Dealing with

WORRY

Why Worry?

Everyone worries from time to time. Too much worry can be bad as it leaves us feeling tense and anxious. Even though we might say to ourselves and to others – "Stop worrying. It's pointless. It won't do any good" – there is something about worrying that makes it hard to stop. This is because worry can be helpful.

Useful worry prompts action. All other worry is pointless.

- worry is useful if it makes you pay attention

  Worrying about the weather cannot stop it raining on your washing. However, if you watch the sky and **act** to bring in your washing when it rains, then being aware that it may rain will have helped.

- worry is useful, provided it is turned into a plan for action

  For example, worrying that your electricity might get cut off might lead you to **act** to pay your bill on time. Once the bill has been paid the worrying would stop and you would feel better.

- worry is useful if it helps you be better prepared

  Worry may help you think about "what you could do if…," or "what would happen if…". Worrying "what would happen if my house was burgled" could make you **act** to take out house insurance and lock your front door when you go out.

Worry without action does nothing

If worry on its own did something, then we could worry all day to increase our bank balance. On the other hand taking action such as selling something, working more hours or spending less **will** directly affect our bank balance.

Is it worth worrying about?

There are four things that are not worth worrying about but that accounts for a lot of our worries: the unimportant, the unlikely, the uncertain and the uncontrollable. Ban these from your life, and you will worry less.

The Unimportant

It is easy to fill your life with worries about little things. When you find yourself worrying, start to question yourself instead. Ask yourself, "How important is the thing that I am worrying about?"

The Unlikely

A lot of worries ask "What if…" questions. Tackling existing problems is hard enough. Do not waste time, energy and happiness on problems that do not exist.

The Uncertain

Many things we worry about have not yet happened and we can only act once we know what has happened. For example, worrying that you may have failed a test or exam is not going to improve the results.

The Uncontrollable

We have no control over many of the things we worry about. For example, worrying that you are getting older does not change the fact that in a day's time you will be a day older.

Dealing with persistent worries

Thinking about the type of worry you have using the exercises above may help you stop worrying. However, some worries are very difficult to get rid of and keep going through your mind.

Worrying can have an impact on our behaviour, mood and bodily symptoms

Thoughts

"It's all too much."
"I am useless."
"I shouldn't be feeling this way."
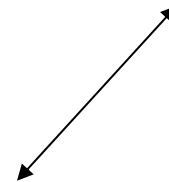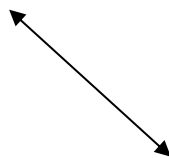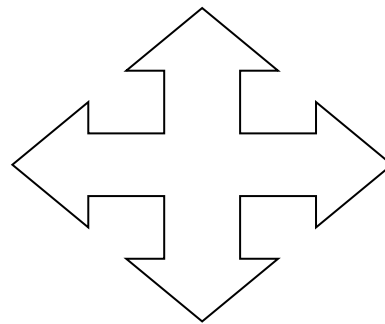"I need to be prepared for everything".
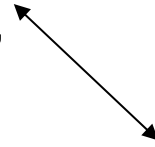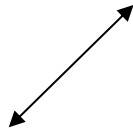
Behaviour

- Constant worry
- Avoid situations that cause you worry
- Preparing for every event in detail

Mood

- Scared
- Angry
- Anxious
- worried

Bodily symptoms

Feeling tired
Restlessness
Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
Unable to concentrate
Feeling sick

Worry diary

Try to make a note of your worry as soon as it comes into your head, no matter how small it may seem. Be as specific as you can, noting down the situation, your thoughts, behaviour, mood and bodily symptoms (as in the diagram on the previous page).

Dealing with your worries

Still worrying? Try these three steps to help deal with the worries. Worries can be divided into two types: those you **can** do something about and those you **can't**.

1. Be clear what the worry is

2. Decide if something can be done

3. Write a list of things you could do to solve your worry

4. Postpone your worry until your scheduled 'worry time' and use distraction techniques (Ceder - Managing your worries)

Ways to distract yourself

You can only pay full attention to one thing at a time. Keeping yourself busy will leave no room for worry. Below are some useful hints on how to distract yourself.

Physical Activity. Giving yourself a task to do takes your mind off worrying thoughts. Keeping yourself physically active by doing some exercise is a good way to stop worrying thoughts.

Mental Games. Doing puzzles, crosswords, reciting a poem or a song and counting backwards from one hundred are all useful distraction exercise.

Focus on your Surroundings. Concentrate on a specific detail of the world around you, for example making words out of number plates of cars or guessing what people do for a living. Focusing on the outside world will prevent you from thinking about your worries.

Sometimes your attention may drift from what you are doing to a worry. If this happens, say to yourself that you have done all you can for now. Remind yourself that there is nothing more that can be done today and shift your attention back to your task.

Do not use distraction techniques as a way of avoiding dealing with your worries. Go through the steps above before using distraction.

Worry Time

Hold a daily planning session, which you use to work through your worries and problems.

- Planning sessions
  - Set aside 10-15 minutes.
  - Sit in a quiet room. Have pencil and notebook to hand.
  - Notice what kind of worries you have and make a note of them.
  - Worry time is a space to collect your worries, not to solve them. After worry time you may have ideas on how to solve them.

Prioritising Worries

- Prioritise your real worries
  - Not important
  - Important and leave for now
  - Important and problem solve

Problem Solving

- There is a section on Problem Solving in the Managing Your Worries workbook which has 7 steps that will provide a structed way to help you find a solution to your worry. This leaflet is one of several resources produced by Clinical Education Development and Research (CEDAR) from the University of Exeter
    - [NHS Talking Therapies | Clinical Education Development and Research (CEDAR) | University of Exeter](#)

Further Information

NHS Inform

[Anxiety self-help guide | NHS inform](#)

[Problem solving self-help guide | NHS inform](#)

NOTES