

SELF HELP GUIDE

“STRESS
ANXIETY
DEPRESSION
EMOTIONAL
PROBLEMS”

DO WHAT MATTERS

“It was pitched at the right level. The presenters were very good. Factual not emotional or a softly softly approach, yet appreciative of the difficulties being faced.”

Quote from a seminar participant

CONTENTS

PART 1

Problem definitions and targets in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)	3
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PART 2

What keeps us stuck and why is this understandable	6
Reason 1 – Avoidance	7
Reason 2 – Habit	9
Reason 3 – We lose touch with what matters	11

PART 3

Getting back on TRAC with our lives	12
Knowing what matters	12
Recognising our TRAPs and getting back on TRAC	20
Spare TRAP and TRAC sheets	31

ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

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This self-help pack has been written to help people to remember and to apply the ideas and coping skills that are described in the 'Manage Your Mind' seminar delivered by Leeds IAPT. It is intended for personal use only. Permission to share copies of this booklet should be requested in writing to the author: martingroom@nhs.net

PART 1: CBT IS LIKE A TAXI

PROBLEM DEFINITIONS AND TARGETS IN CBT



Starting Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is like getting into a taxi... when you get into a cab you need to tell the driver where you want to go.

So what we ask at the start of CBT is:

"What would you like to get out of the CBT?" "What are your goals or end of treatment targets?"

People often reply by saying what they don't want or what they want to stop doing.

"I don't want to feel tired, low, angry, upset, anxious or depressed."

"I want to stop being so agitated with my kids and wife."

"I want to stop checking or seeking reassurance or scanning around for the nearest toilet or way out."

This is really useful. We summarise the problem you want to work on in CBT and call this a 'problem definition', a 'summary of the problem', or a 'problem list'. It will help you and your therapist have a clear, shared idea of what you are working on together. By rating how much the problem upsets you and interferes with your life at the beginning of CBT it gives you and your therapist a measure of how effective the CBT is. If the CBT is working, the problem should become less upsetting and interfere less with your life. Here are a few typical examples:

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PROBLEM DEFINITIONS EXAMPLES

1. I check excessively. I try hard not to show others vulnerability 'weakness', I feel I'm not as connected with people or myself as I want to be.

This interferes with my life 6 out of 8. This upsets me 7 out of 8.

2. When I have physical sensations in my tummy (for example when I am accelerating in the car, stressed, anxious in a shop), I think "I am losing control."

This leads to adrenaline rush and panic attack. I try to cope by distracting myself, using breathing techniques, holding onto things or avoiding the situation all together.

This interferes with my life 4 out of 8. This upsets me 6 out of 8.

3. I feel low and tired. I worry excessively about dying and my health. I busy myself with tasks to distract myself from uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. I "give myself a kicking" for worrying about stuff I don't need to. I visit the Doctor too much.

This interferes with my life 8 out of 8. This upsets me 7 out of 8.

EXERCISE

Have a think about the problem/problems you want to work in CBT.

In a few sentences, how would you summarise your problem definition?

It may be helpful to think about.

- What triggers it or sets it off?
- What are the main thoughts or images you have when it happens?
- How does your behaviour change?
- What are the main consequences of this?

My problem definition is:

Coming back to the taxi idea, the problem definition is: the point you get in, where you start not where you want to go.

Saying I want to be happy or I don't want to be so tired and upset is really understandable. However it's a bit like saying to the cabbie:

"I can't stand being here, I want to leave this place, get me away."

When he or she says – *"but where do you want to go?"* you reply...

"I don't want to go to the airport, I don't want to go to the town hall and I definitely don't want to go to Headingley!"

However it's more useful to work out where you do want to go. Also, with the taxi drivers help how we are going to get there.

In CBT this means how your life would be different if the problem was significantly different or improved. In this way, your CBT focuses on what matters to you. In CBT we do this by having end of treatment targets. Again, these are scored or rated to measure how successful the CBT is.

Here are a few examples of CBT end of treatment targets. What the client's life would look like at the end of treatment.

1. Spend half an hour with Jim three times a week at the end of the day, chatting, reading, playing a game.

(I can do this 10 % of the time)

2. Travel on the bus to work every day.

I cannot do this at present (0% of the time)

3. Sit with colleagues in the staff room and join in chatting two times a week for 15 minutes or more.

I can do this 50% of the time. However it is really uncomfortable

In each of the examples, the person chose this specific target after thinking about what matters to them in this area of their life. Jane's target (target 1) was chosen as Jane reflected on what matters to her as a wife. To be playful, intimate and tuned in. Spending time with her husband Jim fitted with what mattered to her. She wasn't doing this as she had got into a strong habit of checking the cooker was switched off for 50 minutes before going to bed.

By having a problem definition and clear targets you and your CBT therapist can work together as a team and know if you are getting where you want to go.

PART 2: WHAT KEEPS US STUCK AND WHY IS THIS SO UNDERSTANDABLE?

Often people coming to CBT have lost sight of what matters to them. They frequently spend less time doing what matters to them. Alternatively they do things that matter but somehow the meaning or purpose has dropped away and these things seem less rewarding. This often leads to some uncomfortable thoughts and feelings and some changes in how they behave. They seem stuck or caught in a trap. This booklet helps understand the typical human TRAPS that we can all find ourselves stuck in. It also gives some ways to help get out of them.

'Life is spelt... hassle'

Life can be great. However, often life is stressful and can be full of hassle. Sometimes really big life events happen. Things like this:

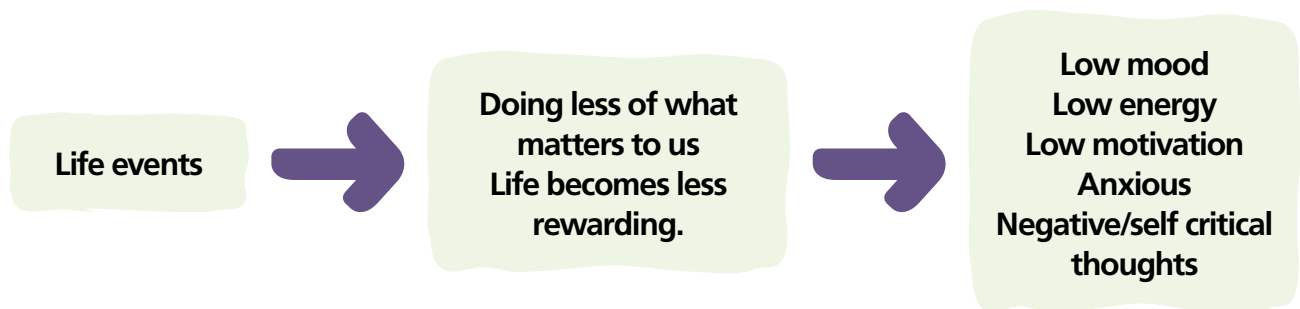
- Lose or gain a new job
- We break up or get stuck in a relationship
- School holidays/ holidays
- We are assaulted or abused
- We get married
- We lose a good friend or relative
- We start a family or find out that we can't
- We move away from home

Notice that even positive things like going on holiday or getting a promotion are usually stressful.

Often, (not always) we get stuck following positive or negative changes in our lives. These events may be events in the past, more recent events or very often a combination of the two. For example, we change, lose or get bored of our job; a relationship doesn't work out or is stressful; we have children; we have an injury or illness or look after someone in a similar situation. These changes often alter how much time we spend doing what matters to us. We work less, we play less, and we do less chores or tasks to keep our lives on track.

Alternatively we may do the same things but somehow they don't seem to matter anymore. As a result our lives become less rewarding or vital. When this happens humans tend to feel, sad, low, or anxious. We feel tired, down on ourselves and lack motivation.

This pattern is normal. After all, if doing things that matter makes us feel vital and provides a sense of well being, not doing them or doing them less will make us low, tired or de-motivated..



However sometimes, rather than making an adjustment to these events and getting back on track with our lives this pattern goes on for a long time and we get stuck. Let's look at three reasons how and why this happens.

HOW WE GET STUCK

REASON 1: AVOIDANCE

When we feel low, tired, sad, anxious etc (as all humans do) we tend to withdraw or avoid things. We do this to try to feel better. To get rid of or 'fix' the feelings and thoughts we don't want. For example, we may not answer the phone (which may be an invitation to go out); we may not go running or do sport because we feel too tired and we may not do the washing up. Instead we may dwell on things, have some chocolate or biscuits or zone out on the computer or TV.

Reacting in this way to unwanted thoughts, feelings, images, memories or physical sensations (experience) is very common and really understandable. Why? Because dealing with difficult thoughts and feelings in this way provides a 'hit' of relief.

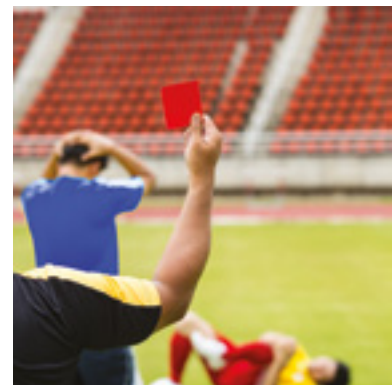
HUMANS LOVE RELIEF!

It's very habit forming. The more we avoid or withdraw, the more it becomes a habit because we keep getting a hit of relief. The problem is, (as you may have noticed) there are some longer term unintended consequences. Withdrawing or avoiding often leads to an increase of low mood, painful feelings, memories or unpleasant physical sensations rather than less. For example, because we haven't exercised we still feel tired and low. If we haven't dealt with that bill or another problem, we worry about it and get more anxious. Also the time period of the problem (having an unpaid bill) is getting bigger. We may sleep badly or feel guilty for not eating sensibly. If we don't wash up, when we walk into the kitchen we may not feel great!

We also tend to switch our attention away from what matters and more toward the problem and the thoughts, feelings and sensations connected to it.

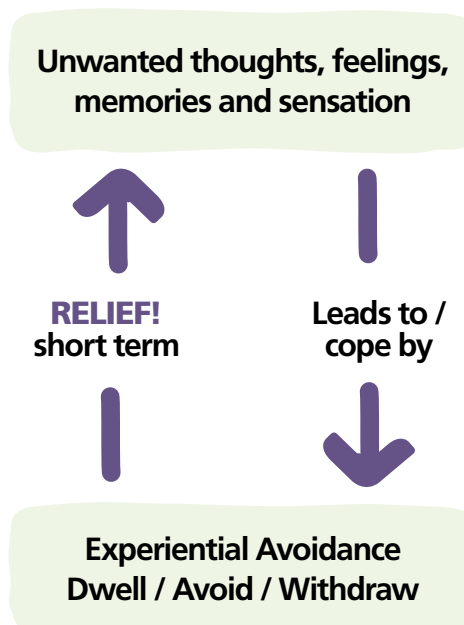
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We can also criticise ourselves for putting things off or not doing things. Our minds are trying to motivate us. "C'mon you should be able to do this" etc. This can work. Sometimes this gets us to do things that matter. However, self-criticism often leads to more of the thoughts and feelings we were trying to get rid of, especially guilt, shame and anger. If we carry on criticising and putting the boot in things can get really quite nasty.



Self criticism is like 'putting the boot in'. Rather than help motivate us, things just get 'nasty'

In other words we get stuck in an unhelpful but very understandable short term relief cycle like this.

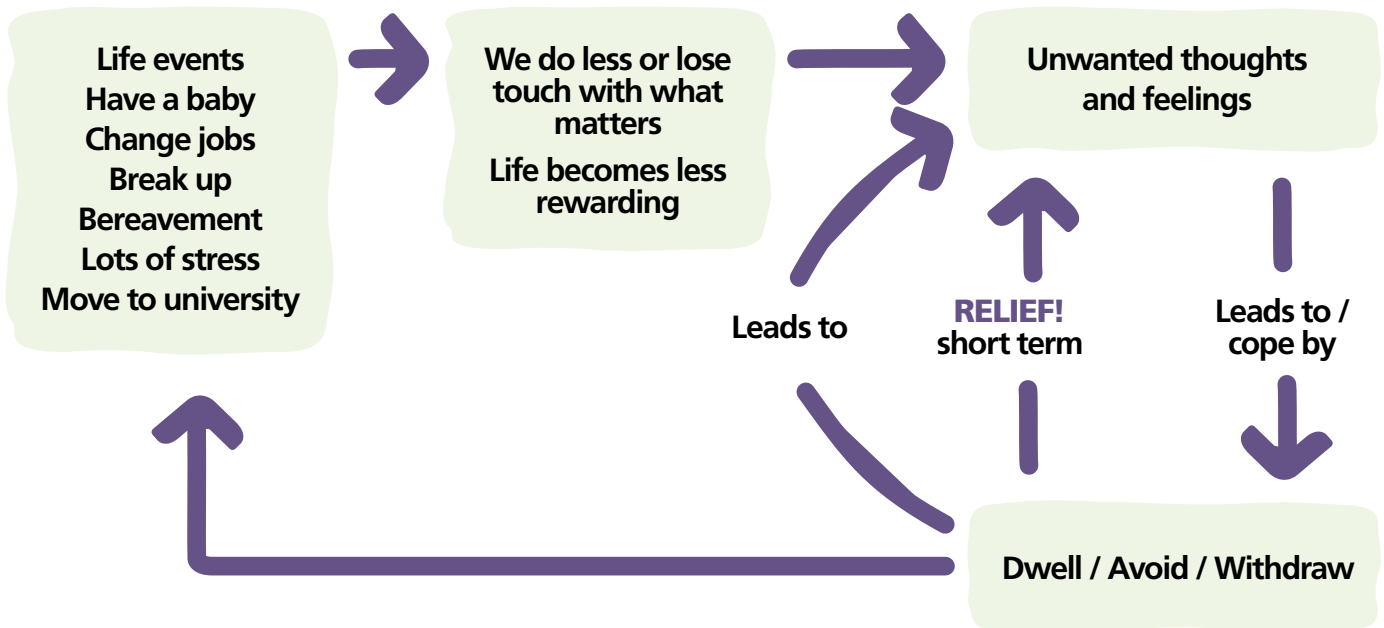


As we are in this relief cycle and still getting unwanted thoughts, feelings, memories etc. this makes us even less likely to start getting back into doing things that matter to us. Or when we are doing what matters we are not really 'present'. For example, we spend time with our loved ones, but we are also worrying or dwelling. We go to a work meeting we have been putting off but we can't concentrate. Our attention has wandered again!

And so the problem continues because the life now being lived is a life with less meaning or purpose. We are doing less of what matters. Or when we do what matters – it somehow matters less.

A life with more relief but not enough reward.

In summary it looks like this:



**HOW WE GET STUCK
REASON 2: HABIT**

One definition of a habit is

“An action performed repeatedly and automatically, usually without awareness” (Wikipedia)

We only keep up habits if they are somehow ‘reinforced’. That is, there is usually some kind of pay off following the behaviour. Some kind of reward or relief which leads to us to repeat the behaviour. Here are some everyday examples.

EXAMPLE 1

We are feeling stressed, anxious and overwhelmed. We have been for a while and we are a bit run down. Our bodies react by wanting carbohydrates to get a bit more energy. It’s the end of the day. We have several things to do, none of which are particularly appealing. We walk into the kitchen, we see the pack of chocolate digestives. We eat four. We are distracted from the thoughts and feelings by the taste and sense of eating. This is rewarding. And for a brief period while we put off the things we need to do and thinking about them we feel some relief. Next time we walk into the kitchen the biscuits aren’t out. However, the memory of last time is triggered, we remember them, we salivate, we can almost smell the chocolate from the memory! We seek them out and have five more. And so the habit starts to gain strength and shape.

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The kitchen has become a trigger for chocolate digestive. The consequences are short term reward and relief. However, there may be some negative short and long term consequences. Short term we may put something off and self criticise. In the longer term we may put on weight.

EXAMPLE 2

We are going to a wedding or other similar social event. We start to have worrying, negative thoughts about this and feel anxious. At the wedding rather than talking to new people and giving eye contact we only talk to the people we know very well. We experience relief (short term pay off) but in the long term our confidence to talk to people we don't know starts to fall off. The next time we are in a similar situation, the worry and feelings return and we do the same again. We continue to get short term relief. However, the longer term consequences are that we may avoid social events and become less confident.

Both examples show how and why a habit develops and how it starts to get fixed or rooted.

One key thing to remember about habits is how understandable it is that we get stuck this way. It can be incredibly frustrating when we become aware of a bad habit and yet still continue! Why would this happen? All human minds and bodies are set up to prioritise short term gains especially when we are feeling threatened or overwhelmed. Knowing this can make us less self-critical. Although we know it's not helping long term we also know we can get some short term relief and tend to go for it.

HOW WE GET STUCK

REASON 3: WE LOSE TOUCH WITH WHAT MATTERS

We can think of the habits and patterns discussed above as bad habits. By 'bad' we don't mean morally wrong. A 'bad' habit can be thought of as an avoidance of something that matters to us, or the thoughts and feelings that come along with it. Often a 'bad' habit will take us further away from what matters to us.

A 'good' habit can be thought of as bringing us towards what matters, where we want to be. Even though at times this may feel uncomfortable.

Once we find ourselves feeling stressed and overwhelmed it may be more difficult to remember or get in touch with what is really important to us. Our lives may become too full and busy and we spend so much time 'doing'. We may not even notice the patterns and habits we have fallen into. Similarly if we are in a depressive cycle our lives may have become rather emptier rather than busier.

One way this happens is through a process called over general memory. Research has shown that when we are low in mood our memories actually work differently. When our memories become over general we find it more difficult to recall specific memories of our lives and easier to recall general ones. As a result it is more difficult to make sense of why our lives matter to us. What we stand for as individuals. Once again, we won't be aware that this is going on – we'll probably just feel disconnected from a sense of purpose or vitality with our lives. This is a normal human process which has some unfortunate consequences. Knowing this however can help make sense of our experience.

SUMMARY

Life happens. This effects what matters to us. We experience unwanted thoughts and feelings. When this happens:

- 1. We struggle tend to avoid, withdraw, self-criticise and our attention shifts.**
- 2. We get out of the habit of doing what matters.**
- 3. We lose sight / lose touch with what matters.**

Now we understand a bit more about how and why we get stuck in section 3 we look at two ways to get back on track.

PART 3: GETTING BACK ON TRAC WITH OUR LIVES

First we'll look at a three step technique to be clearer about and more in touch with our values and what matters to us. We'll then move on to a technique called TRAP and TRAC.

KNOWING WHAT MATTERS – OUR VALUES

What matters to us is determined by our values. By this we mean statements about

- **What do we stand for?**

- Even in the face of unwanted thoughts and feelings or real life problems.

- **How do we want to act or behave as a: (For example)**

- Friend, a brother, a worker or colleague.
- Regarding our health, creativity and interests?

It may be we don't think about this much. This may be one reason why from moment to moment the way we behave can become easily shaped by habit rather than guided by our values.

Values are connected to goals but are different as the examples below illustrate.

GOAL	VALUE
To have a big house	Caring for and protecting your family
To win the match	Playing fairly, enthusiastically and skilfully
To get good marks	Applying yourself fully to your studies and exploring new ideas
To have a lot of friends	To be warm, friendly, outgoing, supportive and genuine
To lose 5 kg in weight	Looking after, strengthening and maintaining my body and health
Love	Leads to strong bonds of attachment

When we get lost in a storm of negative thoughts, emotions, memories and physical sensations it's our values that can help, like a light house.



Sometimes this is easy. Often it is not.

Values are as much about how and why we do things as about what we do. I like to think of the Bananarama song:

"It ain't what you do its the way that you do it"

or even

"It ain't what you do but the WHY that you do it"

The 'why' in values isn't so much about what you should do. It's more about what in your 'heart' matters to you.

We can learn to become more aware of our values. As we do, values tend to more directly influence what we chose to do and how we chose to do it. This may not be easy. Especially at times when values have to be prioritised. However being in touch with our values, what matters to us has been demonstrated to lead to a healthier life and a greater sense of well-being as the facts below illustrate.

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- People who pursue their personal goals and strive to “do what matters to them” tend to live longer and happier lives (in spite of stress). (Katz & Yelin, 1995)
- People who stop pursuing their goals and aspirations are at greater risk of depression and physical illness. (Street et al, 2007)
- Sometimes people are unable to “do what matters” because they become distracted by more immediate goals and concerns. Often these immediate goals focus on gaining relief from symptoms or worries. (Mansell et al, 2013)

Russ Harris in his book. *The Confidence Gap* (2010) suggests values can be like helpful life glue. While habits, although really understandable keep us stuck in unhelpful patterns of behaviour, when we are in touch with our values they keep us helpfully attached to how we really want to live our lives. How we really want to spend the time we have. When we are acting more in line with our values we are more likely to feel vital and to have a sense of meaning and purpose. Moment to moment we will still have unpleasant thoughts and feelings. This is a part of being alive and having the type of brains we have. This way we are able to have a ‘good day’, even if we are not feeling great.

The following exercises can all be used to help us be clearer about what matters to us. From there we can look at our regular life and compare this with what really matters to us. From there, if we choose to, we can set goals that reflect our values.

STAGE 1: WHAT ARE YOUR VALUES?

Read the info on values below. Without thinking about it too much jot down some ideas below each life area about what your values or valued actions (things that you do when you hold your values in mind) are.

If you feel overwhelmed that’s normal. Pick just one or two and then follow through to the next stage.

VALUES WORKSHEET

(Adapted from Kelly Wilson’s Valued Living Questionnaire)

Deep down inside, what is important to you? What do you want your life to stand for? What sort of qualities do you want to cultivate as a person? How do you want to be in your relationships with others? Values are our heart’s deepest desires for the way we want to interact with and relate to the world, other people, and ourselves. They are leading principles that can guide us and motivate us as we move through life.

Values are not the same as goals. Values are directions we keep moving in, whereas goals are what we want to achieve along the way. A value is like heading north; a goal is like the river or mountain or valley we aim to cross whilst travelling in that direction. Goals can be achieved or ‘crossed off’,

whereas values are an ongoing process. For example, if you want to be a loving, caring, supportive partner, that is a value – an ongoing process. If you stop being loving, caring and supportive, then you are no longer a loving, caring, supportive partner; you are no longer living by that value. In contrast, if you want to get married, that’s a goal – it can be ‘crossed off’ or achieved. Once you’re married, you’re married – even if you start treating your partner very badly. If you want a better job, that’s a goal. Once you’ve got it – goal achieved. But if you want to fully apply yourself at work, that’s a value – an ongoing process.

The following are areas of life that are valued by some people. Not everyone has the same values, and this is not a test to see whether you have the ‘correct’ values. Think about each area in terms of general life directions, rather than in terms of specific goals. There may be certain areas that you don’t value much; you may skip them if you wish. There may be areas that overlap. For example, if you value hiking in the mountains, that may come under both physical health and recreation. It is also important that you write down what you would value if there were nothing in your way. What’s important?

What do you care about? And what you would like to work towards?

1. Family relations. What sort of brother/sister, son/daughter, uncle/auntie do you want to be? What personal qualities would you like to bring to those relationships? What sort of relationships would you like to build? How would you interact with others if you were the ideal you in these relationships?

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2. Marriage/couples/intimate relations. What sort of partner would you like to be in an intimate relationship? What personal qualities would you like to develop? What sort of relationship would you like to build? How would you interact with your partner if you were the ‘ideal you’ in this relationship?

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3. Parenting. What sort of parent would you like to be? What sort of qualities would you like to have? What sort of relationships would you like to build with your children? How would you behave if you were the 'ideal you'?

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4. Friendships/social life. What sort of qualities would you like to bring to your friendships? If you could be the best friend possible, how would you behave towards your friends? What sort of friendships would you like to build?

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5. Career/employment. What do you value in your work? What would make it more meaningful? What kind of worker would you like to be? If you were living up to your own ideal standards, what personal qualities would you like to bring to your work? What sort of work relations would you like to build?

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6. Education/personal growth and development. What do you value about learning, education, training, or personal growth? What new skills would you like to learn? What knowledge would you like to gain? What further education appeals to you? What sort of student would you like to be? What personal qualities would you like to apply?

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7. Recreation/fun/leisure. What sorts of hobbies, sports, or leisure activities do you enjoy? How do you relax and unwind? How do you have fun? What sorts of activities would you like to do?

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8. Spirituality. Whatever spirituality means to you is fine. It may be as simple as communing with nature, or as formal as participation in an organised religious group. What is important to you in this area of life??

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9. Citizenship/ environment/ community life. How would you like to contribute to your community or environment, e.g. through volunteering, or recycling, or supporting a group/ charity/ political party? What sort of environments would you like to create at home, and at work? What environments would you like to spend more time in?

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10. Health/physical well-being. What are your values related to maintaining your physical wellbeing? How do you want to look after your health, with regard to sleep, diet, exercise, smoking, alcohol, etc? Why is this important?

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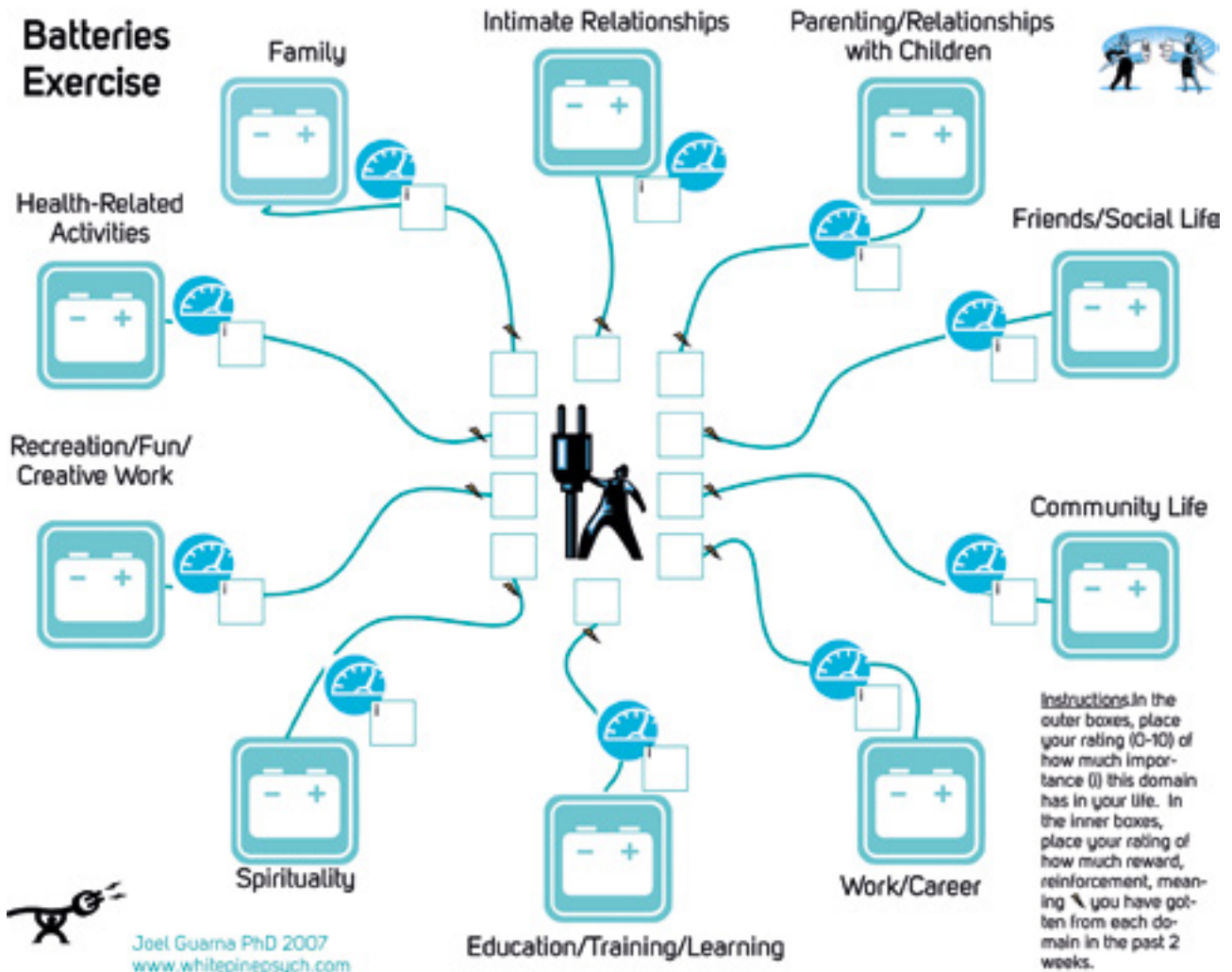
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STAGE 2: HOW PLUGGED IN ARE YOU? THE BATTERIES EXERCISE

Go back to each area of your life and the values you wrote down and score this 0-10 on how important it is to you. There is no wrong or right with this. You can rate several at the same importance if you wish. Place these scores in the outside box of the 'batteries exercise'. In the inner box score how much reward, meaning, satisfaction, vitality you currently get from this part of your life. Again 0–10.



This is called the batteries exercise (Joel Guarna, 2007). The more plugged in you are to your values the more vital your life is. One way to use this is to notice where an area of your life scores highly for importance but has a low score for how much reward, meaning or satisfaction you get from this part of your life. Then we can ask ourselves:

“What is it about how I’m living this part of my life that makes it less rewarding?”

“What could I do in the next hour, in the next day in the next week etc. to make this part of my life a little more how I want it to be?”

This takes us to stage three.

STAGE 3: USING OUR VALUES TO SET GOALS.

If values are like a compass helping us to navigate, you may now have a slightly better idea of which direction you want to go in. Stage 3 gives you a structure to work out what sort of goals you want to work towards specifically. These are useful right now and useful for when you start CBT.

1. Choose an area of your life that is a high priority for you to change.
2. Focus on the values to pursue in this part of your life.
3. Now choose some goals guided by those values. Start from really small changes on the very near future and work forward. (If it helps close your eyes for a moment and just try to picture what things would be like, how you would be acting.)
 - a. What will you commit to doing in the next few hours?
 - b. What will you commit to doing in the next 24 hours?
 - c. What will you commit to doing by next week?
 - d. What will you commit to doing next month?

Repeat this process for other areas.

Again, this can feel overwhelming. If this is the case, be assured that this is normal. We humans take time to get used to new things. Take one area of your life and one small step at a time and keep coming back to it. Values work is an ongoing process that you never finish.

As you do this exercise and carry out goals you will probably start to gain more of a sense of meaning and purpose in your life. It is likely you will feel uncomfortable at times. Unwanted thoughts, feelings and memories will show up. This is normal. It's how our minds are built to work when faced with life's hassles. Heading in our valued direction, doing what matters often feels uncomfortable and expecting this can be helpful.

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RECOGNISING OUR TRAP'S AND GETTING BACK ON TRAC.

We get stuck with our lives when our behaviour shifts toward trying to avoid having uncomfortable thoughts, feelings and memories and away from doing what matters. This is an understandable and very common pattern for us all and one which all humans are prone to. If we can understand and spot where this happens we can break unhelpful habits and get back in touch with what matters to us.

TRAP and TRAC is a technique from the behavioural part of CBT. It has been developed mainly to help with depression. However it can be used to understand and help get out of any TRAP we find ourselves stuck in. It works by helping us to understand and become more aware of TRAPS and then come up with an alternative way of behaving to test out. TRAP stands for:

Trigger	What sets the problem off? This could be something inside your head like a thought or it could be a real world thing. For example, something someone said, a situation an object.
Response	What was set off? Any thoughts, feelings, memories or physical sensations that are triggered.
Avoidance pattern	What did you do following these thoughts and feelings?
Consequences	What was the short and long term effect or consequence of this avoidance pattern?

TRAPS are habits, ('bad' habits) broken down into different parts.

WHERE DO I START?

Sometimes knowing where to start can be a bit daunting. Generally it's a good idea to start either with something that's relatively easy and obvious or with something that you are really motivated to change. Here's a check list of common human avoidances that might give you a few ideas. Tick the ones you do or do excessively.

TIPS

Don't panic or be too hard on yourself if you tick a lot – These avoidances are really common for us humans.

- Avoid social activities
- I make excuses not to attend social events
- Ignore the phone/texts or e-mails from friends
- I limit myself to events where the people are familiar
- I tell myself I prefer to be alone
- I leave social gatherings early
- I keep to myself or stick to someone I know at social gatherings
- I avoid socialising with people of the sex to which I'm attracted
- I've reduced or stopped my leisure activities
- I've reduced or stopped solo hobbies
- I do not take as much care of myself as I used to
- I have reduced or stopped paying attention to my role as a parent / partner / son / daughter
- I've reduced time spent cooking and live on junk food
- I've given up cleaning my home
- I've stopped opening or replying to letters and paying bills
- I'm not following up I want to achieve a college or work
- I'm sticking with things I know rather than developing new interests where I may fail
- I try not to think about problems in any of my relationships but just let things go on as they are
- I do not think about what I really want in life
- I avoid communicating with my partner/ parents/ children
- I'm not getting serious about college or work
- I'm trying to find a reason for the way I feel
- I'm constantly thinking about why I acted a certain way the past
- I try to answer "what if" questions all the time on my mind
- I'm turning down opportunities to further my educational career
- I'm fantasising "if only" situations (for example, if only I had not acted in the way I did, or if only such and such had not happened)
- I avoid making important decisions about my future
- I distract myself when I think about work or education, or my role as partner or partner

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The following are relevant only when you use them excessively to stop yourself thinking or to numb yourself emotionally.

- I can't eat or binge eat
- I watch excessive amounts of TV
- I listen to a vast amount of music
- I spend a large part of my days on the computer/Internet
- I binge drink alcohol
- I stay in bed in the morning or have frequent naps in the day
- I exercise excessively
- I avoid exercise
- I use illegal substances

(List adapted from Manage Your Mood by David Veale and Rob Willson)

Once you have decided which one of your avoidances to understand better. Use this form to write down your TRAP. (There are more of these in the back of the booklet)

TRIGGER

What sets the problem off? This could be something inside your head like a thought or it could be a real world thing. For example, something someone said, a situation an object.

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RESPONSE

What was set off? Any thoughts, feelings, memories or physical sensations that are triggered.

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AVOIDANCE PATTERN

What did you do following these thoughts and feelings?

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CONSEQUENCES

What were the short and long term effects or consequences of this avoidance pattern?

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Here are some examples from other people:

EXAMPLE 1

- Circumstance:** At work before lunch on Monday.
- Trigger:** Asked co-worker out for lunch, she said she had other plans.
- Response:** Felt embarrassed, depressed.
- Avoidance pattern:** Ate lunch alone at my desk and thought about why she wouldn't want to have lunch with me.
- Consequences:** Felt depressed and anxious most of the day – avoided her for the rest of the day.

EXAMPLE 2

- Circumstance:** At home at bed time, tired.
- Trigger:** Going to bed I walked past the kitchen door.
- Response:** "Is the cooker on?" What if... feel anxious and responsible.
- Avoidance pattern:** Check the cooker for several minutes until it 'feels right'. Check the kettle etc.
- Consequences:** Short term – relief.
- Long term – Paul (husband) annoyed as I woke him up coming to bed late. He'd wanted a cuddle. The same thing happens again the next day.

SELF HELP GUIDE

EXAMPLE 3

Circumstance:	Getting out of the house in the morning.
Trigger:	Son is messing around with his brother.
Response:	Thoughts: "We're going to be late", "Why don't they listen?", "They should do as they are told" Feelings: anger, disappointment..
Avoidance pattern:	Shout, threaten, speed up/rush, blame others.
Consequences:	Feel guilty, poor start to the day, kids don't learn to behave how I want them to. Wife is annoyed with me.

Once we know our traps a little better we also become more aware of them. This may feel uncomfortable. Thoughts like "that's so obvious", "why do I keep doing this?", "I shouldn't need help with this stuff" will often show up. Again it's our minds trying to help us out. This is normal. Try to accept this may happen and concentrate on developing an alternative way to behave when faced with the same Triggers and responses. This is your TRAC.

TRAC stands for

Trigger	Same as the TRAP
Response	Same as the TRAP
Alternative coping	A different way of behaving or acting in the same situation. A way that takes me toward what matters rather than away from it. A way that may feel uncomfortable in the short term. However may be more satisfying, helpful or rewarding in spite of this.

Sometimes, once we know the TRAP we have some ideas what alternative coping looks like. It may mean going back to a way we dealt with the situation before. However, it can be daunting. This is one reason why it can be best to start with small TRAP's first. Here are some ideas for alternative coping.

- Pick something that matters to you and stay focused on this. Perhaps write it down or keep an object with you that reminds you of how and why its important.
- Develop a skill
- Accept that thoughts and feelings will show up and consider using a technique to manage your mind/feelings differently. Our seminars 'Manage your mind' and 'Coping with feelings' include tips to understand and cope with thoughts and feelings as you move toward doing what matters.
- Give it a 'fair trial' (rule of 3) – try not to evaluate or think about if it will work or if its working before or during the alternative coping. Instead try it three times and then review if it worked or not. Worked meaning – taking me toward what I value and what matters.
- Notice when you are being self-critical and try to be warm or compassionate to yourself.

Here are some real examples for the TRAPS above.

EXAMPLE 1

- Circumstance:** At work before lunch on Monday.
- Trigger:** Asked co-worker out for lunch, she said she had other plans.
- Response:** Felt embarrassed, depressed.
- Alternative coping:**
- Remind myself that thoughts are thoughts not facts.
 - Ask if she was free another day.
 - Eat lunch with others in the staff room or go out for a walk or look in the shops.

EXAMPLE 2

- Circumstance:** At home at bed time, tired.
- Trigger:** Going to bed I walked past the kitchen door.
- Response:** "is the cooker on?" What if ... feel anxious and responsible.
- Alternative coping:**
- Remind myself that it's normal to have worrying thoughts like this and to feel anxious and responsible but that does not mean that the thoughts are in any way more or less likely to happen.
 - Have the thoughts and feelings. Accept that I may feel bad for a while and still go to bed, cuddle Paul and try to read my novel.
 - Accept that I may not sleep as well at first.

EXAMPLE 3

- Circumstance:** Getting out of the house in the morning.
- Trigger:** Son is messing around with his brother.
- Response:** Thoughts – "we're going to be late", "Why don't they listen?", "They should do as they are told". Feelings – anger, disappointment.
- Alternative coping:**
- Agree with my wife that one of us gets the kids ready rather than both of us trying to do this and getting muddled.
 - Spend 30 minutes reflecting on my values as a dad and set some goals.
 - 'Have' the thoughts and feelings but don't speed up, shout, threaten.
 - Notice what's happening in the moment.
 - Read for 10 minutes twice a week the book 'The whole brain child' to get some more ideas about how to manage my children's behaviour.

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SUMMARY

TRAP and TRAC and getting in touch with your values may help you to start doing more of what matters. For many of us, this is an important part of getting back to having more of a sense of meaning, purpose and well-being. Breaking habits takes time and effortful practice. Our minds will often protest as we wean them off the short term relief they have got used to. So if we are doing well we can expect some negative thoughts and feelings.

When we are in a TRAP it's like our minds taking us for a walk away from what matters.



When we get back on TRAC its more like taking our minds for a walk toward what matters, despite some protesting thoughts and feelings.



Remember with all these tips:

- Make a start
- Start small
- It will take effort and practice
- Don't expect symptoms to stop. Don't wait for them to stop before trying to get back on with life. You'll be waiting for a long time because they are a part of being human and being alive.

Good luck.

SELF HELP GUIDE

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ALTERNATIVE COPING

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SELF HELP GUIDE

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