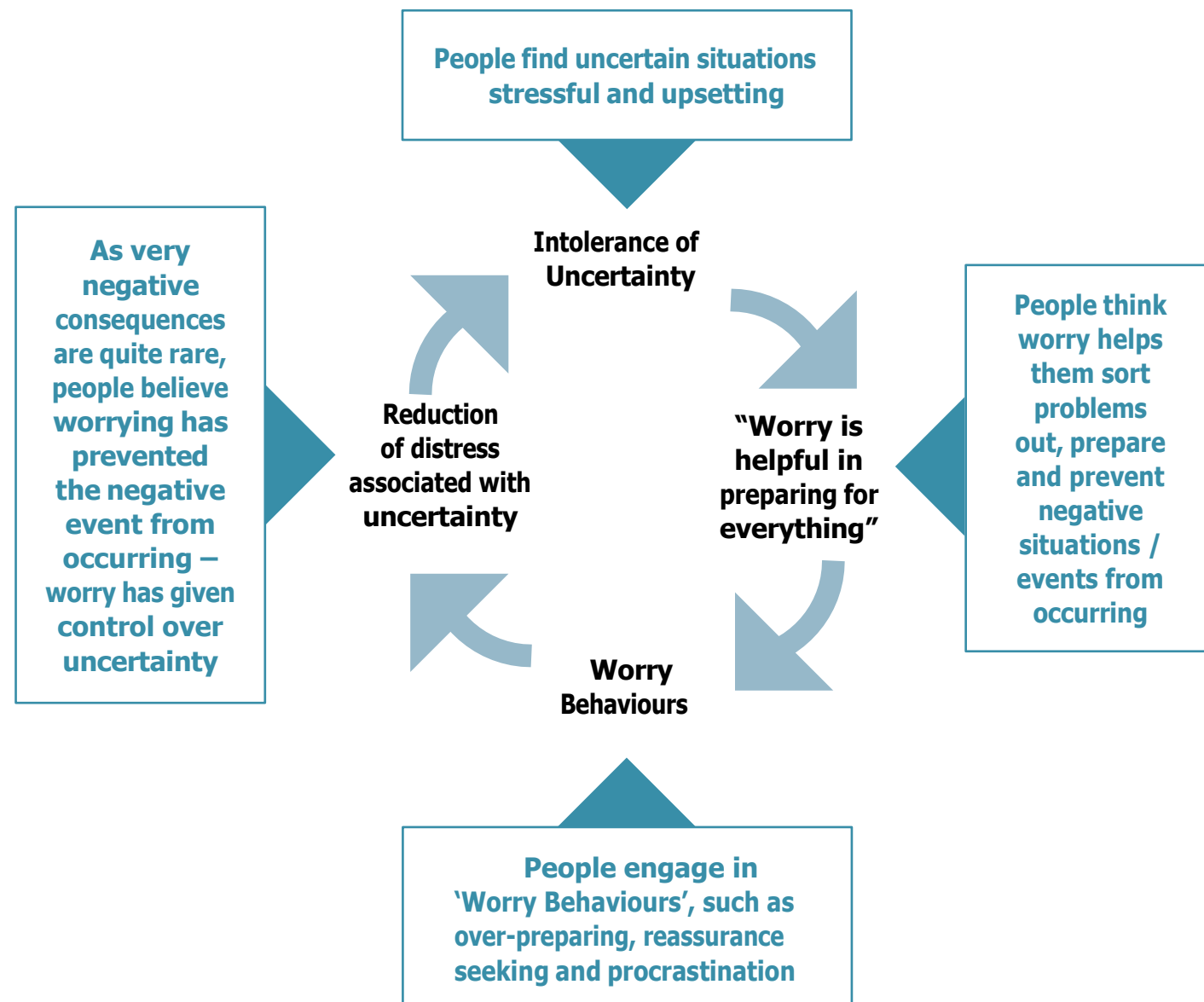
These are related to four main areas and may include things like:

**PHYSICAL FEELINGS**
- Tense
- Restless
- Sleep difficulties
- Nausea
- Tired
- Difficulty concentrating
- Upset stomach

**EMOTIONS**
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Apprehension
- Nervousness
- Overwhelmed
- Distressed
- Irritable

**THOUGHTS**
- "I'm prepared for everything if I worry about things"
- "I'm going crazy"
- "I can't cope"
- "My mind just won't stop"
- "All this worry will make me ill"

**BEHAVIOUR**
- Worry
- Reassurance seeking
- Putting things off
- Over preparing
- Avoidance of situations that cause worry
- Trying things to distract yourself

*Like a **vicious cycle**, each of these areas has a knock-on effect on the others and can impact on significant areas of life such as work, relationships and hobbies.*

# What maintains Generalised Anxiety Disorder?

There are a number of key features in GAD that are believed to keep the *vicious cycle of worry* going:

**People find uncertain situations stressful and upsetting**

Intolerance of Uncertainty

**People think worry helps them sort problems out, prepare and prevent negative situations / events from occurring**

"Worry is helpful in preparing for everything"

Worry Behaviours

**People engage in 'Worry Behaviours', such as over-preparing, reassurance seeking and procrastination**

Reduction of distress associated with uncertainty

**As very negative consequences are quite rare, people believe worrying has prevented the negative event from occurring – worry has given control over uncertainty**

**Intolerance of uncertainty** is associated with people overestimating that future events will be negative and feeling that they will not be able to cope if the worst happens.
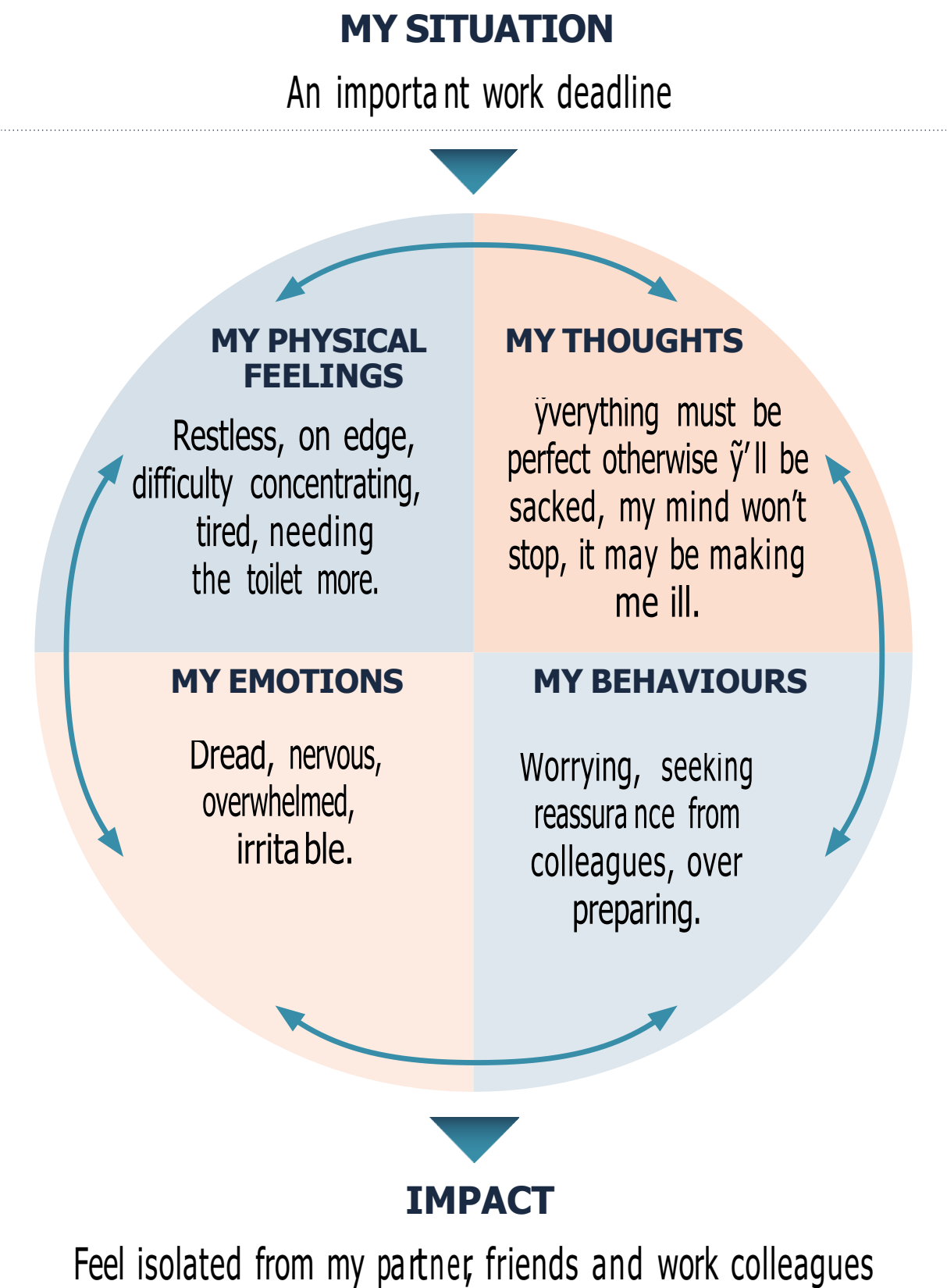
In these situations, some people may believe that worrying about potential problems in the future helps them generate solutions to problems if they do arise. They then therefore engage in **worry behaviours**, such as over-preparing, making many plans or seeking reassurance from other people. Once they think they have done all they can to cope with things *'if the worst happens'* they experience relief believing that they have increased their certainty around future events. Experiencing such relief then has the effect of strengthening the use of **worry behaviours** and they never get the opportunity to see what might happen if they didn't worry in the first place. Breaking this cycle and learning to **live with uncertainty** is an important part of tackling worry.

So let's now try to get an understanding of what your vicious cycle of worry looks like. First, have a look at the **vicious cycle worksheet** completed for Amanda. ▶
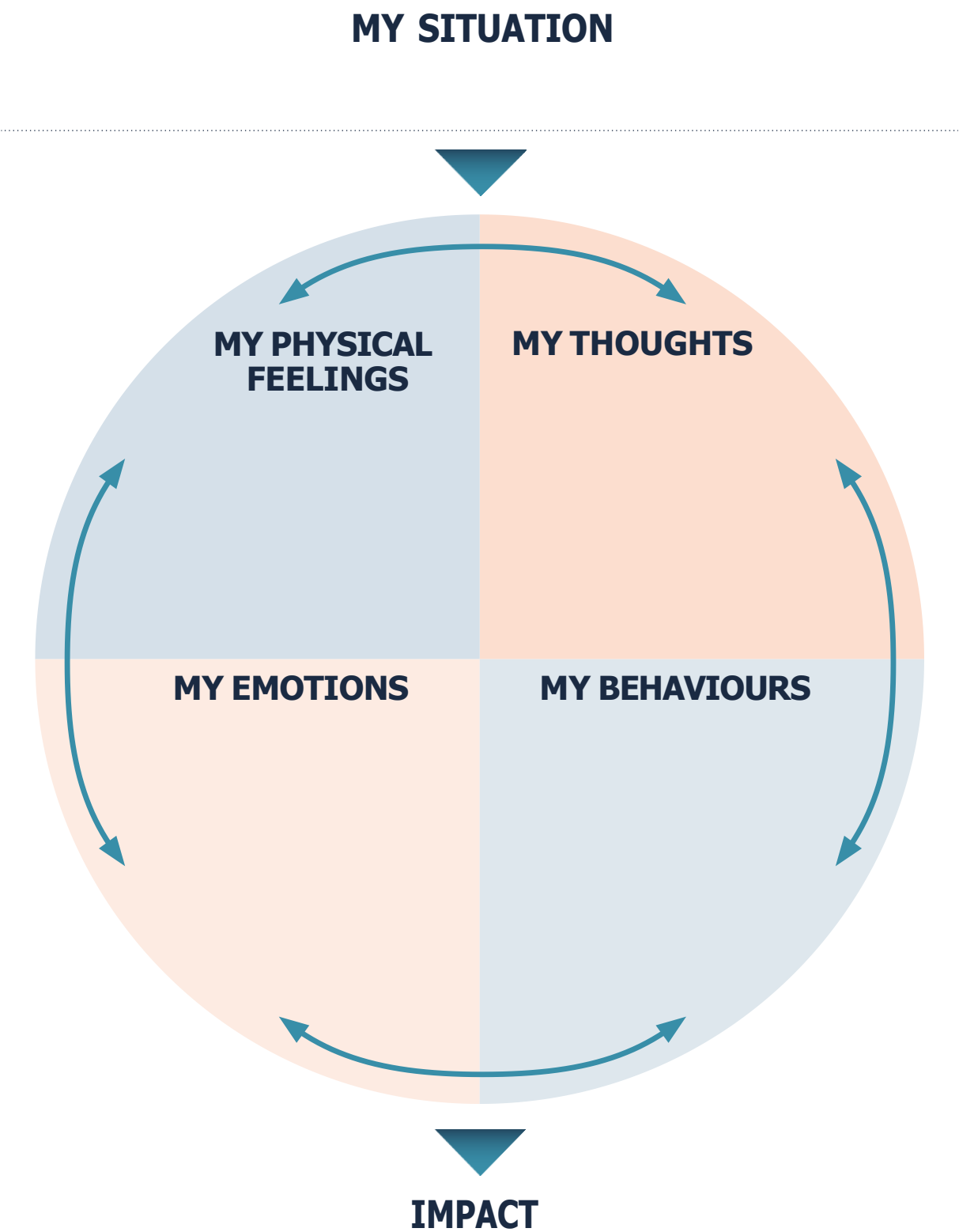
## Amanda's vicious cycle worksheet

### MY SITUATION

An important work deadline

**MY PHYSICAL FEELINGS**

Restless, on edge, difficulty concentrating, tired, needing the toilet more.

**MY THOUGHTS**

ÿverything must be perfect otherwise ÿ'll be sacked, my mind won't stop, it may be making me ill.

**MY EMOTIONS**

Dread, nervous, overwhelmed, irritable.

**MY BEHAVIOURS**

Worrying, seeking reassurance from colleagues, over preparing.

### IMPACT

Feel isolated from my partner, friends and work colleagues

## My vicious circle worksheet

Now using the vicious cycle worksheet below, write down the emotions, physical feelings, behaviours and thoughts you are experiencing, thinking about how these impact on your life.

### MY SITUATION

**MY PHYSICAL FEELINGS**

**MY THOUGHTS**

**MY EMOTIONS**

**MY BEHAVIOURS**

### IMPACT

# Setting goals

Now you've completed your **My vicious cycle worksheet**, the next step is to begin to think about setting yourself goals you'd like to have achieved by the time you have completed this workbook.

When setting goals it's important to think about the following ▶

# Top tips

### Be specific

It's important to set specific goals you'd like to achieve by the time you have completed this workbook. People often think about setting broad goals for themselves such as *"not feeling as anxious"*. However, it can be hard to know if, or when, a goal like this has been achieved. So, instead when setting goals, think about how you would know you were not feeling as anxious. Try thinking about the type of things you might be doing then set more specific goals around these things. For example *"I will ensure I spend quality time with my family over the weekend by only looking at work emails when the kids are in bed"*.

### Be realistic

To begin with it's important to set yourself some goals you feel you can realistically achieve over the next few weeks. Therefore think about initially setting yourself **short term goals** – goals that are just out of reach, but not out of sight, and begin working towards these before moving onto goals that are **medium** or **long term**. However it's still worth thinking about medium and long term goals at this point, as they may begin to look more achievable when using this programme and your worry and anxiety begins to lift.

### Be positive

It can be tempting to consider stating goals in terms of doing less or stopping something, for example *"I will ask my colleagues what they think about my performance at work less often"*. However, as far as possible it's often more helpful if goals can be expressed in a more positive way, or as striving towards something. For example, rather than *"I will ask my colleagues what they think about my performance at work less often."* think about what you might do instead. For example, *"I will ensure I only seek feedback on my performance at work from my line manager during my monthly performance review"*.

Or, rather than *"I will stop putting doing things off at work"*, think about some of the benefits you may have from achieving this goal. For example, *"I will strive to get on with more things I am given to do at work, and see how far I get with them before seeking any help if I need it."*

Here is an example of Amanda's goals:

## Amanda's goals worksheet

| Today's Date: | Monday 23rd November |
| --- | --- |

ỹ'll ensure ỹ spend quality time with Ben over the weekend by only looking at work emails once each morning.

**I can do this now (circle a number):**

| 0 Not at all | 1 | 2 Sometimes | 3 | 4 Often | 5 | 6 Anytime |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

| Today's Date: | Monday 23rd November |
| --- | --- |

**GOAL 2**

ỹ'll strive to get on with more things ỹ am given to do at work, and see how far ỹ get with them before seeking help if ỹ need it.

**I can do this now (circle a number):**

| 0 Not at all | 1 | 2 Sometimes | 3 | 4 Often | 5 | 6 Anytime |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

Now you've seen the **short term** goals that Amanda set for herself, using the **Goals worksheet** on the next page, it's time to set some **short term** goals for yourself.

## My goals worksheet

| Today's Date: | |
| --- | --- |

**I can do this now (circle a number):**

| 0 Not at all | 1 | 2 Sometimes | 3 | 4 Often | 5 | 6 Anytime |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

| Today's Date: | |
| --- | --- |

**I can do this now (circle a number):**

| 0 Not at all | 1 | 2 Sometimes | 3 | 4 Often | 5 | 6 Anytime |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

| Today's Date: | |
| --- | --- |

**I can do this now (circle a number):**

| 0 Not at all | 1 | 2 Sometimes | 3 | 4 Often | 5 | 6 Anytime |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

| Today's Date: | |
| --- | --- |

**I can do this now (circle a number):**

| 0 Not at all | 1 | 2 Sometimes | 3 | 4 Often | 5 | 6 Anytime |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

| Today's Date: | |
| --- | --- |

**I can do this now (circle a number):**

| 0 Not at all | 1 | 2 Sometimes | 3 | 4 Often | 5 | 6 Anytime |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

# Well done getting this far

Now it's time for you to start working through **Problem Solving** and **Worry Time**. This may sound a bit daunting! But remember you're in control of how much you do at any time, and you have support.

Sometimes progress will be slow and setbacks will happen. This is perfectly normal and to be expected. If you find yourself facing difficulties, speak with your PWP or anyone else who may be supporting you.

## Stage 1:

### Areas of my life that are really important to me

**First of all, try and think about five or so areas that are really important to you right now.** Although they are likely to be different for everyone, examples of such areas may include things related to areas such as family, relationships, roles and responsibilities, social and leisure activities, health, finances or religious beliefs. Thinking about areas of life of importance to you can help you prioritise problems to focus on solving in these areas.

The person supporting you can help you identify a few core areas of life you really value or find important. Use the **Areas of my life that are really important to me worksheet** on the next page to record areas you've identified. You can see Amanda's example below:

### *Amanda's areas of my life that are really important to me worksheet*

**List the five most important and valued things in your life right now here:**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | My relationship with my partner Ben |
| 2 | My relationship with my mum |
| 3 | My job |
| 4 | ỹxercising |
| 5 | My relationship with my friends |

# Areas of my life that are really important to me worksheet

**List the five most important and valued things in your life right now here:**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | |
| 5 | |

# Stage 2:

## What are my worries?

The next stage is to try and capture your worries and to write them down in your **My worries worksheet** on page 22. It's important to try and write down all the worries you're having, no matter how small they might seem. It's also important to try and be as **specific** as possible about your worries by considering each of the following:

▶ What is the **situation** you are worried about? For example: "*A project at work*"; "*My partner travelling long distances for work*".

▶ What **thoughts** are you having? For example, "*What if I don't do a good enough job?*", "*What if I don't make the deadline*", "*What if my partner has an accident on the way to work?*"

▶ What do you **fear** might happen? What would be the **consequence**? For example: "*I'll get sacked*" or "*My partner might die*".

▶ What **emotions** are you feeling? For example: '*Anxious*', '*Fearful*', '*Overwhelmed*', or '*Sad*'.

> **Before you begin to complete your own My worries worksheet, let's have a look at Amanda's worries worksheet on the following page:**

# *Amanda's worry worksheet*

| Date and Time | The Situation | What Are You Thinking? | What Do You Fear Might Happen? | What Emotions Are You Feeling? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monday 7am | Ben driving to work | What if he is in an accident? | He'll have an accident and die. | Anxious, scared, dread, sad |
| Monday 9am | Ben's job | What if he has an accident on site? What if he falls down a ladder? Would anyone know to call me if he had an accident? | He'll have an accident and get really hurt. | Anxious, fearful, sad |
| Monday 10am | Work project | What if ỹ don't make the deadline? What if my boss sacks me? | ỹ'll muck up the project and lose my job. | Scared, overwhelmed, dread |
| Monday 11am | Work meeting | What if ỹ am late? What if ỹ forget my notes? | My boss will think ỹ am useless. ỹ'll never get promoted. | Anxious, dread |
| Monday 1pm | Ben hasn't responded to my texts yet | What if he has had an accident? | He's had an accident and is hurt. | Anxious, sad |
| Monday 2pm | Work project | What if ỹ lose another contract? What if my work is not good enough? ỹ'm never going to make the deadline. My boss thinks ỹ am useless. | ỹ'll lose my job. | Anxious, dread |
| Monday 5pm | Talking to my mum | ỹ am sure the gas fire in my mum's house is unsafe. What is there is a gas leak? What if there is an explosion? | My mum might get seriously hurt. | Anxious, scared |
| Monday 7pm | Cleaning the bathroom | The bathroom sink tap is dripping, what if it floods the bathroom? What if ỹ can't afford the water bill? ỹf there is a flood ỹ'll never be able to afford to pay for the damage. | The bathroom will flood and cause serious damage. | Anxious, overwhelmed |
| Monday 11pm | ỹn bed | ỹ just can't stop worrying. ỹ'm never going to be able to sleep. ỹ've been worrying all day. All this worry must be making me sick. ỹf ỹ am sick ỹ won't be able to work and ỹ'll miss my deadline. | ỹ am going to get sick, miss my work deadline and ỹ'll lose my job. | Anxious, overwhelmed |

# My worry worksheet

| Date and Time | The Situation | What Are You Thinking? | What Do You Fear Might Happen? | What Emotions Are You Feeling? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

# Help! I am worrying a lot at night

Worrying a lot at night is common. You may find your worries are preventing you from being able to get off to sleep, or stay asleep. If you find this is the case, you could try following these tips:

▶ Keep a copy of the **Worries worksheet** next to your bed and write down any worries you're having when you have them.

▶ For the moment, try to "Let the worry go" – remember, you'll come back to these worries when working through the *Managing your Worries* workbook. So you're not ignoring your worries, just postponing them until the next day.

▶ If you find it difficult to get back to sleep, you could try the following tips:

• Try to focus your attention on the present. For example, the touch of the pillow, the duvet on your toes, or focus on your breathing.

• If you cannot fall asleep within 15-20 minutes, get out of bed and go to another room and do a relaxing activity until feeling sleepy (repeat if required).

# Stage 3:

## Types of worries I am experiencing

Now try to think about the types of worries you're currently experiencing and categorise them into the following three different types:

### Not important

**These are worries that have little to do with the areas of your life that you've identified as important or valued.**

For example, *"I was late meeting my friend for coffee"* or *"I forgot to buy milk"*. However, some worries may not be related to important or valued areas in life but are still important, and need to be sorted out or there may be serious consequences. For example, not renewing your car insurance and being involved in an accident! Therefore, although not important to you personally, to avoid any serious consequences you should still view these worries as important.

### Important and can be solved (practical worries)

**These are worries of importance and value to your life and you should actively work towards solving.**

Often these worries are related to practical difficulties affecting you now, for which there is a practical solution. For example, such worries may include things like: *"I'm struggling to keep up at work but don't know how to raise this with my boss"* or *"I haven't paid my electricity bill and will get cut off soon"*. Later in the workbook we will discuss ways to help solve this type of worry.

### Important but cannot be solved (hypothetical worries)

**These are worries that have no way of being solved but are still important to you**.

Sometimes these are related to life events or things that occurred in the past, for example *"I had a heart attack"* or are about things that might happen in the future but currently there is little to suggest they will. Often worries about what might happen in the future start with *"What if …"*, for example *"What if there is an accident on the motorway and I'm late for work"* or *"What if my partner leaves me?"* Worries about things that **might** happen in the future are also known as Hypothetical Worries. Although you may dwell on these a lot, there's no way of solving them.

**Now, let's take a look at the problems you identified on your worries worksheet.** Then transfer them onto to your Types of worries worksheet on page 26 writing each worry in the column most appropriate to that type of worry. You can see Amanda's example below:

## Amanda's types of worries worksheet

| Not Important | Important and Can Be Solved | Important but Cannot Be Solved |
|---|---|---|
| What if ỹ forget the milk on the way home? | ỹ'm sure the gas fire in my mum's house is unsafe. What if there is a gas leak? The bathroom sink tap is dripping, what if it floods the bathroom? Given the fault with the printer ỹ'm never going to make the document submission deadline! | What if Ben has an accident? What if Ben falls down a ladder? What if my boss sacks me? What if ỹ lose another contract? |

# My types of worries worksheet

| Not Important | Important and Can Be Solved | Important but Cannot Be Solved |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

# Help! Does my hypothetical worry have a practical solution?

**Sometimes we may have hypothetical worries about things that might happen in the future, for example, "What if" worries, that may have a practical solution – something can be done about your worry.** If you have this type of worry, you may want to try asking yourself questions such as *"Is it a worry I can do something about now?"* and *"Is there a specific plan I can put in place to overcome the worry?"*

Sometimes people may also find it helpful to look at the specific situation they're worrying about to help decide whether a worry has a practical solution. For example, you may worry about things such as *"I haven't paid my electric bill"* and then *"What if the electric gets cut off?"* then leading to *"What if I can't cook for my children?"* Whilst these are *"What if?"* worries, the situation you are worrying about is something you could do something about – it is a problem that is practical and can be solved. Another example might be, *"What if I don't make my work deadline?"* Here, the specific situation you are worrying about is a work deadline, and there may be a specific plan you could put in place to achieve it.
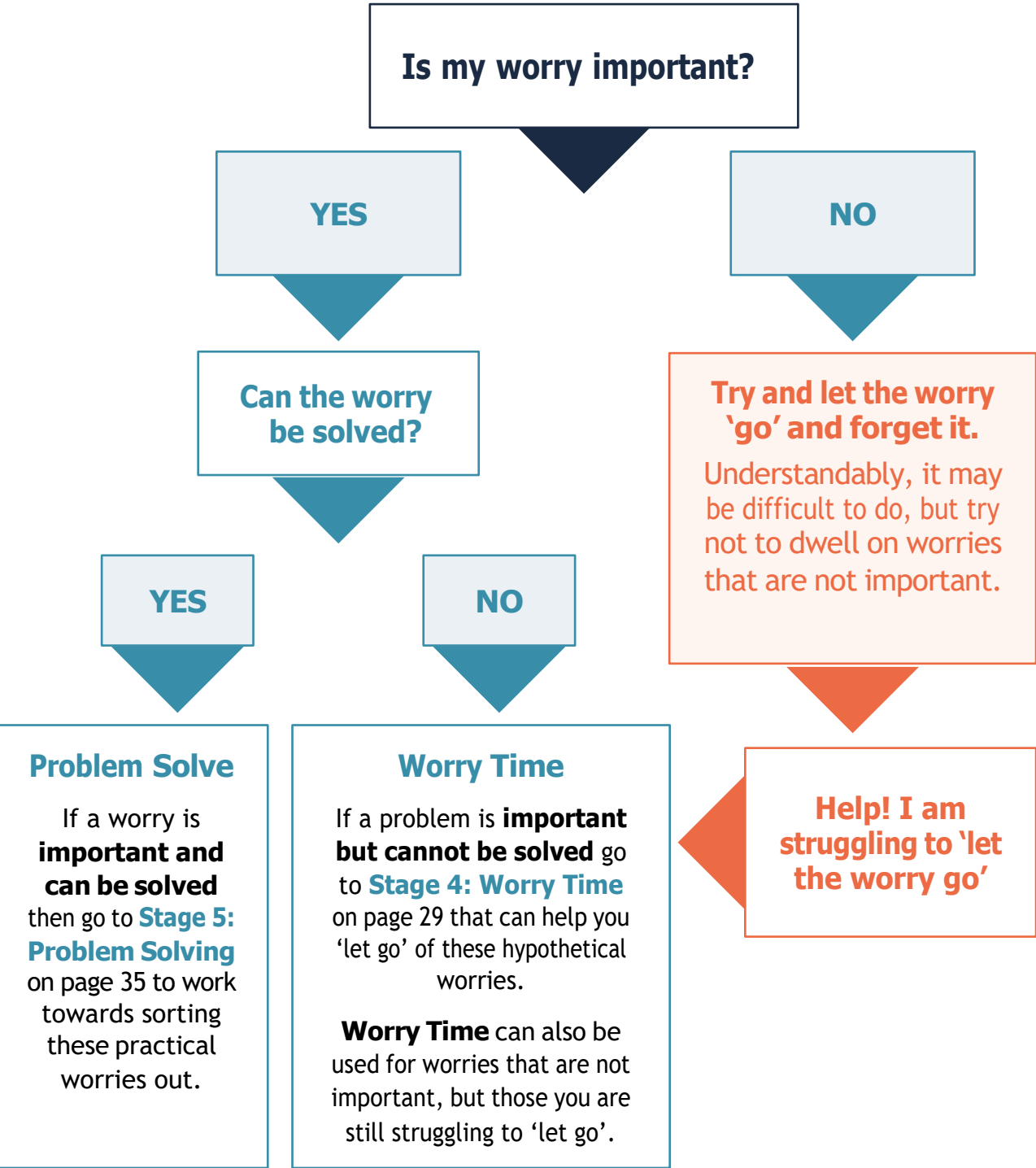
> ## ▶ IMPORTANT
>
> **Sometimes when people are trying to find a practical solution to their worries they may find themselves slipping into using worry behaviours.**
>
> For example, reassurance seeking or over-preparing and planning. You might want to consider asking yourself *"Am I putting this solution in place to plan for the unknown?"* If so, this may be a warning sign you're engaging in worry behaviours that may not be helpful. If you find yourself struggling with this, chat to your PWP or other person supporting you.

# Well Done

You've identified the different types of worries you currently experience. Now use the diagram below to decide how best to deal with your worries:

**Is my worry important?**

**YES**

**NO**

**Can the worry be solved?**

**Try and let the worry 'go' and forget it.**
Understandably, it may be difficult to do, but try not to dwell on worries that are not important.

**YES**

**NO**

**Problem Solve**

If a worry is **important and can be solved** then go to **Stage 5: Problem Solving** on page 35 to work towards sorting these practical worries out.

**Worry Time**

If a problem is **important but cannot be solved** go to **Stage 4: Worry Time** on page 29 that can help you 'let go' of these hypothetical worries.

**Worry Time** can also be used for worries that are not important, but those you are still struggling to 'let go'.

**Help! I am struggling to 'let the worry go'**

# Stage 4:

## Worry Time

**It can be difficult not to worry about our worries, even when they are hypothetical and can't be solved.** Whilst it's important to try and "let go" of these hypothetical worries this can be easier said than done!

However, one solution some people find helps them is to schedule something called Worry Time. Worry Time allows you to plan time to worry about your hypothetical worries, but at a specific time so they don't take over your life. Try following the 4 steps below to help you manage your hypothetical worries.

> ▶ **IMPORTANT**
>
> **Scheduling time to worry when you are currently overwhelmed with many worries may not seem to make much sense! This is understandable. However, scheduling a specific time to worry can help you regain control over your worry.**
>
> Worry Time has been shown to be really helpful for many people and can help put you back in control of your worries, and you'll start to learn that worries do not need to take over your life.

## Step 1: Schedule Worry Time

Think about a period of time each day you can set aside to worry about your hypothetical worries. Ensure this is your protected time where you can worry and do nothing else. People often report finding 20 minutes is enough, although when you get started you'll be the best judge of the amount of time you'll need to schedule your Worry Time. Having a scheduled Worry Time can help you stop your hypothetical worries from impacting too much on other things you're doing during the rest of your day, putting you back in control. Once you've decided on a suitable time, write this in your **Worry Time worksheet** on page 31.

---

### Top tips for scheduling Worry Time

- ► **Let others know not to disturb you**

- ► **Turn your phone off, or if needed, ask others to get the phone if it rings**

- ► **Find somewhere quiet and free from other distractions**

- ► **Don't schedule Worry Time too close to your bed time**

- ► **Plan your Worry Time for the week in advance**

---

# My Worry Time worksheet

### Worry Time

**My scheduled Worry Time is:**

### My hypothetical worries

| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | |
| 5 | |
| 6 | |
| 7 | |
| 8 | |
| 9 | |
| 10 | |
| 11 | |
| 12 | |
| 13 | |
| 14 | |

## Step 2: Writing your worries down

Scheduling Worry Time won't necessarily stop worries from popping into your head during the day. However, if they do, write them down in your **Worry Time worksheet** and set them aside until your scheduled Worry Time. You're still taking these worries seriously as you'll be coming back to them during your scheduled worry time. However, writing them down and putting them aside can help reduce their impact on what you're doing there and then.

> ▶ **IMPORTANT**
>
> **The worries you write down during the day might not just be hypothetical worries. They might be worries that have a practical solution – so they are problems that can be solved.**
>
> However, when you come to your scheduled Worry Time later you will go through the worries you've written down. If there are problems that have a practical solution you can then go to **Stage 5: Problem solving** on page 35 and follow the problem solving steps. However, remember that if not acting on your worry straight away may have significant negative consequences it's important not to postpone this worry. For example, if you realise you have lost your bank card, it's best not to leave cancelling your card until much later in the day!

## Step 3: Refocus on the present

Once you've written the worry down, try to **refocus** again on whatever you were doing at the time. Sometimes however, if you're struggling to refocus it may help to do something different to what you were doing before. Remember, you have set aside worry time later so try to "let the worry go" for now. You're not ignoring it, just delaying it until Worry Time when you can give it your full attention!

### Top tips for refocusing

▶ Remember you have your scheduled Worry Time later.

▶ Pay attention to the present. For example, the task or activity you were doing when the worry came into your mind.

▶ If you find paying attention to the present difficult, concentrate on the task you were doing by using your senses. For example, what can you see, smell, hear, touch or taste? If you are cooking, focus on the smell of the food, or the sound of the food cooking.

▶ If you find re-engaging in the task you were doing too difficult, you might find it helpful to switch to a new task entirely.

## Step 4: Your Worry Time

During your scheduled Worry Time, read through the worries you've written down on your **Worry Time worksheet** during the day. Then use your Worry Time to worry about them. Sometimes, when you come back to the worries you've written down you may find that some of them are no longer a worry for you, or may have resolved themselves. If this is the case put a line through them.

If however you find the worries you've written down have a practical solution, then add the problem to your **Types of worries worksheet** in the **Important and can be solved** column on page 26.

If you decide you want to work through that worry, you can then use Problem Solving to solve this worry.

Using Worry Time takes time and practice. However, over time you may find this a useful technique to reduce the impact of your worries on a day-to-day basis. As you begin to use Worry Time more often you may also find yourself being able to reduce the amount of time you schedule each day for Worry Time. Over time you may not need Worry Time at all, but this is something you should look to work towards.

## Step 5: Reviewing worry time

After your scheduled Worry Time, use the **Worry Time review worksheet** on page 34 to write down what you've learnt during worry time. For example:

■ Did some of your worries have practical solutions?

■ Did you notice you have fewer worries than you realised. Or perhaps a lot of your worries were about the same thing?

■ Did some of the worries no longer bother you?

However, it's important not to review your Worry Time until after the time you've set aside to worry has finished. Initially Worry Time itself should be used just to worry.

# My worry time review worksheet

### What have I learnt during Worry Time?

Try to think about what you've learnt during Worry Time. For example, what have you noticed using Worry Time? Are some of your worries practical worries? Were you having lots of worries about the same thing? Are some of the worries no longer bothering you?

# Stage 5:

## Problem solving

**Many worries we experience have a practical solution.** However, at times when you're experiencing lots of different worries it may seem they are simply too difficult and overwhelming to solve. Following these seven steps will provide a structured way to help you find practical solutions to these.

### Step 1: Identify the worry

The first step is to select a worry you've listed under **Important and can be solved (practical worries)** from the **Types of worries worksheet** on page 26. Remember, it's your choice which worry to begin to work on. However if you find this difficult, the person supporting you will be able to help. Now write the worry down on your **Problem solving record worksheet** on page 36.

Sometimes, you may have to convert the hypothetical worry you have written down into a practical problem. For example, *"What if my electricity gets cut off"* could be converted into *"I need to find a way to pay my electric bill by the end of next Friday"*.

If you struggle to determine if your worry has a solution, look back at the situation you're worrying about as this might help you decide.

### Step 2: Identify a solution

Identify as many potential solutions as possible to the problem identified in **Step 1** and write them down on your **Problem solving record worksheet**. Don't worry at this point if the solution seems ridiculous – remember it's important not to reject anything too early. When you've completed **Step 1** and **2** and written these into your **Problem solving record worksheet**, move on to Step 3 on page 37.

▶ **IMPORTANT**

**When trying to identify a practical solution to our worries it's really important to make sure the solution doesn't involve using some of those worry behaviours.**

For example reassurance seeking, over-preparing, over-planning, repeatedly checking, putting important things off, distracting yourself from your worries – we spoke about earlier in the workbook. Using these behaviours to try and solve your worries won't help you learn to live with uncertainty and help you get out of the vicious cycle of worry in the long-term. Remember to ask yourself "Is my solution a long-term solution to my worry?" You may find **worry behaviours** are short-term solutions, but they won't help solve and overcome your worries in the longer-term.

# My problem solving record worksheet

## Step 1: Identify an important worry that can be solved

What is the worry you'd like to try and solve?

..................................................................................

**My worry:**


**My practical problem?**


## Step 2: Identify potential solutions to the practical problem

What are the potential solutions? (Remember not to dismiss anything too early!)

..................................................................................


## Step 3: Strengths and weaknesses

Use your **Strengths and weaknesses worksheet** on page 38 to write these down for each solution considered

## Step 4: Selecting a solution

What solution am I going to try out?

..................................................................................


## Step 5: Planning the solution

What steps will I follow to apply my solution? e.g., What, When, With Whom, Where? What resources do I need? What steps do I need to follow?

..................................................................................


## Step 6: Trying out the solution

Use your **Putting my plan into action worksheet** on page 41 to keep a diary of what you did

## Step 7: How it went

Use your **Putting my plan into action worksheet** on page 41 to review how well your solution worked

## Step 3: Analyse strengths and weaknesses

Next, use the **Strengths and weaknesses worksheet** on the following page to write down the strengths and weaknesses for all of the potential solutions identified in Step 2. This allows you to think about the main advantages and disadvantages for each solution.

**Think about the following:**

▶ Do you believe the solution is likely to work?

▶ Are you going to be able to try the solution out?

▶ Do you have everything you need to try the solution out?

▶ Could the solution cause even more problems?

In the final column of the **Strengths and weaknesses worksheet** put a *Yes* for any solutions you'd like to try out, *No* to those solutions you feel you can reject or *Maybe* for solutions you may want to think about more. The person supporting you, or a trusted friend or family member, may be able to help you think about these.

# My strengths and weaknesses worksheet

**My Problem – write the problem that can be solved here:**

| What are the strengths and weaknesses of each solution? Write these below: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Solution | Strengths | Weaknesses | Choice (Yes/No/ Maybe) |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

## Step 4: Selecting a solution

Select a **solution** identified on your **Strengths and weaknesses worksheet** on page 38 you'd like to try out. When selecting a **solution** think carefully about whether you've the resources to try it out, as it may cause further problems if not. When you've selected a **solution** write this into Step 4 of your **Problem solving record worksheet** on page 36.

## Step 5: Planning the solution

Solutions to problems often require careful **planning**. To make a solution more achievable, it can be helpful to think about the steps and resources that may be needed such as time, support, finance, equipment etc. Ensure all steps are specific, linked and realistic. To make the steps more specific it can be helpful to think about the "4 Ws":

▶ WHAT are you doing? For example, phoning my electric company

▶ WHERE are you going to do it? For example, in my kitchen

▶ WHEN are you going to do it? For example, on Wednesday at 3pm

▶ WHO will you be with? For example, on my own

Now go back to your **Problem solving record worksheet** to write your plan in the space for **Step 5: Planning the solution**.

## Step 6: Trying out the solution

**Now, put your plan into action by trying out the solution!** It's really important to write down how you went about trying your solution out. So you don't need to rely on your memory, it's best to do this as soon as possible after trying the solution out. You can use your **Putting my plan into action worksheet** on page 41 to record this. People sometimes find it helpful to take this workbook with them if the solution requires them to be out of the house or to use another way of recording/writing it down, such as using notebook or your mobile phone.

## Step 7: How it went

Finally, to help you review how well your solution worked, use your **Putting my plan into action worksheet** on page 41 to write down **how it went**. Some solutions may have worked, some may have worked a little and some may not have worked at all. If your plan didn't work this can be very frustrating. However, some problems are very difficult and may need more than one plan to solve.

If the solution has worked, then based on what you've learnt here, you may want to think about generating new solutions to apply to other worries and problems you're experiencing. Otherwise, if the solution didn't help solve the problem, go back to **Step 4** on your **Problem solving record workbook** and consider trying another solution.

**Remember:** Regardless of whether the solution worked or not, every time you try out a solution you're learning about the types of things that work and those that don't. All this information is good, as it may help you generate further solutions that may work in future.

You can see Amanda's example **problem solving worksheet** on page 43.

▶ **IMPORTANT**

**Sometimes, you may find that you've identified problems that seem too big or overwhelming to solve. This is normal and to be expected, especially if they are problems you've been looking to solve for some time.**

One way of helping with problems that seem too big or overwhelming is to look at **breaking them down**.

For example, you may be experiencing difficulties paying the mortgage. When breaking down a difficulty with finance, think about the different components such as how much debt you have, what your income and what your expenditure is. Sometimes with problems such as this, it's also worth thinking if there are others with specialist knowledge who can help. For example, professionals with this specific type of knowledge or organisations and charities in the community that may be able to help.

If you find yourself struggling with **breaking your problems down** then speak to the person supporting you who may be able to help.

# Putting my plan into action worksheet

## Step 6: Trying out the solution
What exactly did I do?

## Step 7: Reviewing how it went
How successful was the solution? What went well? What didn't go to plan? If things didn't go to plan has anything been learnt that may inform another solution?

# Remember

**Keeping problem solving records** **is essential for you and anyone supporting you, to review your progress and help overcome any difficulties using the** *Managing your worries* **workbook.** Also, sometimes when a solution doesn't solve the problem, there may be parts of the solution that did work or you found helpful. Keeping records using the worksheets provided will help you improve your Problem Solving skills for the future.

# Checking-in

**As you work through your worries listed on your Types of worries worksheet on page 26, it's important to cross off worries you've solved or that no longer bother you.** Remember, some worries with practical solutions may take longer to solve than others, so these worries will end up staying on the **Types of worries worksheet** for longer. By crossing off your worries you'll be able to see how you've managed to tackle various problems in your life and start to regain control of your worries rather than letting your worries control you.

## *Amanda's problem solving record*

### Step 1: Identify an important worry that can be solved

What is the worry you'd like to try and solve?

My worry: The bathroom sink tap is dripping, what if it floods the bathroom?

My practical problem? ỹ need to organise for the bathroom tap to be fixed.

### Step 2: Identify potential solutions to the practical problem

What are the potential solutions? (Remember not to dismiss anything too early!)

1 Continue to ignore it.
2 Try and fix it myself.
3 Wait for Ben to come home from work to look at it.
4 Speak to a friend who might be able to fix it.
5 Find a plumber to fix it.

### Step 3: Strengths and weaknesses

Use your **Strengths and weaknesses worksheet** on page 38 to write these down for each solution considered

### Step 4: Selecting a solution

What solution am I going to try out?

Find a plumber to fix it.

### Step 5: Planning the solution

What steps will I follow to apply my solution? e.g., What, When, With Whom, Where? What resources do I need? What steps do I need to follow?

1 Set aside time to go on the internet to find some plumbers.
2 Speak to some plumbers and get some quotes.
3 Decide on which plumber to use.
4 Find out when the plumber ỹ choose can come and do the work.

### Step 6: Trying out the solution

Use your **Putting my plan into action worksheet** on page 41 to keep a diary of what you did

### Step 7: How it went

Use your **Putting my plan into action worksheet** on page 41 to review how well your solution worked

# Amanda's strengths and weaknesses worksheet

**My Problem**

ỹ need to organise for the bathroom tap to be fixed.

| What are the strengths and weaknesses of each solution? Write these below: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Solution** | **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** | **Choice (Yes/No/Maybe)** |
| Continue to ignore it. | None | ỹ will just continue to worry. ỹt's been dripping for a while now and really does need to be fixed. | No |
| Try and fix it myself. | Cheaper! | ỹ don't really know anything about plumbing and wouldn't know where to start. ỹ'd likely just worry ỹ'd make things worse. | No |
| Wait for Ben to come and home to look at it. | He'll probably know how to fix it and this would save money. | ỹ keep putting things off so Ben can sort them when he comes home at the weekend and this really annoys him, especially after working so hard all week. | No |
| Speak to a friend who might be able to fix it. | Cheaper! | ỹ'm not really sure if anyone ỹ know would be able to help. ỹ'm likely just putting things off again. | No |
| Find a plumber to fix it. | They will know how to fix it and the problem will be sorted. | ỹt'll cost money. ỹ might have to arrange time off work if the plumber can't come round in the evening or weekend. | Yes |

# Amanda's putting my plan into action worksheet

## Step 6: Trying out the solution
**What exactly did I do?**

ỹ managed to set aside some time during my lunch break to find some plumbers online. ỹ popped three a call and managed to get some rough quotations for the job.

One of the plumbers was quite a lot cheaper than the other two, so ỹ decided to go with him. He had an extra charge for coming at the weekend which ỹ wanted to try and avoid paying, so ỹ spoke with my boss to see if ỹ could arrange a day to work from home. ỹ was really worried about asking my boss, but she was fine with this and even said what a pain it was trying to get work done around the house when working full time! That was a huge relief! ỹ booked the plumber and he came over and fixed the tap a couple of days later.

## Step 7: Reviewing how it went
**How successful was the solution? What went well? What didn't go to plan? If things didn't go to plan has anything been learnt that may inform another solution?**

ỹt went really well. ỹt felt great actually getting the tap fixed at last and sorting this problem out! This also helped to stop my worries about what might happen if the leak continued, such as "What if there is a flood" or "ỹ'll never be able to pay for the damage". Also, my boss being so helpful meant that worries about my performance at work reduced. Surely if she thought ỹ was that useless she wouldn't have been so fine with me working from home at such short notice. ỹ can't say ỹ'm not still worrying about other things, especially work, but this has really helped and ỹ am definitely feeling less anxious than before.

# Staying well

Hopefully over the last few weeks you've started to see an improvement in your anxiety and started to find practical solutions to those worries that have a solution and be better able to discuss those hypotheritcal worries that don't.

This may be helping you feel as if you're managing your worry better. To **stay well** in the future, it's also important to try and make the techniques you've learnt in this workbook part of your daily life. So have a think about the things you've found particularly helpful.

**What signs and symptom may indicate you're experiencing excessive and uncontrollable worry again?**

At the beginning of the workbook you wrote down the physical feelings, emotions, thoughts and behaviours you'd experienced that indicated you were feeling worried and anxious. In the future, these can serve as **warning signs** that you're experiencing generalised anxiety disorder again. To make you aware of your **warning signs** it can therefore be helpful to fill out a **Warning signs worksheet**. So, have a look back at the **Vicious cycle worksheet** you filled in at beginning of the workbook to identify your warning signs. Then use this to fill in the **Warning signs worksheet** below:

## My warning signs worksheet

**My Physical Feelings**

**My Thoughts**

**My Emotions**

**My Behaviours**

# Staying well toolkit

Now, use the **My staying well toolkit** below to write down activities, strategies or techniques you've found helpful whilst using this workbook. You can then refer back to this if you find yourself struggling with your anxiety and worry again in the future.

**Remember:** feeling anxious, worried, or tense for a short amount of time is perfectly normal and can actually be helpful in the right situations. However, if you experience them for a while and they begin to have an impact on how you live your life again, it may be important to do something.

**Techniques you learnt in this workbook worked last time and they can do so again!**

## My staying well toolkit worksheet

**What activities helped me feel better?**

**What skills have I learnt working through this workbook?**

**What helped me put these activities, skills and techniques into practice?**

# Checking-in with how I am doing

As you finish this workbook it can be helpful to find a regular time to check-in and see how well you're managing your worry and anxiety.

To help ensure you're keeping up with the activities that helped you last time and to make them a part of your daily life, you may find continuing this regular **check-in** useful for a number of weeks.

Some people find a weekly check-in is initially helpful, however, over time find they can reduce the frequency. Once again, you're in control and are the best person to know what you find most helpful.

If you think having a weekly check-in would be helpful, have a go at using the **My checking-in worksheet** over the coming weeks or months. Making a **written commitment** to use your **My checking-in worksheet** can make it more likely that this is something you'll do. You can use the space below to make this **written commitment**:

## My written commitment to check-in with myself:

**I will check-in with myself about my worry and anxiety every**

.................................... **over the next** .................................... **weeks**

# My checking-in worksheet

**Have I started doing more or less of those unhelpful behaviours that may indicate I'm experiencing difficulties again?**

**Am I experiencing any thoughts similar to those I had when I started this workbook?**

**Are the physical feelings associated with anxiety I had when I started this workbook excessive and uncontrollable again?**

**Am I experiencing any emotions similar to those I had when I started this workbook and troubled by these?**

**If I think my difficulties are returning again, what sorts of things could I do to help me start overcoming these difficulties so I can manage again?**

## My Notes

## My Notes

# Authors

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**Dr Joanne Woodford** is Research Fellow within the Clinical Education Development and Research (CEDAR) group at the University of Exeter. She has a special interest in improving access to psychological interventions for people with depression, especially for people who also experience physical health difficulties and their families. Joanne has developed a wide range of CBT self-help interventions people experiencing depression. Joanne has also worked on several educational programmes directed at training mental health professionals to support patients in the use of CBT self-help materials.

**Faye Small** is the Programme Lead of the post graduate certificate in Psychological therapies practice (Low intensity CBT) training within the Clinical Education Development and Research (CEDAR) group at the University of Exeter. Her main clinical interests are in the area of low intensity cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and supervision for psychological wellbeing practitioners. With a previous background in mental health and counselling, Faye is a qualified Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner, High Intensity CBT practitioner and Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

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