

Worry Management

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Worry management is an intervention for the treatment of worry. This workbook can be used either alone or with the support of your Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner.

How to use this workbook.

Worry management has four parts. Each aspect of worry management can be used individually to manage worries.

It can take some time for an intervention to become effective and to show improvement. It is important to allow enough time for worry management to be effective.

Helpful Resources;

Help Guide <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/how-to-stop-worrying.htm>

Mind Shift App <http://www.anxietybc.com/mobile-app>

www.talkplus.org.uk

Worry Management

What is worry management?

Worry management is a set of techniques to help reduce the impact of worrying or to solve practical problems. Worry management includes identifying and classifying worries initially then using either Worry Time or Problem Solving to manage these.

What is worry?

Worry is a normal process that we all experience from time to time, however sometimes worry can become overwhelming and impact our ability to manage day to day. There are several ways that worry is maintained, these include;

1. Avoidance or distraction

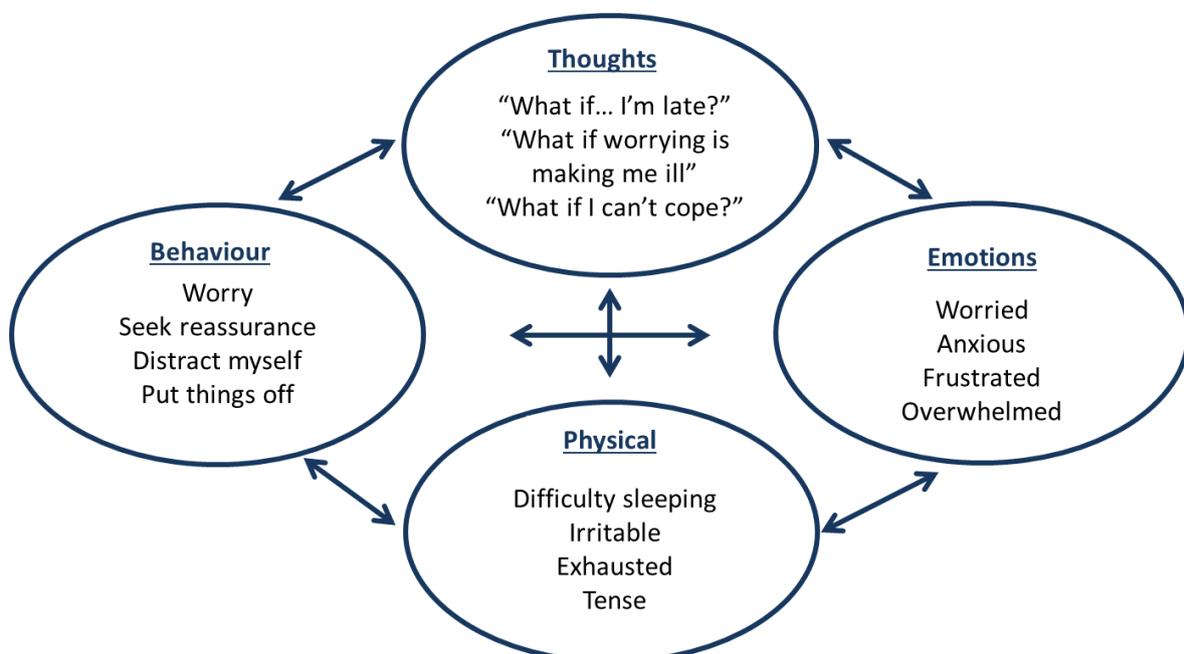
As worry can be very distressing it is normal for us to avoid the things which are causing us to worry or try to distract ourselves from the worries in our minds.

2. Beliefs about worry:

We may have certain beliefs about the function of worry; that it is helpful or that it is making us ill. These beliefs can make it hard to stop worrying, or make the worry worse.

3. Putting things off

Worrying can take up a lot of our time and is very distressing, therefore we might not have enough time or energy to tackle everyday problems. If this happens our problems can pile up and cause us even more worry.



STEP ONE

Classifying Worries

There are two main types of worries; practical worries and hypothetical worries.

Practical worries are often about a current situation that you can do something about. For example this can include things like; "I don't have enough time to complete my work", "I have a tooth ache" or "I need to book leave for my holiday". It is quite normal when we are feeling anxious or overwhelmed not to act on our worries and to start putting things off. However this often leads to our worries piling up and we can become overwhelmed and stuck in a vicious cycle.

Hypothetical worries are often about the future and what might happen. These worries are about things that we do not currently have control over and therefore cannot do anything about. Hypothetical worries often come in the form of a "what if", for example; "What if my car breaks down?", "What if the train is late?" or "What if my daughter gets lost on her way home?". These worries can be very overwhelming and can lead to us worrying about worry; that it is making us ill or wearing us out..

Keeping a worry diary

Initially it may be difficult to capture our worries as it is not something we do in our day to day lives. By using the technique below we can begin to identify the worries that are causing us to feel anxious. When you notice you are anxious, some useful questions to ask yourself are;

"What do I think is going to happen?"

"What is making me feel this way?"

"What bad thing am I predicting?"

When you notice that you are feeling anxious try to identify any worries that may be in your mind. Using *Worksheet 1* record the situation you were in, the worry or worries you had at that time and the emotion you were experiencing. Also record the intensity of the anxiety you were experiencing, from 0–100%.

It is best to record the worries as soon as possible. Sometimes this may not be possible, for example if at work or out, however a phone or notepad can be used to jot down the thought until you can next access the worksheet.

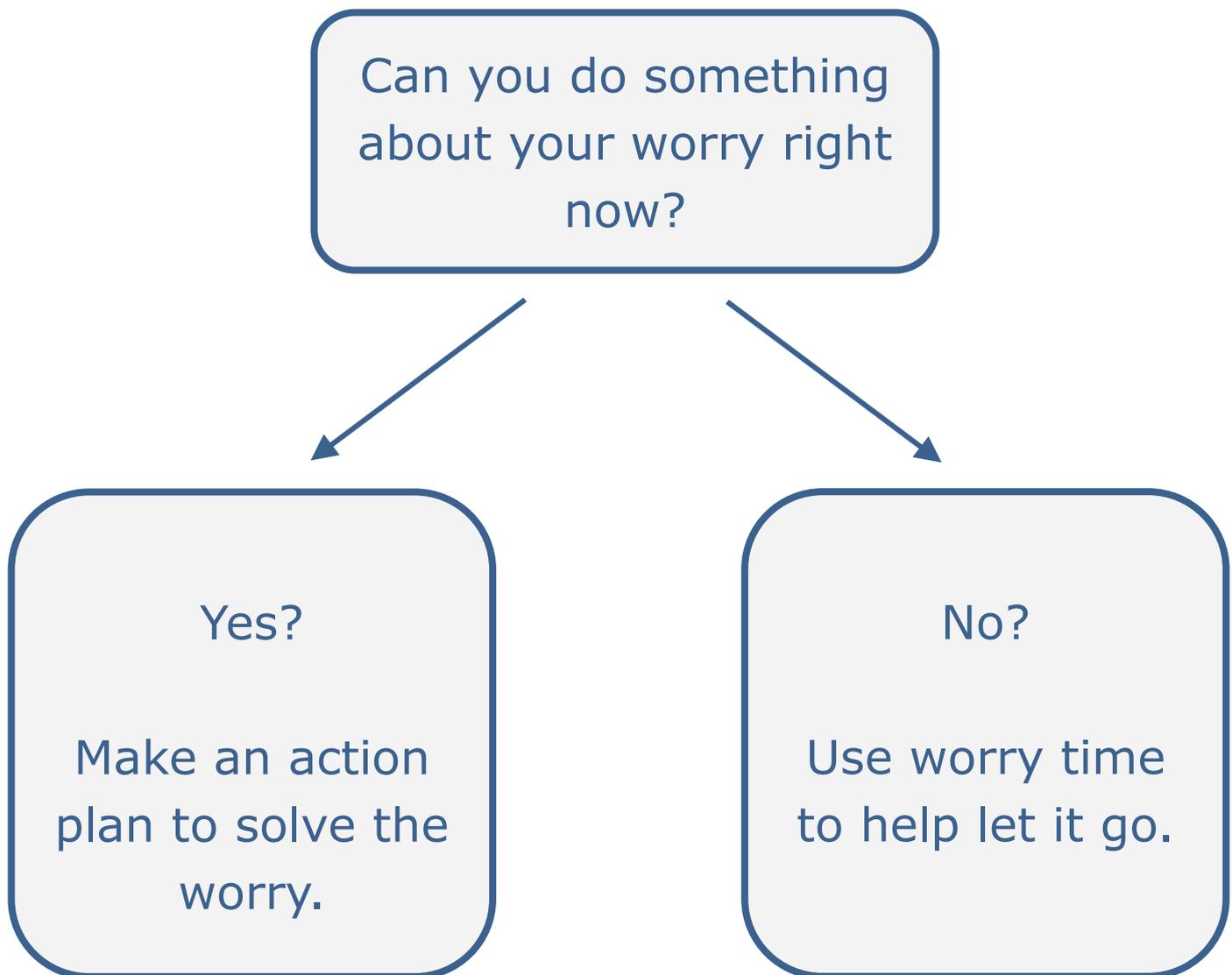
The last section of the Worry Diary is to classify what type of worry you have written down, either hypothetical or practical. It may be difficult at first to decide what type of worry it is, it can be helpful to ask yourself; is there anything I can do to change this situation right now? If so then the worry may be a practical one. By classifying our worries we can start to see which of our worries we can do something about, and which we need to let go.

To complete Step 1 use *Worksheet 1*.

STEP TWO

Managing Worry

Once you have kept a worry diary for a period of time and have got used to classifying your worries, the next step is to manage your worries. Use the flow chart below to decide which techniques would be most beneficial for you.



If you notice in your worry diary that you have a lot of **practical worries** the best techniques might be to use Problem Solving. Problem Solving is helpful in order to create a manageable action plan to start solving the worries. For Problem Solving see page 8.

If many of your worries are **hypothetical**, then Problem Solving would not be helpful. Instead the technique to use is Worry Time to learn to let go of worries that you cannot do anything about. For Worry Time see page 7.

Worry Time

Worry time is a set period of time each day allocated to worrying. Worry time can be helpful in reducing the time we spend each day worrying, allowing us to enjoy our day to day lives. When we worry during the day, instead of focusing on these worry we postpone them for our allotted worry time. To do this follow the steps below;

STEP ONE: Choose your worry time

It is important to set aside, what you feel, would be a sufficient time each day for worry time, when you will not be interrupted or distracted. This time should ideally be in the evening, but not too close to bedtime, to mull over the days worries. It is important to stick to the same time each day in order to build a routine. You may find that the more you use worry time the less time you need each day, then you can reduce your worry time accordingly.

STEP TWO: Capture your worries

When you notice that you are worrying during the day, write them down. You can either chose to still use the worry diary, a notepad or even your phone to do so. If the worry is a practical worry, use problem solving to solve it. If the worry is a hypothetical worry go to step 3 of worry time. If you find that you are worrying a lot at night it can be useful to keep your diary or a note pad near your bed.

STEP THREE: Refocusing

Once you have captured your hypothetical worry and written it down it is then important to refocus. This may sound difficult at first, but remember you will spend time worrying about it later, in your scheduled worry time, meanwhile, refocusing involves paying attention to the present. Pay attention to whatever task you were doing when the worry came into your mind. Refocusing from our worries can be very difficult to do when we are not used to it, using our 5 senses can help us to do this. Concentrating on our sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste can help to ground ourselves in the present. For example, if you are doing something like the washing up focus on the scent of the bubbles, the temperature of the water or the sound of the splashing. Other ways to refocus might be to engage in a different task, such as cooking, reading a book or exercise. Some people find that listening to music is a good way to refocus, find whatever is best for you to be able to attend to the present.

When further worries come into your mind through the day, repeat the process. Write the worry down and then refocus on the present. You might find the more you practise this the easier it becomes.

Worry Time

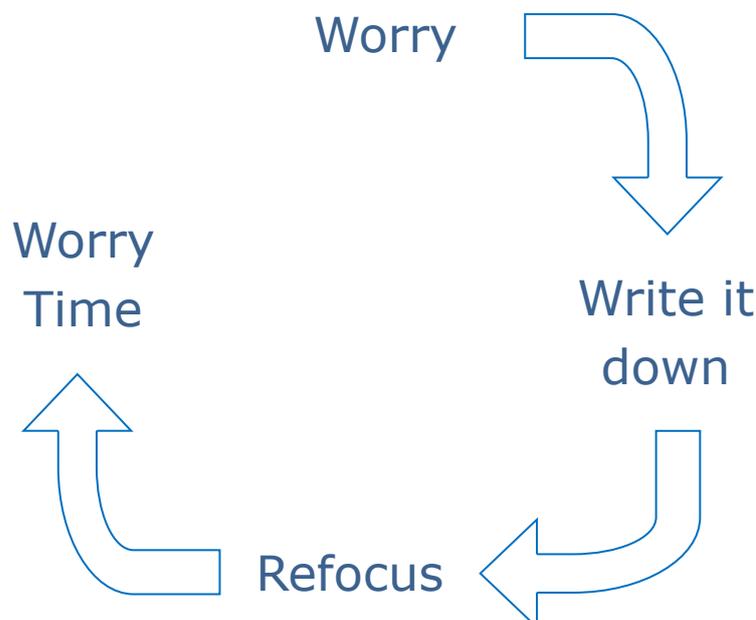
STEP FOUR: Worry time!

When your worry time comes around, it is time to worry! Get out the list of hypothetical worries you have written down during that day and select a worry to start to worry about. It is useful to ask yourself questions about each worry;

- For each worry consider how you felt when you wrote the worry down and how you feel about it now, has this changed?
- Did the thing you were worrying about happen?
- If so, how did you cope?
- Are any of the worries no longer a problem?
- Would continuing to worrying about it during the day have made a difference?
- What could you be doing now instead of worrying??

Once you have done this for each of your worries and get to the end of the worry time it is important to stop worrying. You may find it helpful to destroy the list of worries– rip them up or throw them away at the end of each worry time and start with a fresh sheet every day.

As you practise this technique you may find that outside of your worry time you are more able to manage the worries. As you progress with this technique you may find you are using less time than you originally thought each evening to worry. If this is the case you can reduce your allotted worry time in line with your current needs, you may find that eventually you don't need this time at all. Also as you progress you may find it is not necessary to write down your worries and you can refocus without this step. If this is the case then continue in this way.



Problem Solving

STEP ONE

Identifying one problem

It may be that you have more than one problem at a time, therefore the first step of Problem Solving is to choose one problem, perhaps start with the problem that will make the most difference if it was not there. It is important that we define the problem as clearly as possible, try to be clear about what aspects of the situation make it a problem.

Identify one problem

"I have too much work to do so I am completing work at home and missing time with my family"

OR

"I haven't paid my rent arrears and now they say I will be evicted"

OR

"I can't do anything to help my elderly relative"

STEP TWO

List all possible solutions

List as many solutions as possible; don't worry about how practical, good or reasonable the solutions are at this stage, try for a list of at least five possible solutions. It can be difficult to come up with solutions when we are feeling overwhelmed therefore it is important that we try to be as creative as possible so you can come up with solutions you may not have thought about previously. It can also be helpful to ask a trusted friend or family member to help you come up with solutions, or even to look online.

List all possible solutions

1. Only do what I can complete in work hours
2. Talk to my boss about my problem
3. Quit my job
4. Manage time better at work
5. Delegate some of the work to my colleagues

STEP THREE

List the advantages and disadvantages of each solution

| Solution | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--|---|---|
| Only do what I can complete in work hours. | Have family time. Will highlight the problem. Increasing pleasurable activities at home will improve my mood and ability to cope. | Won't get all my work done. My workload will increase day by day. I will get more stressed. |
| Talk to my boss about my problem. | My boss is in a position to help me. Have family time. | I don't want my boss to know that I can't cope. Might not help. |
| Manage time better at work. | Have family time. | Not enough time to complete all tasks. |

STEP FOUR

Select one solution

After reviewing the advantages and disadvantages of each solution, select one solution that you feel at the time will have the best chance of the most positive outcome. It may be difficult to choose a solution as you are concerned that it will not work, however keep in mind that you have gone through the strengths and weaknesses of each. If several solutions seem equally as good then pick the one that requires the least effort.

| Select one solution |
|----------------------------------|
| Talk to my boss about my problem |

STEP FIVE

Make an action plan

Develop an action plan of how you will carry out the solution step by step using the worksheet. Some useful questions to consider while developing the action plan are; What is the first step I need to take? Where will I be? Who will be involved? When will I carry out the plan? As carrying out the plan may be difficult it is important that we are very specific about each step of the plan and to break it down into manageable steps.

| Make an action plan | |
|---------------------|---|
| Steps | <i>Include what, where, when, and with who</i> |
| 1 | Email my boss Monday at 9:30am to request a meeting. |
| 2 | List what I am currently finding difficult and any solutions. |
| 3 | Arrange and attend the meeting with my boss. |
| 4 | Explain to my boss my current difficulties- being specific and clear. |
| 5 | Agree a plan with my boss to manage my workload. |

STEP SIX

Implement the plan & review

Carry out the solution as outlined in the action plan you developed in *Step Five*. Once you have carried out the plan evaluate how effective the solution was. Think about what went well, or what you might do differently in the future. If the solution did not fully fix the problem then consider whether the action plan needs to be revised or return to *Step Four* and choose another solution instead. Learning from an attempt can be invaluable in identifying the best solution.

To complete Problem Solving use the *Worksheets*.

WORKSHEET ONE

Identify one problem

| |
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List all possible solutions

| |
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| |
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| Solution | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| | | |
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| | | |

WORKSHEET TWO

Select one solution

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Make an action plan

| Steps | <i>Include what, where, when, and with who</i> |
|----------|--|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | |
| 5 | |
| 6 | |

Review your solution

What went well?

What could you do differently