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Manchester
Health & Wellbeing
Service



Unwind Your Mind

A guide on how to manage
anxiety and worry



Produced by buzz Manchester Health & Wellbeing Service
in partnership with Manchester Primary Care Mental Health Team.
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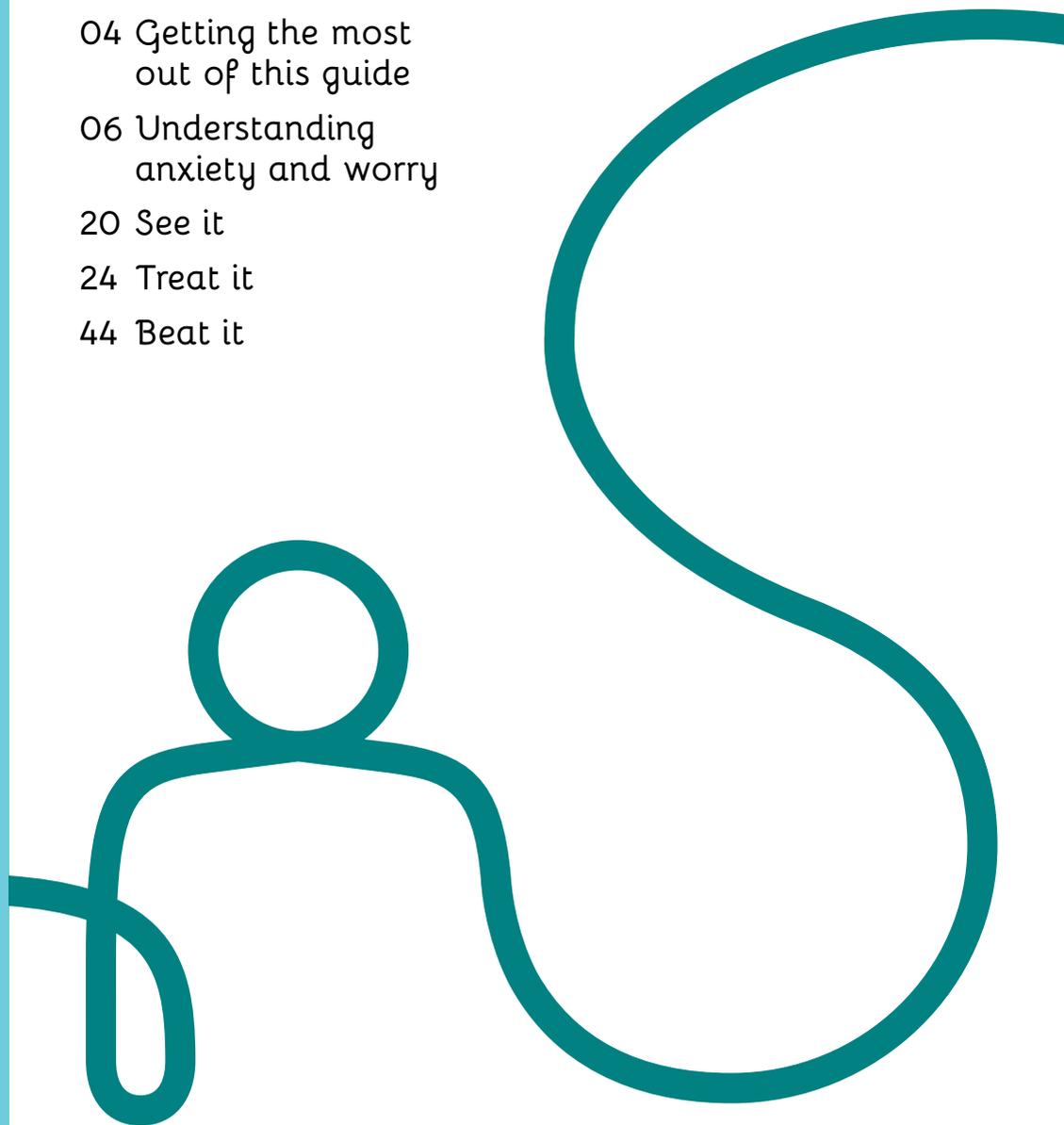
www.buzzmanchester.co.uk

This guide is one of a series about mental health and wellbeing by buzz Manchester Health & Wellbeing Service. You can find more guides at www.mhim.org.uk

‘Unwind Your Mind’ is all about anxiety and worry and learning how to manage the impact they have on your life.

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Getting the most out of this guide

This guide provides a range of tools to help you to manage anxiety and worry.

You may wish to start by trying one of the tools in this guide, then move on to try some of the others at your own pace.

This guide looks at anxiety in more detail. It will help you understand how your thoughts are affecting your life. It will also show you some ideas for challenging those unhelpful thoughts, so you can unwind your mind.

At the end of the guide there are details about where to get more information, help and treatment.

If you find it hard to work through this guide, you might find it useful to talk to someone. This could be a health worker such as your doctor or practice nurse. Your focus, energy and motivation levels may be low right now; so there may be things it would be better to try first.

Understanding anxiety and worry

This section explores what anxiety is. It explains how people can get into a vicious cycle of anxiety and worry.

See it

This section will help you to assess how anxiety is affecting your life. It will help you to see what is keeping your anxiety going.

Treat it

This section has a range of tips to help you deal with anxiety and worry.

Beat it

This section gives you more ideas on how to make progress. It also lists where you can get further support.

As you read this guide, it will ask you to think about what is going on in your life and how you are feeling. There are spaces in the guide for you to write things down. You may find that this helps you think more clearly about how you feel.

What you'll need:

- A pen and maybe a notebook for extra notes
- Time for reading and thinking about how you can help yourself
- Somewhere quiet to read and think
- To keep going and pace yourself by taking one step at a time
- Support from a family member, friend or health professional if needed

Understanding anxiety and worry

There are many different forms of anxiety. It can range from feelings of unease and worry to feeling fear and panic.

Although it might be unpleasant, anxiety is natural and is a normal response to feeling threatened or being in a stressful situation. This is called the 'fight or flight' response.

When you feel threatened, your body releases the hormone adrenaline which makes you more alert so you can act faster and be prepared to deal with danger. When you fight a threat, or run away from it, your body is able to use up the adrenaline. Your body then releases other hormones once the danger is over to relax your body.

Your body might react like this in a stressful situation such as:

- Sitting an exam
- Opening the mail
- Speaking in public
- Moving house
- Losing your job
- Going to a party

When anxiety stops you doing the things you want or need to do in your life it is time to do something about it. The guide 'From Distress to De-stress' also explains some of the symptoms of anxiety and includes skills that you can learn to reduce them. You can download it free from www.mhim.org.uk

There are different types of anxiety:

- Panic: strong, sometimes sudden feelings of panic or fear that are hard to control
- Phobias: fear of something that poses little or no actual danger
- Social phobia: fear or anxiety about being in public or social events
- Health anxiety: constant worry or fear of getting ill or dying
- Generalised anxiety disorder: constant worry about everyday things
- Obsessive compulsive disorder: unwanted and frequent thoughts and fears that can lead a person to repeat actions again and again to try to settle their anxiety
- Post traumatic stress disorder: long-term anxiety following a traumatic event



Different types of anxiety

Example

Below is a table to show the range of different types of anxiety.

At one end, it gives an example of how people behave on a daily basis. At the other end, it describes how anxiety can severely affect people and their lives.

	Common	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Phobia	Jump when you see a spider	Check corners of room for spiders before going in	Avoid the cellar where spiders live	Stop doing the gardening completely
Health anxiety	Look up symptoms on internet	Focus on medical TV programmes	Visit the doctor many times	Repeated medical tests
Post traumatic stress disorder	Short flash backs for two to three months after a car crash	Drive slowly past left-hand junctions	Wake from nightmares over six months after the crash	Avoid driving altogether
Obsessive compulsive disorder	Stereo volume in the car has to be on an even number	Check that all car doors are locked before leaving	Need to touch car door handles eight times	Return to car eight times to check that doors are locked

“Anxiety can range from feelings of unease and worry to feeling fear and panic.”

Recognising anxiety

Is anxiety causing problems in your life?

Here is a list of symptoms caused by anxiety. Please tick any that you often experience.

You feel...

- Anxious, worried, scared, nervous
- Like something awful is going to happen
- Like things are out of your control
- Tense, on edge, stressed, panicky
- Like you are not really there

Your mind is...

- Racing/hard to switch off
- Going over and over things
- Finding it hard to focus, jumps from one thing to another
- Over-estimating danger
- Under-estimating what help there is
- Unable to control or stop worrying
- Imagining that the worst will happen

Your thoughts might be...

- 'I can't cope'
- 'Things are out of control'
- 'I'm going mad'
- 'I'm going to faint/collapse'
- 'I'm going to have a heart attack'
- 'I'm going to make a fool of myself'
- 'I've got to leave, now!'

You might behave by...

- Not being able to sit still/finding it hard to relax
- Starting one job before finishing another
- Avoiding places that make you anxious
- Being snappy and irritable
- Eating and sleeping more or less
- Trying to do things perfectly or trying to control events to prevent danger
- Looking to others for reassurance or comfort
- Drinking, taking drugs or smoking

Your body symptoms are...

- Can't sleep
- Heart racing
- Heart palpitations
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Blurry vision
- Butterflies in the stomach
- Feel sick
- Need to go to the toilet
- Headaches
- Tired
- Tearful
- Forgetful
- Can't concentrate
- Tense neck, shoulder or leg muscles
- Numbness/tingling in toes and fingers
- Sweating
- Shakiness

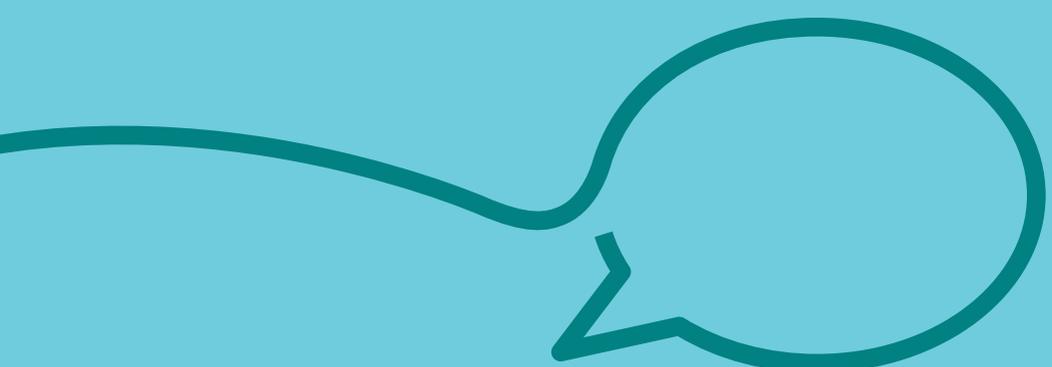
If you have ticked a number of these boxes, you may be having symptoms of anxiety. However, don't be alarmed, this is very common. There are things you can do to improve your situation. You will find some useful tools in this guide.

Causes of anxiety

There are many reasons why someone might become anxious.

Anxiety can stem from early childhood experiences or develop gradually, everyone will experience anxiety at some point in their life.

Beliefs about the world

You might have a fear of being judged by others, feel unable to cope around large crowds or at social events or think the worst that something bad will happen. You may experience thoughts such as: 'they won't like me', 'I'll make a fool of myself' or 'what if I have an accident?'.


Childhood events

Childhood abuse or traumatic events can have an impact that continues into adulthood.

Stressful life events

This could be anything that you personally find stressful, including losing a job, relationship breakdown or a bereavement.

Being under a lot of pressure

This could be at home or work e.g. work/studies, family commitments/problems, being in debt and not having enough money.

What keeps anxiety going?

Anxiety can become a long-term problem because things that happen in your life and past experiences all have an affect on your thoughts, emotions, your body and your behaviour like a ripple effect.

Anxiety has a physical effect on the body as well as mental effects. Coping with stressful situations in your day to day life can set off your 'fight or flight' response even when doing things you might enjoy, like going on holiday.

Negative thoughts will make your anxiety worse. If you think negatively about situations you will feel more anxious or worried and you may start to see danger where there is none. You can find out more about unhelpful thinking styles on page 18.

You might try to look after yourself by avoiding a stressful situation, but if you avoid things that you fear you will never have the opportunity to realise there was nothing to worry about.

If you are not aware of what keeps anxiety going you could get stuck in a vicious cycle of anxiety and worry.

Meet Chris. We will find out more about Chris and his anxiety throughout this guide.

Chris's situation

Chris has been invited to a party. Chris's thoughts about going to the party affect his emotions. It also affects how he feels physically. This can also change what he does or doesn't do.

The model over the page shows the vicious cycle of his anxiety. Look at the arrows in the diagrams. They show how each area can affect all the others.

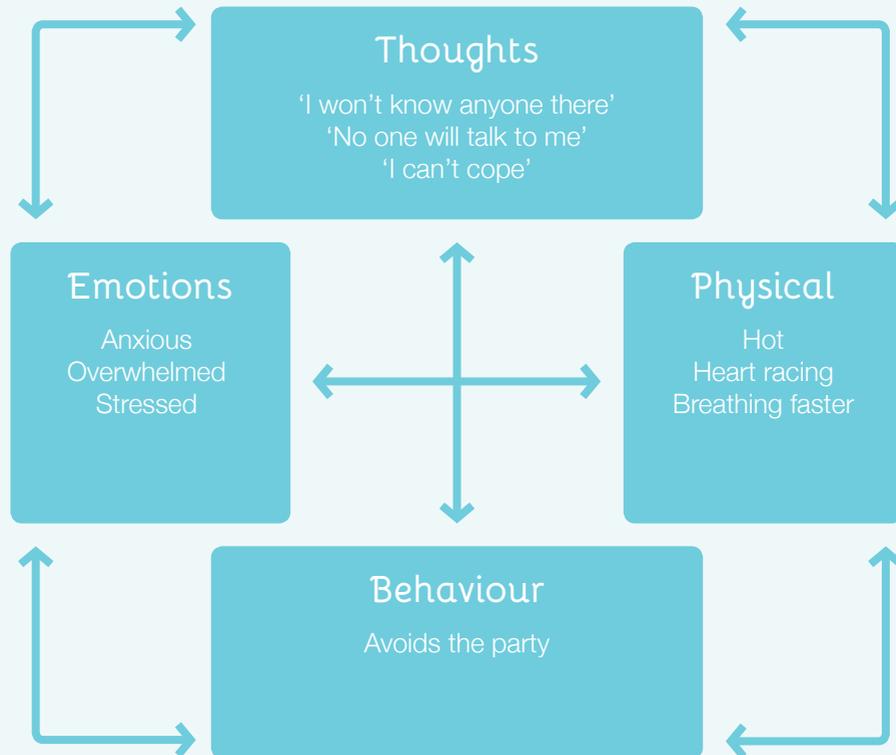
Vicious cycle of anxiety

Example

Chris has been invited to a party.

Chris thinks he won't know anyone and no one will talk to him at the party, this makes him feel anxious and overwhelmed which leads to his 'fight or flight' response being triggered so his heart starts to beat faster. Chris now feels awful and decides not to go to the party.

Chris's behaviour backs-up his thoughts which leads to a vicious cycle.

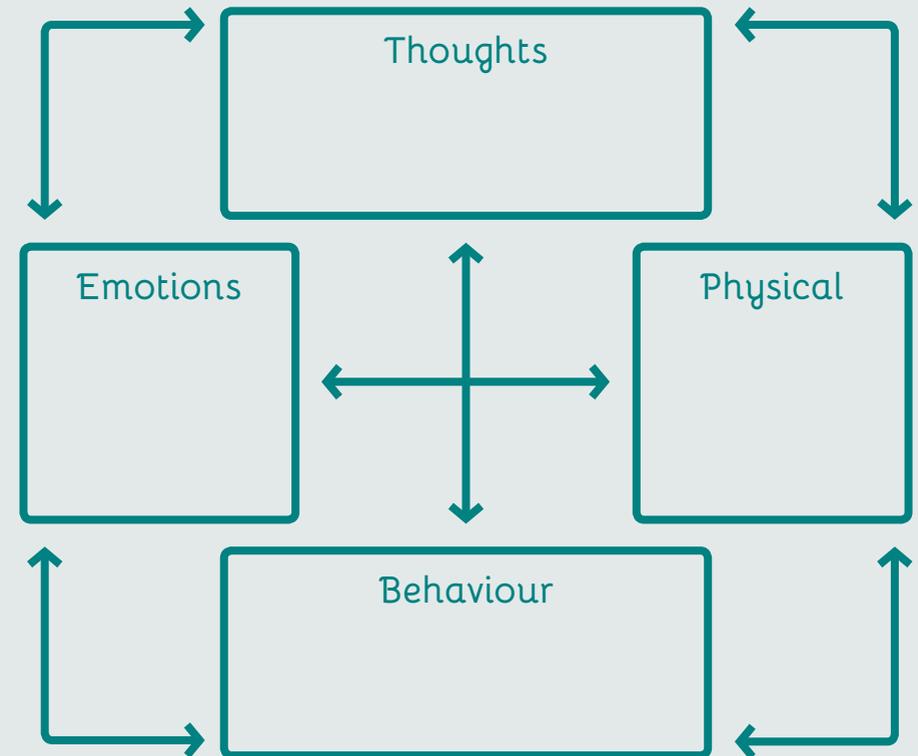


Your situation

Exercise

Have a go at drawing your own cycle on the blank diagram below.

Use the symptoms checklist from page 10 and 11, or think of the last time you felt anxious or worried. The arrows show how each area can affect the other areas to make a vicious cycle.



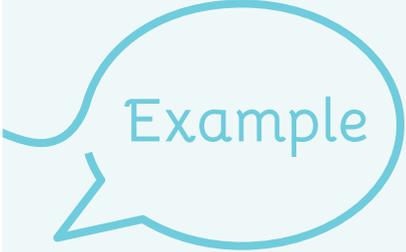
If you make a small positive change in one of the above areas it can help you to break your cycle of anxiety.

One of the things that keeps anxiety going is unhelpful or negative thoughts, they tend to happen more often when we are stressed or low.

“Worry is like
a rocking
horse: it keeps
you going,
wears you
out and gets
you nowhere.”



Model of unhelpful thinking styles



Example

There are many types of unhelpful thinking styles. Some thoughts can be untrue and unhelpful. These are Negative Automatic Thoughts. They are a bit like your own internal bullies.

Have a look at the examples below. Do any of them sound familiar?

Expecting the worst

- Expect things to go wrong, no matter what
- Expect the worst to happen
- Expect everything to always be a catastrophe

Jumping to conclusions

- Assume things about other people or events without any proof
- Mind reading - you think that you know what someone else is thinking
- Fortune telling - you predict that things will go wrong

Living by fixed rules

- Have fixed rules about how you and others should behave
- Often use the words 'should', 'ought', 'mustn't', 'shouldn't' and 'can't'

Negative focus

- Focus on the bad things about a situation and not see the good
- See only your weaknesses, not your strengths

All-or-nothing thinking

- See no middle ground
- Feel there is only one right way to do something and every other way is wrong
- Place people or situations into 'either/or' groups

Blaming yourself

- Think that things are your fault when something bad happens

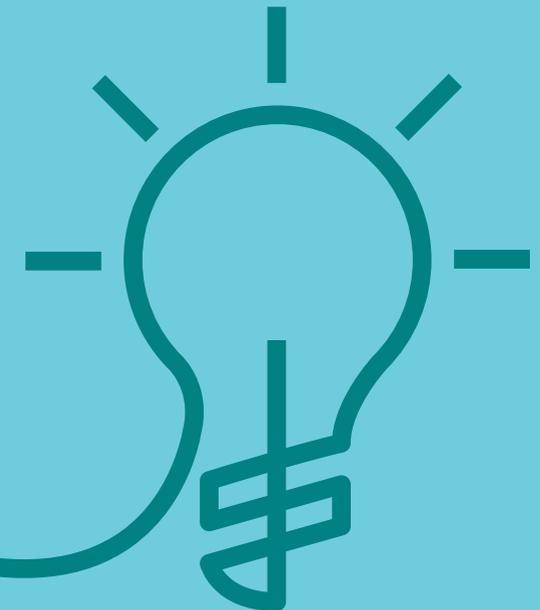
What next?

This guide is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). This aims to help you identify any unhelpful thinking and things that you do. It also looks at how to change them to help you feel better in your body and mind.

Research shows that CBT can help to manage symptoms and problems that cause anxiety and keep it going.

The rest of this guide looks at how you can recognise and then challenge your anxious thoughts using CBT methods.

Try each of the techniques to see which ones work for you. They are designed to help you take back control over your thoughts. You will need to make time to practise the techniques to start to feel better.



See it

Now it is time to start paying attention to your thoughts and patterns of thinking more closely.

Once you can identify your thoughts and ways of thinking that might trigger your anxiety, you can learn to manage it better. Many of these thoughts come and go very quickly. They may happen automatically, so you may feel that they are just a part of you. This is very common and it is important to remember that this can change.

Thought diary

A thought diary can help you figure out what you are thinking and make you more aware of what your thoughts are and how they affect you. You will be able to see if those thoughts are unhelpful and start to challenge them.

Complete the table on the next page. Rate how worried or stressed you felt at the time on a scale of zero to ten.

0 = completely calm
10 = the most stressed/worried you could ever be

Thought diary



Date and time			
e.g. 29/02/16, 4pm			
What happened?			
e.g. I have been asked to go to a friend's birthday party			
What was I thinking?			
e.g. 'I won't know anyone there' 'No one will talk to me' 'I'll say something to upset someone'			
My emotions			
e.g. Anxious, overwhelmed, nervous			
How my body felt			
e.g. Hot, heart racing, breathing faster			
Stress rating 0-10			
e.g. 7			

“Just because
you think it,
doesn't make
it true.”



Treat it

Your thoughts are messages from your brain. They are often random and automatic.

This means that they will pop into your head whether you like it or not. You might not be able to control what thoughts you have, but you can choose how to react to them.

When you have an unhelpful thought learn to do one of the four D's:

- Demand evidence
- Dismiss the thought
- Distract yourself
- Do something about it

The 'Do something' option could also include getting professional support. This could be through your doctor or other services. There is a list of organisations that could help at the back of this guide.

Demand evidence

Many of the upsetting thoughts you might have will be untrue and you can learn to challenge them.

If you can recognise the negative or unhelpful thought then you can start to do something about it. You need to challenge your thoughts to find out if they are true or not before jumping to conclusions.

Take the example of Chris, who was invited to a party.

Chris's thoughts were:

- 'I won't know anyone there'
- 'No one will talk to me'
- 'I can't cope'

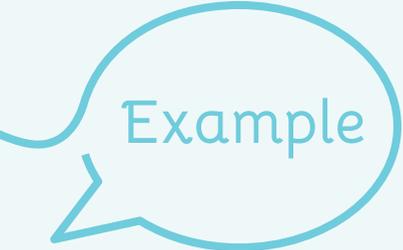
By challenging those thoughts and replacing them with balanced ones, Chris can start to feel less anxious.

Over the page are a set of questions to help challenge thoughts. You can see how Chris has used the questions to challenge his unhelpful thinking.



Challenging your thoughts

Use the set of questions to start to challenge your own thoughts.



Example

Unhelpful thoughts

'I won't know anyone there', 'No one will talk to me'

Challenge thought: what is the evidence?

'I haven't been to a party for a while, so I'm not sure what would happen'

What type of unhelpful thinking am I doing?

'Expecting the worst and fortune telling'

Is there another way of seeing this?

'This is a chance to make new friends. I've been invited so they must want me there'

What different views are there?

What advice would I give to a friend?

'I'd suggest that they could meet up with someone before they go'

What would someone else think?

'My friends are all looking forward to seeing each other'

What effect does my first thought have on me?

'It is making me feel worse'

What could I do to change things?

'I could phone a friend and arrange to meet them before the party'

Helpful or balanced thought

'I'm going to be okay. I am going to the party with Paul, so I will have someone to talk to. A few of my other friends will be there too'

Dismiss the thought

The physical effects of worry take up a lot of the body's energy.

It can wear you out and make you feel ill. Worry is like a rocking horse: it keeps you going, wears you out and gets you nowhere.

When you start to worry about something, try to see if the thought comes under any of the three categories listed below. If the worry belongs to any of these groups, it is safe to stop worrying.

Not important

Are you wearing yourself out over something that doesn't matter? Think about whether it will matter in five years. On a scale of zero to ten how important is it?

Not likely

Is it not likely to happen? Then you are wearing yourself out over nothing. Are you wearing yourself out over something that hasn't happened or might not happen? Worrying is not going to make you better prepared or stronger if it does happen. Instead, it makes you weaker and tires you out.

Not under my control

Are you worrying about something that you cannot control? Sometimes we cannot do anything about a situation or circumstance. A person might worry about getting older, but no one can do anything about aging. Some things we just need to learn to accept and live with.

The worry tree

Although worry can be useful at times, it can often get in the way.

If you can do something, then do it. Then you do not need to worry about it anymore. If you are not sure what to do, then problem solve it. There is information about this on page 38. If the worry comes up again you can tell yourself that you have a plan. This means that you don't need to worry.

If you can't do something about it, then try to stop worrying. It will just wear you out. Instead, know that it is safe to stop worrying. Give yourself permission to stop. You could distract yourself if you find this hard to do.

Use the worry tree plan to check out your worries.

Here are some ideas:

- Remind yourself that worrying isn't helping
- Think of somewhere pleasant
- Calm yourself, try to imagine thoughts as clouds and let them float by
- Relax e.g. practise breathing
- Do something you enjoy
- Do something useful
- Write a list of things you could do, then pick one when you need to distract yourself

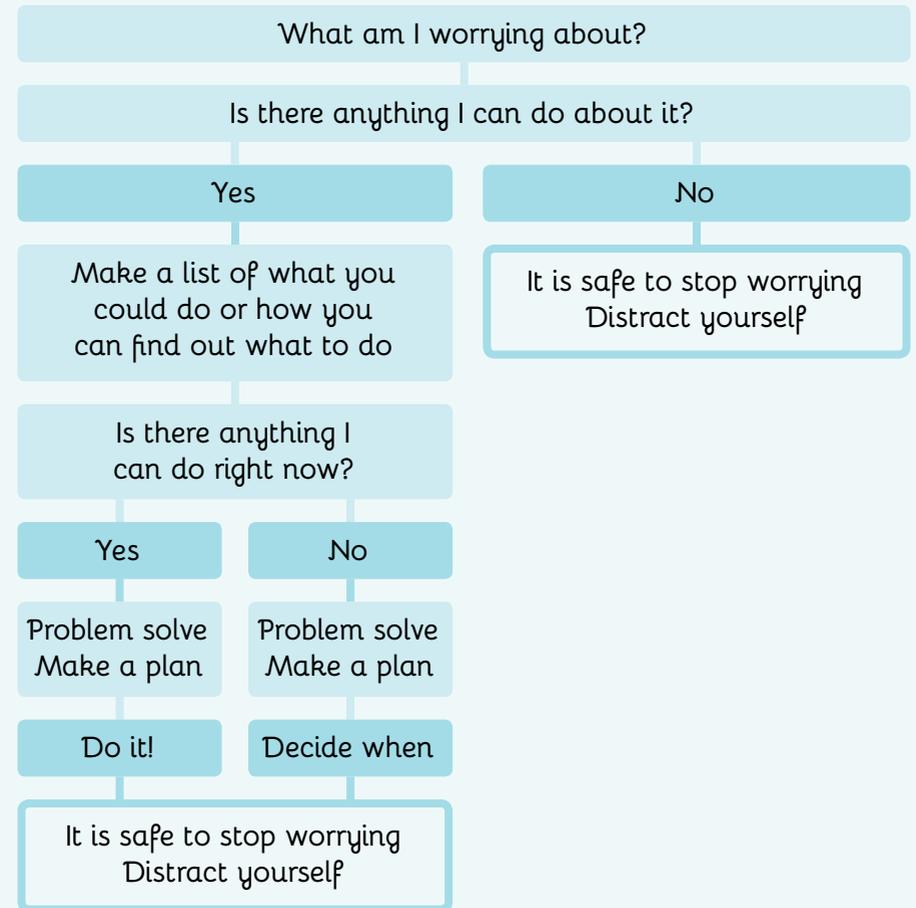


The worry tree



The worry tree helps you:

- Recognise what type of worry it is
- Turn worries into problems that can be solved
- Decide when it is safe to 'let go' of worries



Challenge your anxiety

When you feel anxious you might do things to make yourself feel better in the short-term. These are called safety behaviours.

You might avoid things like:

- Going out to see people or inviting people to come round to see you
- Asking people to do things for you
- Answering the phone
- Opening the mail

Or do things to make yourself feel better:

- Avoiding eye contact
- Not speaking up
- Keeping busy
- Looking for exits
- Speaking quickly
- Finding someone safe to stay with
- Drinking, smoking or taking drugs
- Eating more

Avoidance and safety behaviours actually keep anxiety going in the long-term. To overcome anxiety it is important to give yourself a chance to stay in a stressful situation long enough to feel your anxiety reduce. Your body will get used to it and you will be able to overcome your anxiety. This is called exposure.

Remember Chris?

Chris felt very anxious about going to social events. He thought that no one would talk to him and that he might have a panic attack.

He decides not to go to the party. His anxiety goes down and he feels better for a bit. However when he gets invited to another party he gets even more anxious.

If Chris goes to the party anyway, he might feel nervous at first. But, once there he will find that after a while his anxiety reduces and he may even start to enjoy himself because people start to chat to him. The next time he is invited to a party, he feels a little less nervous about going.

“To overcome anxiety it is important to face your fears slowly.”

The anxiety ladder

When someone feels very anxious, facing his or her fears may feel overwhelming. To reduce this anxiety, it is important to break it down into smaller steps.

They would start with something they find a little bit anxious and then build up to situations that they find very anxious.

The anxiety ladder is a tool that can help you to plan this. Make a list of the things that you avoid, or do, to reduce your anxiety. You could use your thought diary to help.

Give each item a score on a scale of 0 to 100.

0 = completely calm
100 = the most anxious you could ever be

Order your list from least anxious to most feared. To overcome anxiety start with the easiest things and work up to the more difficult stuff. See how Chris does it.

Chris's situation

Chris asks one of his friends to meet him at his flat before the party. He will start with step one and work slowly towards step five.

5. Go to a party where I know no-one	$\frac{95}{100}$
4. Talk to people who are not my friends	$\frac{80}{100}$
3. Meet a mate inside the party	$\frac{70}{100}$
2. Meet a mate outside the party then go in	$\frac{55}{100}$
1. Go to the party with a mate	$\frac{40}{100}$

Your situation



Try making your own anxiety ladder.

Plan to tackle each item in turn, starting at the bottom. You could use the six steps to problem solving on page 38 to help you come up with a plan.

Remember:

- To breathe
- Take it one step at a time
- Your anxiety will rise at first
- It will fall as you stay in the situation
- Try to stay until your anxiety has gone down by at least half
- The symptoms you feel are natural and not dangerous
- Repeat your steps again and again until you overcome your anxiety

8.	$\frac{\quad}{100}$
7.	$\frac{\quad}{100}$
6.	$\frac{\quad}{100}$
5.	$\frac{\quad}{100}$
4.	$\frac{\quad}{100}$
3.	$\frac{\quad}{100}$
2.	$\frac{\quad}{100}$
1.	$\frac{\quad}{100}$

Worry time

Anxiety can lead to a lot of time spent worrying over small things. This can affect your ability to relax and allow your body and mind to rest.

If you can reduce the amount of time you spend worrying, you can reduce your levels of anxiety. Worry time is when you set aside 20 minutes every day to focus on your worries.

You will need a notepad and pen to keep track of your worries. Keep them with you during the day. When a worry pops into your head, write it down and forget about it until your 'worry time'. It is important to write it down so that you will know that you won't forget about it.

When you start your 'worry time' you can work through each worry using the tools in this guide. Remember to time yourself so that you don't over run.

Here are some top tips for managing 'worry time':

- Assess if each worry is still important. You may find that you were worrying about nothing
- Stop when your 'worry time' is over. If you have any worries left over, just save them for the next day
- Don't worry if you find it hard to stop worrying; it will get easier with time and practice
- When you sort out your worries before your 'worry time' is over then stop and congratulate yourself
- Use relaxation techniques to help you de-stress after your 'worry time'. The guide 'From Distress to De-stress' has lots of information about this. You can download a free copy from www.mhim.org.uk

This is something that takes practice. It can be hard to change the way you think, but it can be done. Just be patient and keep going.

“Remember, anxiety and worry are a normal part of everyday life.”

Six steps to problem solving

When people have lots of problems it can feel like there is too much to deal with.

This can affect a person's level of anxiety. It is very easy to spend a lot of time worrying about a problem without finding a way to sort it out. This can make us feel worse and can affect our ability to sleep and think clearly.

It helps to work through a problem in a structured way. Once you have got a plan to deal with a problem you can try it out.

What is the problem?

Identify a problem you want to tackle. You may need to break down a big problem into small, bite-sized pieces to tackle one by one.

What could work?

Come up with as many ideas as you possibly can.

Work out the good/bad

Work out what is good about each solution and then what is bad about each solution.

What will you try?

Choose the one that seems to be the best. Look at the things that are good or bad about each solution to help you decide.

What will you do?

Include what you are going to do and when you plan to do it. It is a good idea to try to think about anything that might get in the way of your plan. You can then think of a step-by-step plan to overcome any obstacles.

What happened?

Review what happened and see how well it worked. If it hasn't, then you can go back and try another solution.

Your situation



Use the table below to problem solve a worry or problem you have.

You can use the steps on page 38 to help.

What is the problem?			
What could work?	What is good?	What is bad?	What will you try?
			What will you do?
What happened?			

Looking after yourself

You can look after yourself in many ways. The skill of 'looking after you' and paying attention to your needs is important.

Some people might feel guilty and view it as being selfish. However, taking care of yourself and being interested in yourself as well as others is a good thing.

Only by looking after yourself will you be ready to deal with the ups and downs that life may throw at you. You will also be more able to support others when you feel strong and well rested yourself.

Eat well

Your brain uses up more than 50% of the energy in the food you eat. That is why it is important to eat starchy food. This includes rice, pasta, bread and potatoes. When you do not eat well, your brain cannot work properly.

Eating your five-a-day helps improve physical and mental health. It includes fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruit and vegetables.

It is also important to eat protein. This includes meat, fish, beans, tofu and Quorn. Omega 3 oils found in oily fish and dark green vegetables are also needed for a healthy brain.

You also need to have enough liquid each day. This includes what you drink. It also includes the liquid found in your food. Read the guide 'Food and Mood' for more information. You can download it free from www.mhim.org.uk

Vitamin D

There is very little Vitamin D in the food we eat. Our skin makes Vitamin D from sunlight. However, this only happens between the months of March and October. You only need to spend 20 minutes in the sun each day, if you have pale skin. If you have a darker skin tone you may need to spend longer in the sun. Many breakfast cereals and all margarines (but not low fat spreads) have Vitamin D added to them. Just check out the label. You can also buy Vitamin D tablets to take once a day.

Get active

This is great for releasing stress. It can make you feel fitter and more confident. Choose something that you enjoy and can fit into your lifestyle. It could be walking while you listen to an audio book. The guide 'Physical Activity and Mood' has tips about getting started. You can download it free from www.mhim.org.uk

Sleep well

Sleep lets the body and mind rest and recuperate. When you don't sleep well, your brain doesn't work properly. You can use relaxation and breathing techniques in bed to help you to fall asleep. Read the guide 'Sleep Well' for more information. You can download it free from www.mhim.org.uk

Get a routine

Having a routine can help you ensure that you look after yourself every day. It can improve the quality of your sleep and life. When feeling low, people tend to be less active than normal. This might stop you from doing things that lift your mood. This can be a vicious cycle and make you feel even worse.

Relax

Relaxing helps the body and mind recover and rest. You can relax in many ways. Some people read; others paint and draw; some people knit and others spend time with animals. Try to find a way that works for you. Breathing skills can reduce the affect of stress on the body. Read the guide 'From Distress to De-stress' for more information. You can download it free from www.mhim.org.uk

Looking after yourself

Connect

Building bonds with people can help you feel supported. It can also allow you to feel closer to others. We have always lived together in groups. Having a good set of friends and family can improve your wellbeing.

Give

This is about doing something nice for others. Helping others can make you feel good about yourself. It will make them feel good too. It could be as simple as smiling at a stranger or holding a door open for someone. You could help a neighbour or friend. You could even do random acts of kindness. It can feel great to volunteer at a local community group or charity. You could meet new people, learn new skills and gain valuable experience.

Keep learning

Learn or rediscover skills. It builds confidence and esteem. You will feel more able to cope with life.

Take notice

Noticing the world around you can put things in perspective and brighten your day. Often we can go around in autopilot and miss the little things that could improve our mood. Keep an eye out for rainbows, architecture and nature!

Ask for help if you need it

Don't be ashamed to ask for emotional or practical help and support when you need it. We all need help sometimes. Seeking help early can prevent problems getting worse. It's a sign of strength, not weakness.

Getting help and treatment

Your GP

If you think you may be anxious, your GP is the best person to talk to in the first instance. Write down your doctor's name, address and contact number here:

Accident and emergency

You can go to A&E if your mental health worsens to crisis point. Write down the address of your nearest A&E here:

Other people who can help

Other people may be able to help you including your family and friends. Write their names and numbers here:

Beat it

Practice, practice, practice...

Things are not going to change overnight. It can be a challenge to make changes to the way you have been doing things for so long. But, with practice it will become easier and easier. In the end, the changes will feel like second nature as you get used to them.

There is a lot of information in this guide. It might be useful to read it more than once. Try each technique a few times and keep practising the ones that you find useful.

Do not expect too much too soon. It may take some time for you to change the way you think and feel. It is a bit like learning to walk as a toddler. We all fall over at first. You will have banged your head and grazed your knees quite a few times. Luckily, despite these setbacks, you kept going and eventually learnt to walk. It didn't happen overnight. It took time and practice. It is the same for overcoming anxiety. It is not going to happen straight away. But, it will be worth it in the end.

After a while, it is useful to go back and check your anxiety checklists. You will be able to see if there have been any changes.

Coping with setbacks

Everyone has setbacks. Life is like that! The trick is to find ways to cope with them. When they do occur, remember that it happens to everyone. It does not mean that you have failed, so it is important not to give yourself a hard time. If you do start to think things like 'I'm a failure', you can use the 'Demand evidence' section of this guide from page 25 to challenge your thoughts.

When you have a setback, try to remember that you are not back to square one. It can be easy to forget about all the progress you have made. Try to see it as a chance to learn something new. We often learn more from things when they don't go quite right compared to when they go smoothly. Take some time to reflect on what has happened. Try to understand why it has happened and what you can learn from it. You may be able to find a pattern to what is going on.

You can learn to recognise your warning signs and prevent setbacks.

Warning signs include:

- Lots of things going on in your life
- Changes in your mood: feeling low, angry, upset, wound up
- Changes in your thinking: negative thinking, unhelpful thinking styles, giving yourself a hard time
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Becoming more irritable and argumentative
- Changes in your body: feeling more tired, headaches, aching muscles
- Changes in what you do: doing fewer enjoyable things, avoiding people and places, being less active

Once you can recognise your warning signs, you can do something to deal with them so things don't get worse. You could even come up with your own survival guide with a plan to deal with each warning sign.

Finally – don't give up! Overcoming anxiety takes time and practice. It may take some time to notice an improvement. It is worth taking some time each month to look at the progress you have made.

It is important to remember that anxiety and worry are part of everyday life. You are not going to get rid of them completely. By persevering, you will be able to manage the impact it has on your wellbeing.

