

SELF HELP GUIDE

**“STRESS
ANXIETY
DEPRESSION
EMOTIONAL
PROBLEMS”**

MANAGE YOUR MIND

“This seminar has been the most appropriate to my situation and was delivered very well... the smile and some humour during delivery definitely works.”

Quote from a seminar participant

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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

WORK SHEET 1

WHAT THINGS DO I WORRY ABOUT?

Write a list of current concerns on this page

WHAT ARE WORRY AND RUMINATION (DWELLING)?

- Worry is a thinking activity. It is something that we do.
- It's about the future.
- Worry generates anxiety.
- Worry is an attempt to be more certain about the future by considering as many possibilities as we can.
- Worry is normal and helpful sometimes. For example if it leads to us solving a problem

Rumination is rather like worry's cousin

- Rumination is a thinking activity. Something we do.
- Often past focused.
- Circular patterns driven by "Why me...?" "If only I'd...?"
- Often self-critical / angry. "Why did I...?" "You shouldn't have..." "
- Connects with different feelings. Often guilt, anger, anxiety and sadness.
- A key emotion that worry and rumination leads to is anxiety.

We all have ideas about what anxiety is. Understanding anxiety and what it is can be helpful in understanding and overcoming excessive worry.

Before reading a bit more about what anxiety is, without thinking about it too much consider these questions and jot down your thoughts about anxiety.

WHAT IS ANXIETY FOR?

HOW NORMAL IS ANXIETY?

HOW HELPFUL IS ANXIETY?

ANXIETY

Anxiety is another word for fear. The normal emotion we experience when we are afraid or think we are under threat. The physical symptoms we experience are often called fight and flight.

FIGHT/FLIGHT RESPONSE

To our cave-dwelling ancestors, the fight / flight response was an essential tool for survival. It evolved over many thousands of years when living in wild and dangerous places. To us, living in today's technological twenty-first century; it is often an ineffective response which can actively **prevent** us from responding usefully to a problem situation.

This response to anything which is perceived as a threat or potential threat begins when certain parts of the brain send a message to the adrenal glands. These begin a process involving a number of hormones including adrenaline, whose purpose is to prepare the body for vigorous emergency action. The main changes that follow are below.

Non-essential processes are immediately switched off. In particular, if the body is digesting food, that is stopped immediately, and people notice a feeling of churning of 'butterflies' in the stomach, or feeling nauseous or sick. A number of other changes follow, to make the muscles as strong as possible.

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The liver releases glucose into the bloodstream. Fats are released into the bloodstream from the fat stores in the body. These are fuel for the muscles, so oxygen is needed to burn them – so the breathing increases and those under stress may notice feeling breathless.

Having fuel and oxygen in the bloodstream, the body needs to get it to the muscles as soon as possible – (remember, the body thinks this is a life or death emergency). So to pump the blood quickly, the heart begins beating faster – and some people notice palpitations. Blood pressure rises, and some people notice feeling hot or cold – even breaking into a sweat, as the body seeks to dissipate the heat that may be generated by the vigorous muscular activity for which the body is preparing.

Becoming ready for instant action, muscle tension increases, and a person may notice shaking, or becoming restless – fidgeting. Shortness of breath may be experienced as a result of tightening of the intercostal muscles. If the pattern is continued for long enough, chronic headaches or backache may result.

As all this is happening in the body, there are two important changes in the neurology. First, reflexes and thinking speed up and some people notice racing thoughts.

Second, the blood supply to the frontal parts of the brain, responsible for higher levels of reasoning is reduced. The blood supply to the more primitive parts, near the brain stem, is increased. These parts are responsible for automatic, or instinctive, or impulsive decision making and behaviour, and a person may understandably be prone to impulsive thinking and behaviour. For example, leaving a situation quickly.

The same changes of blood flow around the brain explain the commonly reported experience of things feeling unreal or unworldly. Key points to remember about fight and flight are

- It's natural and a sign that our bodies are working well. In fact it's fight and flight that will help us when we are really in danger.
- However sometimes it is activated when we think we are in danger, not just when we really are in danger, like a car alarm which is set off by the wind (a 'false alarm').
- If, understandably we think the effects of fight and flight are dangerous or a sign of danger, like feeling unreal or having palpitations, this will lead to more adrenalin and therefore more of the same unpleasant symptoms.



So 'fighting' or 'fleeing' (escaping / avoiding) are sometimes useful. They were certainly useful for our ancestors. This is not so true for modern men and women in the modern world. We humans have become so good at thinking about things (interpreting, analysing, predicting) and the world has become so complex and busy that we are surrounded by triggers or cues that can set off our fight and flight system. It's easy then to start responding in a 'fight or flight' way. This is especially true if we have developed conditions such as generalised anxiety, post traumatic stress disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, panic and other mood problems.

An alternative response when noticing we have become 'adrenalized' because of fight and flight is to recognise and understand what is happening and decide not to respond automatically. We may be able to tell ourselves that what is happening in our bodies is perhaps unpleasant but is not dangerous. We may be willing to experience what is happening without changing course or behaviour or trying to control the thoughts or feelings.

For example, if in a given moment you have an instant thought that something bad is about to happen and your body starts to experience 'fight and flight' symptoms you could say to yourself:

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"This is fight and flight; I may not actually be in danger. It may just be that the old part of my brain is telling me that I am in danger. This is like a 'false alarm'. I don't need to do anything to remain safe. If I accept these feelings rather than push them away, they will pass. In the mean time, step by step, moment by moment I will get back to my life in the present moment"

Understanding what anxiety is and how it works can be helpful, and this can make us less afraid of it. Generally it's a good idea to manage our stress (anxiety) levels by:

- Letting go of the struggle to try and control the symptoms of anxiety. Sit with it. Let it be, in the knowledge that the symptoms aren't dangerous and they usually go away after a while.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eat and drink sensibly.
- Do what matters to you in spite of anxiety. Don't let anxiety take over your life or get in the way of your personal goals and values.
- Notice when you are rushing and slow down.

RECOGNISING WORRY AND RUMINATION AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

Worry and rumination can be frustrating, exhausting and often lead to low mood and irritation. Rumination refers to the activity of dredging up and turning over things that happened in the past such as painful thoughts and feelings. Worry refers to the thinking activity of considering all sorts of negative possibilities in an attempt to be more certain. Rumination and worry often 'ping-pong' off each other.

Other common words people use for rumination are:

Analysing, obsessing, picking at it, dwelling, turning a problem over and over in your mind, stewing, brooding.

Worry and rumination take you away from the present moment and can add to feelings of disconnection and hopelessness. They can also lead to withdrawal from activity and the relationships that have the capacity to make us feel better.

It's really understandable that people dwell and worry and most of us do! Humans have very developed brains and are very good at analysing things. So good in fact that often we don't realise we are doing it. We often ruminate or worry in the background while we are doing other things.

Often people believe that worry and dwelling is helpful or shows that they are doing something responsible or worthwhile. Sometimes it may be helpful to think about the causes of problems or consider future possibilities. But often it neither helps us solve a problem nor does it make us feel better. Instead it makes us even more aware of problems and it can lower our mood.

"GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD AND INTO YOUR LIFE"

Stephen Hayes

When we are ruminating or worrying and feeling low, guilty or anxious we often withdraw from our lives. We may do less of what matters to us. Alternatively we may do things without being fully present or 'all there'. 'Half of us' is hooked up with the dwelling or worry. The following technique is often effective at helping us to firstly spot we are ruminating or worrying and work out if it's helping. Secondly to make a decision about whether to continue worrying/dwelling, or to get on with the things that matter most to us.

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TWO MINUTE RULE

STAGE 1

When you think you may be worrying or ruminating, don't try to stop.

Instead carry on for two minutes (use a watch ideally) and then ask yourself these three questions:

1. Have I made any progress towards solving a problem?
2. Do I understand something about the problem (or my feelings about it) that I haven't understood before?
3. Do I feel less self-critical or less depressed than before I started thinking about this?

Unless the answer to one of these questions is a clear yes the chances are you are probably ruminating or worrying in an unhelpful way.

STAGE 2

- Label this by saying to yourself "this is worrying" or "I am ruminating" – or what ever term makes most sense to you. e.g. "I am picking at this again".
- Actively choose to carry on ruminating or to get on with something that matters in the here and now.

For example, if you are already doing something such as reading, washing up or listening to someone, try to bring all your focus and attention to this.

If you are not already doing something, for example, passively watching TV or browsing on the internet, stop this and get on with something different that matters to you or will make you feel better. For example, make a cup of tea, do something you have been putting off, or go for a walk.

Anything big or small that takes you toward your goals and what you value. However small it seems.

TIPS

- This is a skill and like all skills it takes effortful practice.
- Bear in mind the idea of a fair trial. Give it a chance by repeatedly trying it out and not evaluating it too soon or while you are doing it.

ATTENTION

Where our attention is can make a difference to our mood, our thoughts and what we worry about. Our attention is influenced by what we are concerned about. That is, we are more likely to notice things to do with our concerns and fears. Here are some common examples.

CONCERN	WHAT WE NOTICE
Concern about panic or health	Body symptoms and features
Concern about what others think of us	Aspects of us we think others will notice and judge harshly. E.g. blushing or the tone of our voice. Signs of others noticing us or being critical.
Concern that bad things may happen	We tend to look out for problems and pay more attention to bad news or potential dangers. Whilst dismissing or not noticing positive events, good news, protective factors.
Concern about high standards?	Notice mistakes, errors, flaws

Of course, like in the London Transport video , which you can view on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ahg6qcgoay4 or by searching 'Test Your Awareness: Do The Test'. If our attention is on one thing, it's less likely to be on another. If we are looking out for cars, we are less likely to notice cyclists.

If my attention is on my thoughts, feelings and body sensations I've got less attention on what I'm doing. The washing up, playing with my son, watching TV anything. This may mean I get less out of it or it interferes with these things. For example, if I'm reading with my son but I'm worrying about work, I'm less likely to notice the expressions on his face or the humour in the story. My current concern (dealing with worries about work) competes for my attention and takes me away from the present moment (reading with my son) and I get less out of it. I'm only 'half there'.

A combination of current concern and attention bias can give us a false picture of the world. It can seem that all there is, is the stuff we are worrying about. Knowing this and holding this information in mind can be helpful. It can start to make our immediate experience less frightening. It's useful to become more aware of where your attention is and to train yourself to put your attention somewhere useful. Somewhere you want it to be. This is a way of doing this. It's not easy and once again it takes **effortful practice**. Just like most things, like learning to drive. It seems easy and effort less now but think back to what it used to be like as you approached a red light or a right hand turn on major roundabout!

TASK-CONCENTRATION TRAINING (ATTENTION TRAINING)

It is helpful to reduce your self-focused attention in specific situations. This can be done by an exercise called task-concentration training, devised by the psychologist, Sandra Bogels. In any given situation, especially when you are feeling more anxious or withdrawn, you can estimate your percentage of attention on:

- Yourself (for example, monitoring how you appear to others or trying to sort out your thoughts)
- Your tasks (for example, listening or talking to someone or writing)
- Your environment (such as the hum of traffic in the background).

The three must add up to 100 per cent, but the ratio is likely to vary in different contexts. When you are very self-focused, about 80 per cent of your attention might be on yourself, about 10 per cent on the task you are involved in and 10 per cent on your environment. Someone without depression or anxiety might normally focus about 10 per cent on themselves, 80 per cent on the task and 10 per cent on the environment. This is an important observation because it means you can train yourself to be more focused on tasks and the environment and less on yourself. To get the hang of this, try noticing at random times during the day where your attention is dividing it up into the three areas. Put a post-it note on the fridge or elsewhere as a reminder to do this. Also every time you notice that your mind is excessively self-focused, then immediately refocus your attention onto the tasks or the environment. If you are on your own and have no specific task to do, you will need to refocus on the environment and make yourself more aware of:

- The various objects, colours, people, patterns and shapes that you can see around you.
- The sounds that you can hear.
- What you can smell.
- What you can taste (for example, in the case of food or drink).
- The physical sensations from the environment (for example, whether it is hot or cold, whether there is a breeze, the ground beneath your feet).

Every time you notice your mind's endless chatter and focus on how you feel, re-focus your attention back to the task or the environment.

This training was originally developed to be done in a graded manner for specific situations – for example, if you experience marked anxiety in social situations. You can then practise the exercise for easier situations (for example, listening to a friend telling you about their holiday) and the most difficult situations (for example, being at a party with strangers).

THINKING AND REASONING BIAS

- We often assume that we see the world as it really is, and that our thoughts about the world are facts.
- However, our thoughts aren't facts. We often tend to interpret events in a way that is consistent with our pre-existing beliefs and assumptions.
- Therefore, we constantly 'interpret' the world and events.
- We tend to interpret events along the lines of our current concerns..

In the YouTube clip from the Guardian advert – www.youtube.com/watch?v=_SsccRkLLzU - the term 'from one point of view' is used. In the clip the camera is viewing the scene from different points of view. The term 'point of view' also means how we think about things; our reasoning about things; our opinion.

Just like in the video, thinking about a situation in a certain way or only from one point of view can stop us from getting the big picture or the 'true' picture. It stops us from finding out how the world really is. This is especially true if we walk around assuming, as most of us do that what we see and think is how things are. In reality, how we think about things, interpret things; reason about things makes a big difference to how we feel, what we worry about and how we end up behaving.

We tend to assume that how we think about things is how they are. However, this is far from the truth. Knowing this and trying to be mindful of this, especially when we are worried or emotional can be useful.

HOW WE HUMANS COMMONLY INTERPRET THINGS (OFTEN WITHOUT KNOWING)

- Catastrophising
- Personalising
- Mind reading / jumping to conclusions
- Disqualifying the positive
- Emotional reasoning
- All or nothing thinking (black or white)
- Over-generalising

CATASTOPHISING

Everything is blown out of proportion and ends in catastrophe. E.g. your partner is late home from work leads to the thought "they've had an accident"; your relationship ends leads to the thought "I can't live without them, I'll never find anyone else, I'll never get married, I'll remain alone for the rest of my life", a setback becomes a never-ending pattern of defeat.

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PERSONALISING

Taking personal responsibility for something that is not your fault. Automatically thinking someone has said something or done something because of you. For example, if a team project goes wrong it leads to the thought "it's all my fault"; if your partner is in a bad mood this leads to the thought "I must have done something wrong"

MIND READING / JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

You think you know what people are thinking or you make assumptions. For example, a friend ignores you in the street and leads to the thought "they don't like me anymore"; a shop assistant in an expensive shop looks at you which leads to the thought "they think I can't afford the clothes in here/I shouldn't be in here." Also, you predict that negative things will happen in the future, without any evidence.

DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE

You focus on the negative and ignore or disregard the positive; focus on your weaknesses and forget your strengths. For example, when someone compliments you on your outfit, you put it down with "this old thing?" / "it only cost me..." / "I found it in a charity shop" instead of "thank you!" When someone tells you that you've done something well, you think "they're only saying that to make me feel better". It's a bit like having a post box for a mind. The negatives slot in nicely because they are the same shape as the slot. Negative. They collect in your box and build up a negative sense of you. When a positive comes along it won't slot in because it's the wrong shape (cross shape) and bounces off.

EMOTIONAL REASONING

You automatically assume that because you are anxious there must be something wrong, you must be in danger. You automatically assume that because you are feeling guilty you must have done something wrong.

ALL OR NOTHING

Things are either one way or the other – there is no middle ground. Black or white. Wrong or right. You think that if you make one little mistake, the whole thing is a failure. This is often the basis for perfectionism. For example, if one section of this course didn't go so well, we would think the whole course was a complete failure (and ignore the other four sections that went really well.)

Examples: If I'm not a perfect mother I must be a totally useless one. I'm either a totally reliable friend or I'm a hopeless one.

OVERGENERALISING

Apply bad luck in one situation to 'all the time'. Use of always or never. For example, not getting one particular job leads to the thought "I'll never get a job"; refused one date leads to the thought "I'll never find another partner ever again."

Two things you really ought to know about thinking patterns or biases

- They are normal. We all do it. We tend to do it more when we are anxious or emotional. We can't stop doing it. If we didn't do it we'd be robots and there wouldn't be much comedy or drama on TV!
- Thinking patterns are believed to be useful from an evolutionary perspective. They are how our minds have evolved for a reason. For example, it has been very useful for humans as a species to operate on a 'better safe than sorry' basis. For example, take catastrophising – Its better for a cave man or woman to think a bush is a bear and to avoid it 100 times, rather than finding out that a bush is a bear and getting killed.

These interpretations of reality can make a real difference to how anxious we become because of the anxiety equation below:

$$\frac{\text{How dangerous or awful it is} \times \text{How likely it is to happen}}{\text{How well we think we'll cope if it does happen}} = \text{ANXIETY LEVEL}$$

Rather than putting realistic estimates based on how the world really is, our minds put in interpretations and suddenly things are a lot more threatening. Take a small social error; say breaking wind or burping accidentally but out loud. Rather than reasoning "this is embarrassing, but natural; something that has happened to us all," instead our thinking biases can ramp this up leading to fear and anxiety. This in turn leads to even more catastrophic thoughts and so on. This is shown below:

$$\frac{\text{They will think I'm a bad person and never talk to me} \times \text{This is really likely, it's happened before}}{\text{I just couldn't deal with it and no one would say anything to be supportive}} = \text{HIGH ANXIETY}$$

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HOW TO COPE WITH THINKING AND REASONING BIASES

- Understand and accept that this is what minds do.
- It is normal; we can't really stop our minds doing it.
- We can spot it – train yourself to do this. Write down what you're thinking, look at the list above and work out which you are using. It's common to use several at once.
- We can then consider alternative perspectives: "it may be a burglar downstairs but perhaps it's the cat jumping around again."
- Ask yourself, how helpful is thinking this way right now? Are there any other ways of seeing this situation? Is thinking this way helping me to achieve my personal goals? Is thinking this way interfering with my personal goals? If someone who I care about was thinking this way, what would I say to them? What is the evidence that my thought is factually correct? Is there any evidence that might suggest my thoughts, assumptions or interpretations may be wrong? Have I worried about this in the past? How did that pan out?

'UN-HOOKING' FROM THE THOUGHT AND ITS MEANING

1. When you notice a troublesome thought say it, in a funny voice (really!). Choose a character from The Simpsons, a comedian or an actor. To get started, try this out loud when you are on your own. However, once you get going you can do this in your head.
2. Say to you self, "I am noticing that I am having a thought that she thinks I've been selfish." (or example)
3. Similarly, if you can work out the thinking bias / pattern say to your self "That's an excellent example of me jumping to a conclusion." (for example)

Remember our brain; our minds are not very good at telling the difference between 'things' and our mental concept (words / thoughts) of those 'things'. Hence, the cartoon below.



- **Thoughts are not facts.**
- **Thoughts are not things.**
- **But often, without noticing, we act as if they are.**

AVOIDANCE

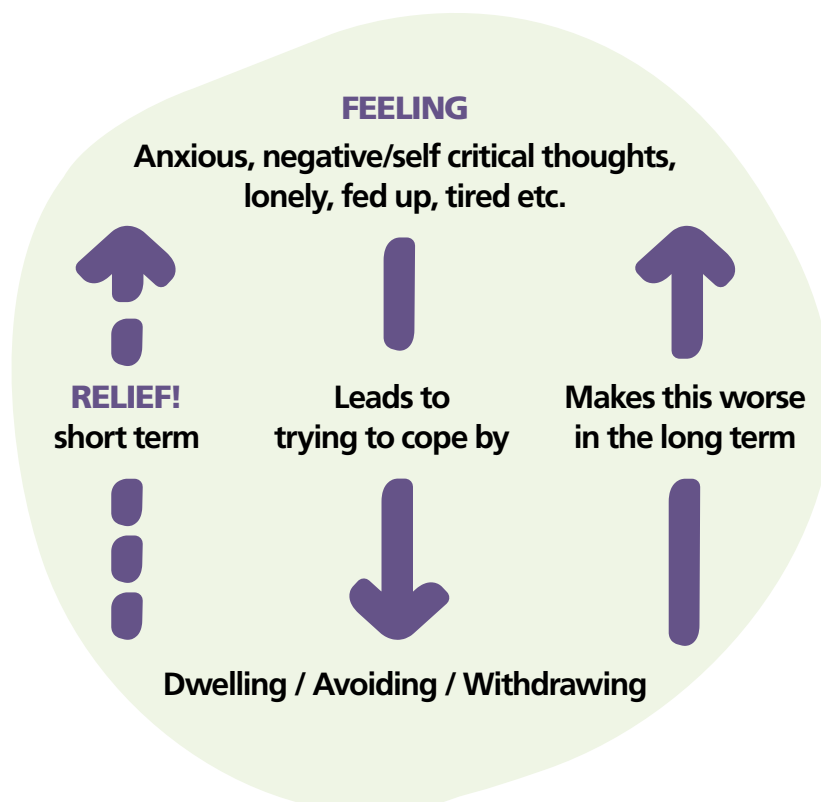
Avoidance is common, normal and can be helpful, especially if we are faced with a dangerous situation. However, getting into a habit of avoiding things can lead to more anxiety, worry and low mood. When we feel low, tired, sad, anxious etc (as all humans do) we tend to withdraw or avoid things. We do 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 to out); we may not go running or do sport because we feel anxious and we may not do the washing up. Instead we may dwell or worry about things, have some chocolate or biscuits or zone out on the computer or telly.

Reacting in this way to anxiety and worry is very common and really understandable 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) some longer term, unintended consequences. Withdrawing or avoiding leads to low mood, more worry and more dwelling 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 more or criticise ourselves for not doing it. 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!

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



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Because we are in this relief cycle and still getting anxious this makes us even less likely to start getting back into doing things that matter to us. So the cycle continues or deteriorates because the life now being lived is a less meaningful life. A life with more relief but not enough reward.

ALTERNATIVE COPING

- Step by step, start doing more of what matters to you.
- This is likely to feel uncomfortable at first as you miss the short term relief you may have got used to. This is normal.
- Don't evaluate whether it is worth doing or not until afterwards.
- Give it a fair trial. Try something three times before you decide if its worth it

UNCERTAINTY

- The world is full of uncertainty.
- People who worry excessively tend to have a lower tolerance for uncertainty.
- They try harder to be certain by worrying and seeking certainty/avoiding uncertainty.

However this tends to back-fire leading in the long term to reduced confidence, more worry and more uncertainty. Excessive certainty seeking behaviours can be divided into approach behaviours and avoidance behaviours. Here are some examples (they often overlap):

APPROACH TYPE

- Doing everything yourself and not delegating, doing things for other people.
- Looking for a lot of information before going ahead with things.
- As soon as you've made a decision start questioning all over again.
- Looking for reassurance excessively.
- Checking and doing things over and over because you're not sure you did it correctly.
- Doing things excessively for other people.

AVOIDANCE TYPE

- Not fully committing to things.
- Finding imaginary reasons for not doing certain things.
- Putting things off, procrastinating.

While trying to be certain of everything is understandable, it often doesn't work. Instead we need to become more tolerant or accepting of the uncertainty all around us. We can do this by experimenting. Here's how.

BECOMING MORE TOLERANT OF UNCERTAINTY

- Choose one area of certainty seeking, e.g. reassurance seeking.
- Write down all the different things you do to seek reassurance and when /who with.
- Line them up from shallow end to deep end (easiest to most difficult to stop or change).
- Starting with the shallow end (easier end) experiment with not doing it and give this new way a 'fair trial'.

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Here's an example for the excessive certainty seeking behaviour of reassurance seeking.

Things I seek reassurance about:

- The clothes I wear
- The clothes to buy when I'm shopping
- What food to cook
- My appearance
- Whether I'm good enough parent friend or lover
- My finances
- If I have upset people

Now we design an experiment to test out what really happens when we stop doing one aspect of this. Here's what that looked like for the above example.

- Rather than asking my partner about what food to cook for supper I will make my own mind up about this. Also I won't ask him what he thinks about it. I'll just chat about the day and what to watch on TV later.
- I'll review what happened when I've tried this three times?
- Do this a few times. You can then repeat this design of experiment for something else shallow end.

It's important to expect to feel uncertain. This is a sign that you are doing it right!

Remember with all these tips

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

Good luck.

BONUS SECTION

This section was not included in the seminars. We found we had too much material to present for one session. However we thought it would be useful to leave in the self help pack as it is relevant and you may well find it useful. Please read on if you are interested.

WORRY RULES AND OTHER RULES FOR LIVING

Rules are rather like code on a computer. You don't see them but if we know what we're looking for we can work out what they are by how the computer behaves. Humans have beliefs or rules about all sorts of things and they influence how we behave. Here are a few common examples that often lead to excessive worry. The belief is in bold. The rule is in italics.

THOUGHTS ARE IMPORTANT

If I have a thought I must worry about it or do something .

WORRY IS HELPFUL

If I have a problem, worrying about it will stop the bad thing from happening or help me cope.

WORRY IS DANGEROUS

I must stop worrying or I'll ...

You can have rules which are not directly to do with worry but which can lead to more worry. Common examples include:

I must never make a mistake.

I must never let anyone down.

I must never show any weakness.

All these rules, if we buy into them place impossible standards on us. We can change them or learn to not buy into their message. However, as we do we can expect some strong feelings. This is normal.

Here are some ideas on how to get started.

- All the ideas above will start to do this. So if you've started doing any of them you are already on the right track. You may have even noticed that your rules are 'loosening' a little.
- To speed this up try working out what your rule or rules are (we all have them! Even CBT therapists!)

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- Try to work out your rules.
- Gently accept you have them and start to consider an alternative. Ask ...
- *Says who? Who says thoughts are important? Who says I can't make a mistake? Is having this rule helping me to do what I really want to do with my life? Is this rule helping me to feel better or not? Is this rule getting in the way of my life goals and values? Etc. (tip – say it out loud or sing it, just in your head if its more appropriate).*
- What are the benefits and the costs to living by this rule?

Get a piece of paper. Put cost on one side and benefit on the other. List underneath the costs of living in accordance with that rule and the advantages.

I MUST NEVER MAKE A MISTAKE

COST	ADVANTAGE
Worry about the slightest thing especially doing things for other people	People trust me to get things right
Don't try new things	I am very good at some things
Spend too much time checking	I sometimes feel really good if I get things 'perfect'

Then consider an alternative guideline that might be more helpful, or less harsh or less rigid. Don't let yourself be bullied by your own thoughts and rules!

Here are some examples:

RULE	GUIDELINE
I must never make a mistake	It's ok to make mistakes. I'm only human. Of course I'll try hard to get things as good as they can be but what's a mistake anyway? Or I like doing things well , but if I'm trying new stuff (which I want to) I'm bound to get some things wrong, its part of learning.
If I have a thought I must worry about it or do something	Some thoughts are important; most are mental flotsam and mean nothing. It's my values and how I act that matters.

NOTES

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