



Social Anxiety

Social Anxiety

This workbook can be used either alone or with the support of your Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner.

Module 1: Understanding Social Anxiety and What Maintains it.

Module 2: Changing What You Do in Social Situations

- Understanding Self Focus and Shifting your Focus of Attention
- Understanding Safety Behaviours and Using Behavioural Experiments

Module 3: Bringing it all Together and Relapse Prevention

Module 1

Understanding Social Anxiety

Fight, flight or freeze

Our bodies are finely tuned to protect us from danger. When we perceive a threat, adrenaline is released into our bodies to help us fight the threat, run away, or play dead. This is known as fight, flight or freeze. This is a natural response and we need it to keep safe.

For people with social anxiety, social interactions are interpreted as a threat (we fear we will embarrass ourselves) and it's our thoughts that set off our fight, flight or freeze response. Although there is nothing physically dangerous about the situation, our bodies react to this false alarm in the same way as a physical threat.

With social anxiety, this means that before the event we worry about it and get that low level feeling of being nervous and tense. We probably start to think of ways to avoid it. During the event we might experience classic fight, flight or freeze symptoms; heart racing, breathing faster, feeling hot and sweaty, and shaking. After the event we tend to go over how badly we think we came across, this may feel us feeling exhausted or we might get that sick feeling that something has gone wrong.

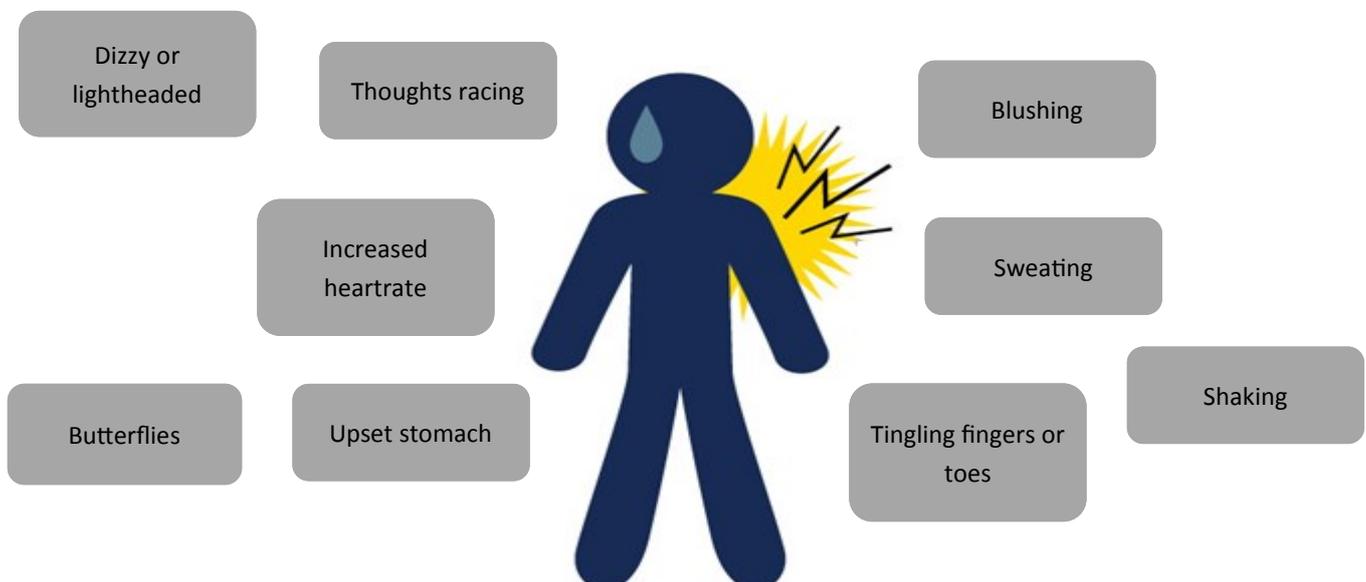
Try this now:

Imagine you have been told that you have to present a speech in one hour.

What thoughts go through your head? How does your body react? Do you have an image of how you will look?

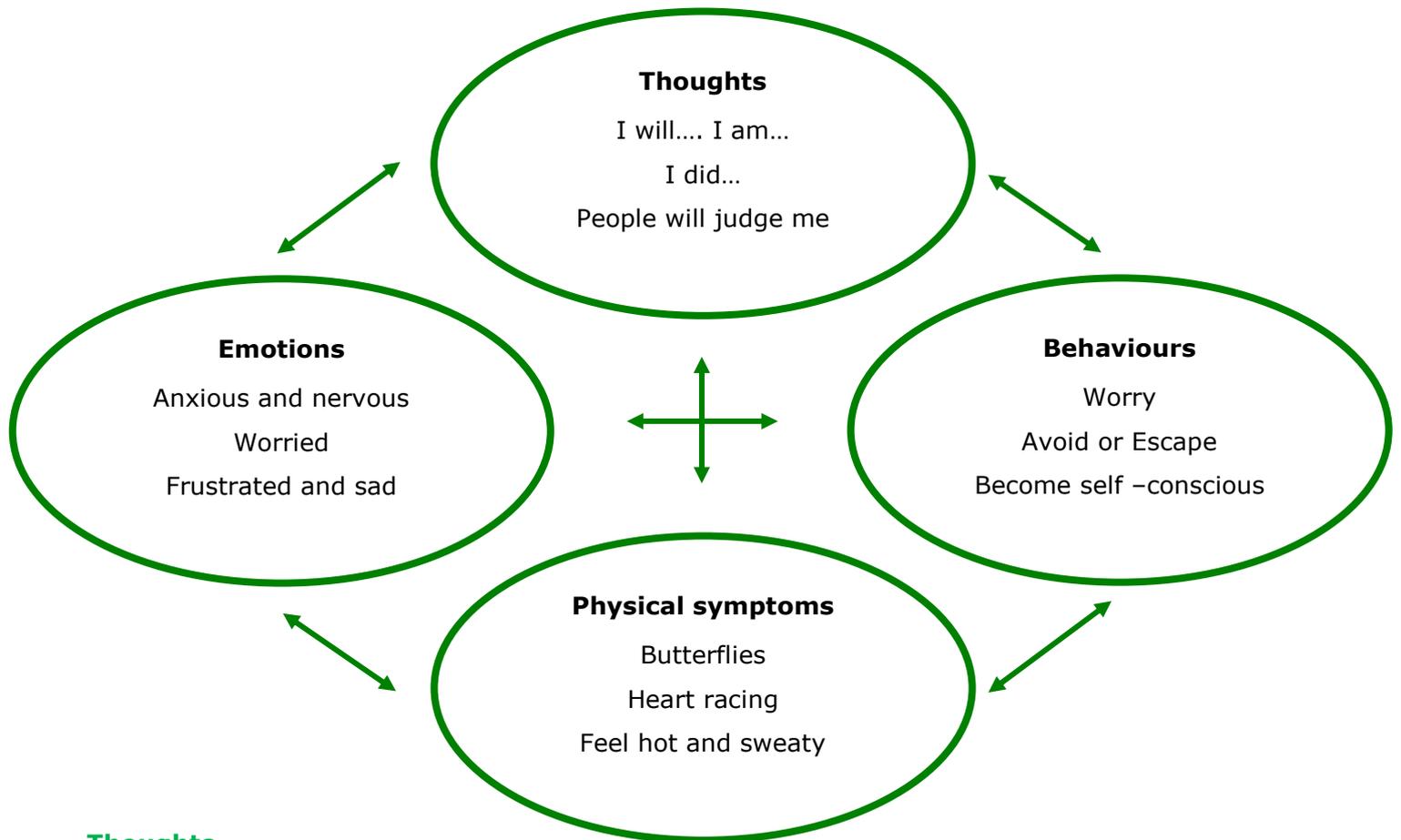
Did just thinking about it set off an anxious response?

Symptoms of social anxiety



The Vicious Cycle of Social Anxiety

The example 'vicious cycle of social anxiety' shown below demonstrates our thoughts about social situations, what we do (or don't do), how our body feels, and how we feel emotionally.



Thoughts

When we worry about an upcoming social situation we may find ourselves thinking 'I won't know what to say' or 'I'll do something embarrassing'. In these instances we tend to think 'People will notice I'm anxious' and that they'll judge us 'They must think I'm weird, stupid, boring'. We may think 'everyone is looking at me' and afterwards think 'I looked like an idiot'.

Behaviours

We might either avoid social situations or go along but endure them with discomfort. We may become very self-conscious and use certain behaviours to avoid drawing attention to ourselves. These behaviours may be things we do physically or they might be things we run through in our heads eg rehearsing what to say.

Physical symptoms

We may start to feel nervous, anxious and tense about the upcoming situation. In the situation we may experience flight/fight /freeze reactions such as heart racing, feeling hot and sweaty, shaking hands or legs, breathing faster or needing to use the bathroom more.

Emotions

We may feel worried, anxious, frustrated, upset or even annoyed at ourselves or others.

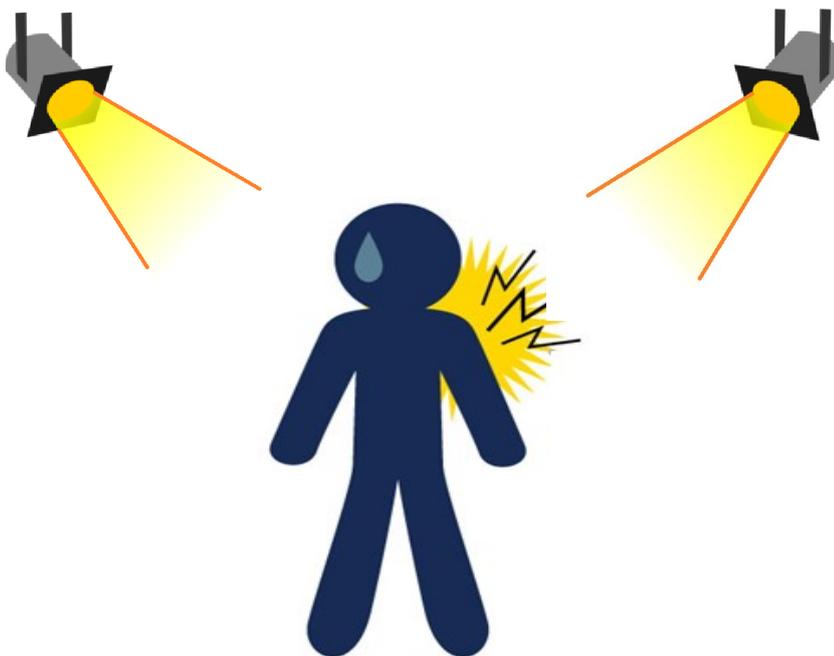
STEP ONE

Mapping out your Vicious Cycle

For some people, their social anxiety is confined to a few specific situations such as eating in public or public speaking. For others it might be almost all situations involving interactions with others.

What social situations provoke anxiety for you?

People with social anxiety tend to anticipate how badly they think they *will* come across in a situation, focus on how they think they *are* coming across in the situation, and then afterwards go over and over what they *did* in the situation. It's like they always have a spotlight on their thoughts, bodies, and behaviour.



To start understanding what is maintaining the problem, let's break this down into three separate cycles – what happens **before** the event, what happens **during** the event, and what happens **after** the event.

Before the event we might worry about what we'll say or do, or that we will somehow embarrass ourselves in front of others.

During the event we might start to notice our physical symptoms of anxiety and behave in a certain way to try to prevent people noticing. We probably become more self conscious.

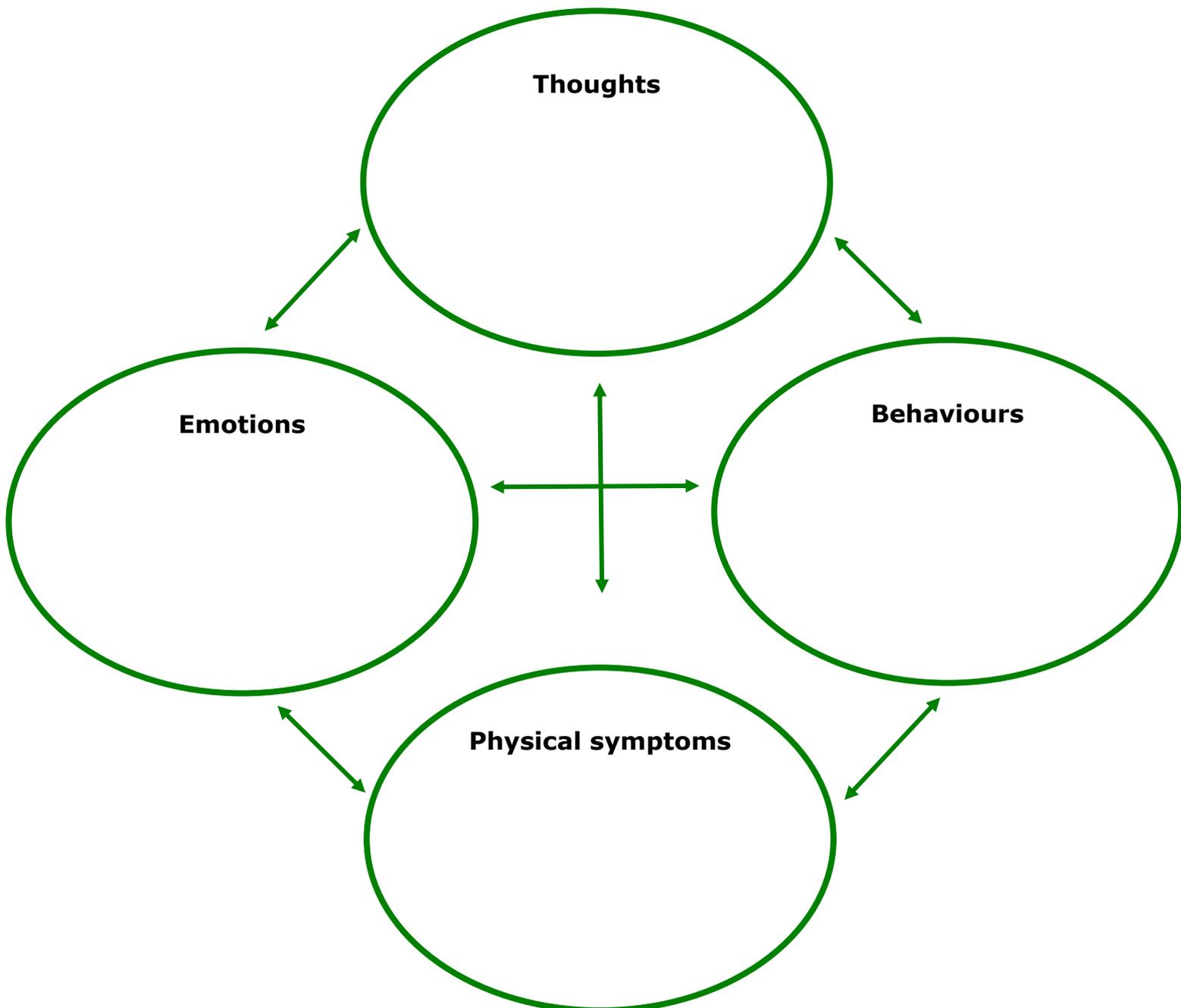
Afterwards we go over and over what we think happened, what we believe people thought about us and focus on what we think went wrong.

Before the Situation or Event

Think of a recent time that you felt anxious about an upcoming event, what was it? Imagine that that event or something similar is coming up again.

Ask yourself:

- What am I worrying about or predicting will happen?
- What is the worst thing about that happening?
- Do I have an image in mind of how I think I will look?
- How does my body feel?
- What will I do to reduce the anxiety I am feeling?
- How do I feel emotionally?



During the Situation or Event

Imagine you are now in that situation.

Ask yourself:

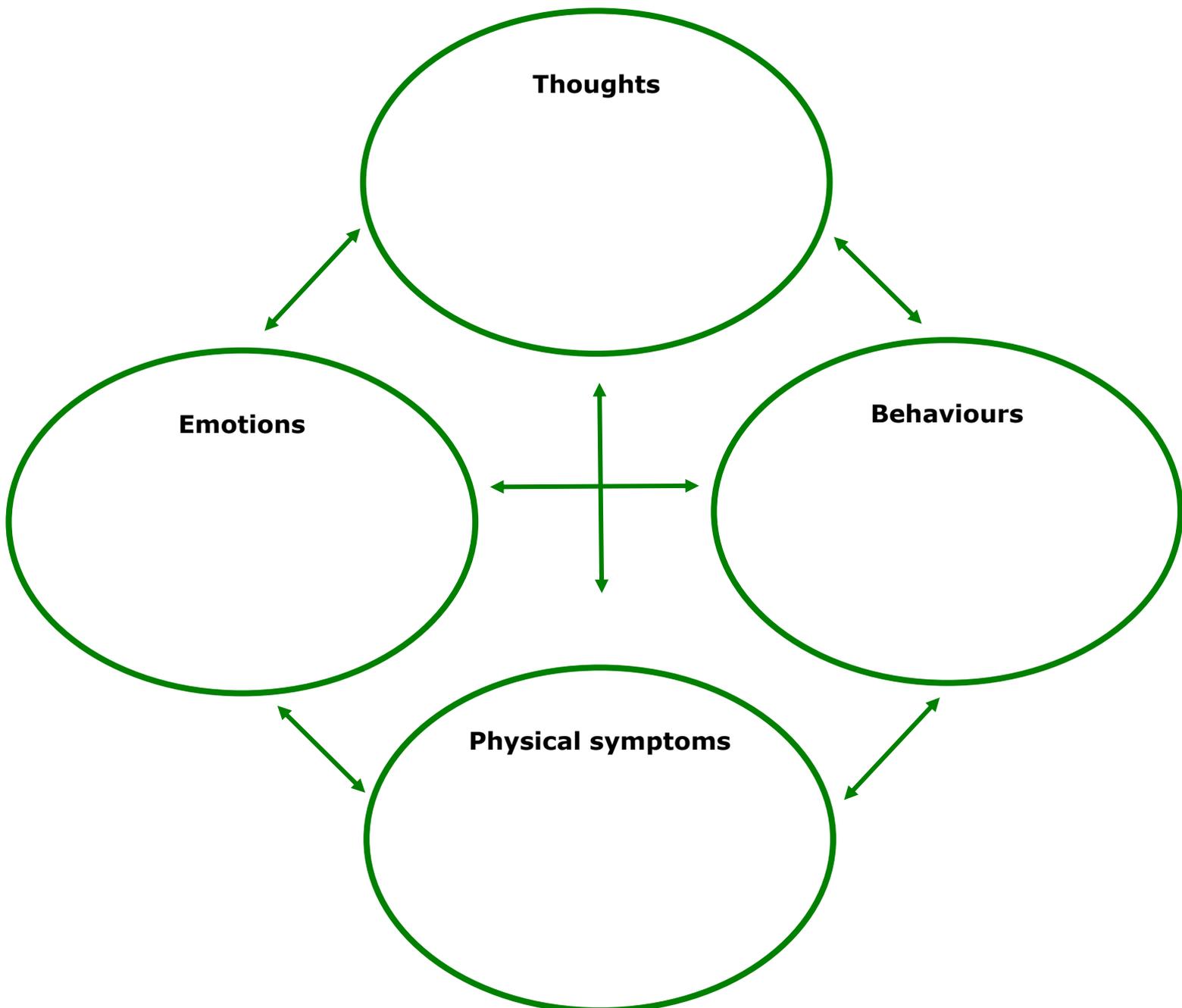
What do I think people are noticing/thinking?

What is going through my mind? What is happening?

What do I notice in my body?

What am I doing to reduce the anxiety I am feeling? Do I do anything to stop people noticing any physical anxiety?

As I become more anxious, where do I focus my attention?



After the Situation or Event

What happens after the situation?

Ask yourself:

What do I think happened?

How do I think I came across?

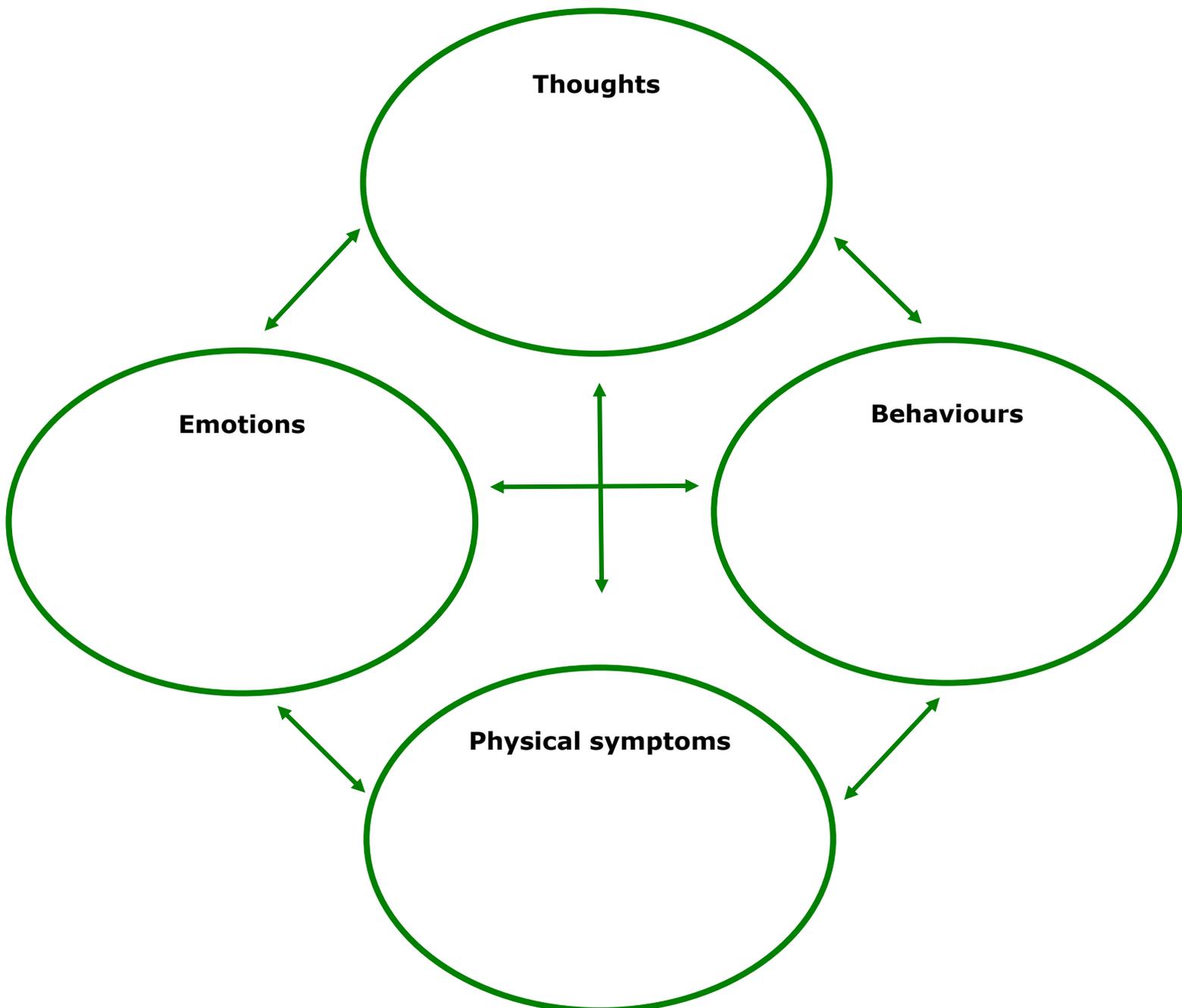
What do I think people thought of me?

What symptoms bothered me?

How do I feel emotionally?

Do I have an image of how I came across?

Am I now dwelling on what happened?



How Does Each Cycle Affect the Situation or Event?

BEFORE

I worry _____

I think _____

I imagine myself looking _____

My body feels _____

Emotionally I feel _____



As I enter the situation I already expect _____

Physically I feel _____

DURING

I start to notice _____

I try to hide any physical symptoms of _____ by _____

I focus on my thoughts of _____

To prevent myself feeling _____ I _____

I think people will notice that I am _____



After the situation I _____

AFTER

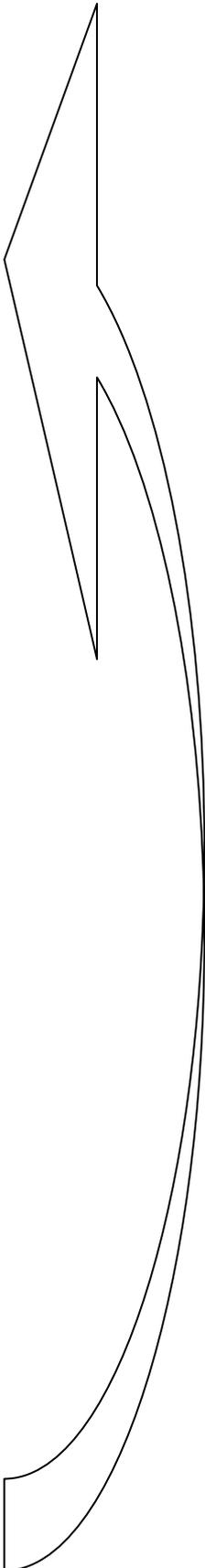
I go over _____

I think _____

Emotionally I feel _____

Physically I feel _____

"I never want to do that again"



Example

Sam has been invited to go out with colleagues after work on Friday. She doesn't really want to go because she worries about what she will say and that she will look nervous. She has avoided going in the past but feels that she can't make an excuse this time. She goes and feels very awkward.

BEFORE

I worry about what will happen, what I'll say
I'm going to embarrass myself
I imagine myself looking bright red and shaking
My body feels nervous/on edge
Emotionally I feel anxious

Sam goes into situation already expecting the worst
She is experiencing mild fight, flight or freeze symptoms

DURING

I start to monitor my performance and I become more self-conscious
I try to hide any symptoms of blushing by putting on lots of make up
I try not to make eye contact
I look for cues to confirm my fears 'They are laughing, probably at me'
I can't think of anything to say
I want to leave as soon as I can

Sam leaves the situation but continues to replay events in her mind

AFTER

I must have seemed so boring and weird
I can't believe I said that
I feel sick and exhausted
I dwell on how bad I think it was

How Did Each Cycle Affect Sam's Evening?

Before

In this example we can see that Sam is worrying before the event and is already imagining how she will not fit in or somehow embarrass herself. As Sam enters the situation she is already feeling nervous and anxious, she has an image of herself going bright red and being humiliated.

During

During the event Sam is looking for cues that confirm how badly she thinks she is coming across. Her attention shifts inward to her internal critical thoughts and how her body feels. To avoid this feared reaction she starts to use certain 'safety behaviours'; crossing her arms, not making eye contact, going on her phone. Sam doesn't realise that what she does changes what happens in the situation and can influence how people relate to her. Her body language makes it appear that she is not interested in what is happening around her, and therefore people are less likely to talk to her. Also by avoiding eye contact she can't see when people are interested in what she has to say. She leaves the situation as soon as she can (without drawing too much attention to herself).

After

After the event Sam carries out a 'post mortem' of how badly she thinks it went. She goes over and over what she said, how she thinks her body showed how anxious she was, and what she assumes people thought of her. This is based on her perception of how she felt rather than what actually happened. Sam also has an image of how she thinks she looked, she thought she looked bright red and was shaking like a leaf.

*Can you see from this example that Sam is worrying about the **event** before it happens, closely monitoring herself during the **event**, and then afterwards going over and over what she thought happened during the **event**.*

It therefore makes sense to have a good look at what happens during the event as this is where the anxiety ultimately stems from.

We will look at this in **MODULE 2 – Changing what you do in Social Situations**

Module 2

Changing What You Do in Social Situations

So far we have looked at 3 vicious cycles: before, during and after a social situation or event. Research suggests that understanding what happens during the social situation is the key to changing social anxiety.

During the situation/event

There are 2 main areas that maintain social anxiety in the situation and they involve *internal focus or self-consciousness*, and *the use of safety behaviours*. If we can break these cycles we can change the patterns that keep social anxiety going. We will look at each one separately .

Examples:

Self Focussed- Self Conscious Thoughts

I don't know what to say
I am going red
I can feel my heart racing
People are judging me
I must look stupid

Safety Behaviours

Escape
Don't make eye contact
Avoid talking about myself
Try to blend into the background

* Think back to your example of thoughts and behaviours **during** a situation.

When you were worried that the outcome that you fear was happening, what happened to your attention?

Did you become more self conscious?

You may have noticed that when you are in a situation and start feeling anxious, your attention is less likely to be on what's happening around you and more likely to be focussed internally – on what you are thinking or feeling and what your body is doing. Being internally focussed is the worst place for someone with social anxiety, as it takes you away from the present and focuses on your negative perception of yourself and the situation. The next step looks at breaking the cycle of internal focus by learning to be in the present and turning your attention outwards.

STEP TWO

External focus and shifting your focus of attention

Part A - EXTERNAL FOCUS (Being Present)

Worrying and focussing on internal thoughts and feelings takes us away from the present and into our own minds. We can use our senses to keep us in the present and to notice what is happening in the external environment.

The first step is to practice this technique in a 'non-threatening' or neutral situation. Like all skills it takes practice and if you can, try practicing for around 10 minutes a day.

1. Becoming aware of the range of different sights and sounds around you

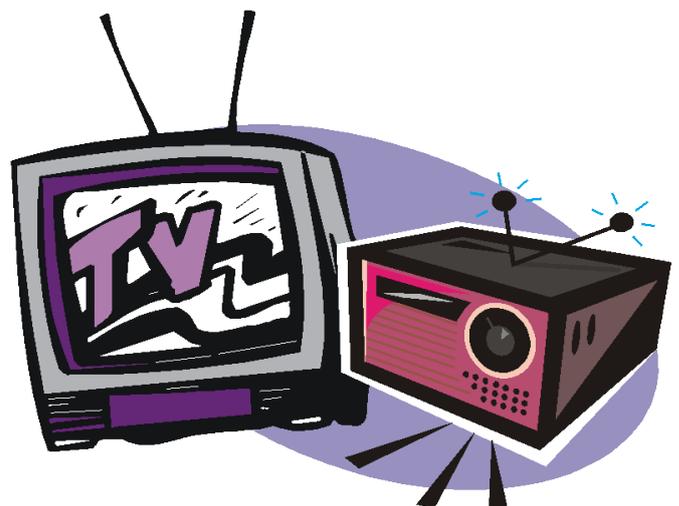
-Practice inside for about 2 minutes at a time

- Listen to a song or the radio, in turn pay attention to the different instruments that are playing (guitar, drums, bass, piano, voice, etc.)
- Sit quietly and pay attention to the sounds in the room and any sounds you can hear outside
- Pay attention to what objects are around you, what are they, what colours can you see, how is the light falling on an object? What would it feel like to touch these objects? Would they be hard or soft, smooth or textured?

If you find your mind wondering, that's ok, just bring it back to what you can see or hear.

- Practising outside

- Go for a walk, pay attention to the sounds around you. What sounds can you hear nearby, what sounds are further away? Can you hear cars, people, birds, silence?
- Now pay attention to the buildings, plants, animals, people around you. What colours can you see? What are the different textures around you, how would they feel?



2. Switching your attention between the different sights and sounds

You can do this equally well indoors and outdoors

Choose several different sounds.

Start by focussing on one of the sounds, noticing all you can about it and letting it fill your awareness

- After following the first sound for a while, shift your attention to another sound and then become absorbed in following that.

- Do the same for a third sound.

⇒ Move on to objects, light, textures, colours, etc.

3. Filling your attention with the external environment

Once you have spent some time focussing on a number of different sights and sounds try to become aware of them all at once and let them fill your attention.

Don't worry if your attention drifts back on to yourself, simply notice this and then shift your attention back to the outside world.

Use **Worksheet ONE** on the following page to record your experiences.

Example:

| Date/time | Situation | What I focussed my attention on | Mins | Any comments |
|-----------|------------------------------------|--|--------|--|
| 12/11/18 | <i>At home having a cup of tea</i> | <i>The different sounds inside and the heat of the tea in my hands</i> | 5 mins | <i>It was harder than I thought my mind kept wandering</i> |
| 13/11/18 | <i>Listening to a song at home</i> | <i>I listened to the piano and then the lyrics</i> | 4 mins | <i>It was really interesting, I have heard this song many times before</i> |

When you notice that you are worrying about an upcoming situation (focussing on the future) or going over a past event (focussing on the past) use the external focus technique as a way of distracting you from your thoughts and coming back to the present.

Part B—SHIFTING YOUR FOCUS OF ATTENTION

The most important part of the technique is starting to use it in different situations. This time it is not for the purpose of distraction but more importantly it's to keep you involved in what is happening around you. That may be focussing externally on what someone is actually saying to you, or noticing what other people are doing, what they are wearing, what music is playing etc.

Try just observing and engaging with what is happening without making a judgement about the situation or about yourself.

Your attention may turn back to yourself, and that's ok. It's the ability to notice where your thoughts are, then switch it!

Have you ever noticed that when you focus on a physical sensation it starts to feel worse? For example, focus on a niggly pain in any part of your body, really focus on it. What happens; does it get better, worse or stay the same? Chances are it gets worse. The same thing happens when we focus on bodily symptoms of anxiety, eg. Sweating, shaking etc. By focussing on them they get worse not better.

What about when you start to overthink what you are going to say. Does it help you get involved in the conversation or does it actually make things worse? Can't keep up, can't find your words, stumble, or stutter, sound shaky?

Shifting your focus of attention in social situations

First—Try practising shifting your focus of attention in 'non-threatening' or neutral social situations.

For homework try applying it in social situations e.g next time you are talking with a friend/family member/colleague.

How did it feel?

Once you have practiced shifting your attention in neutral situations, try gradually using it in situations that you find more challenging.

Use the **Worksheet TWO** on the following page to record your experiences.

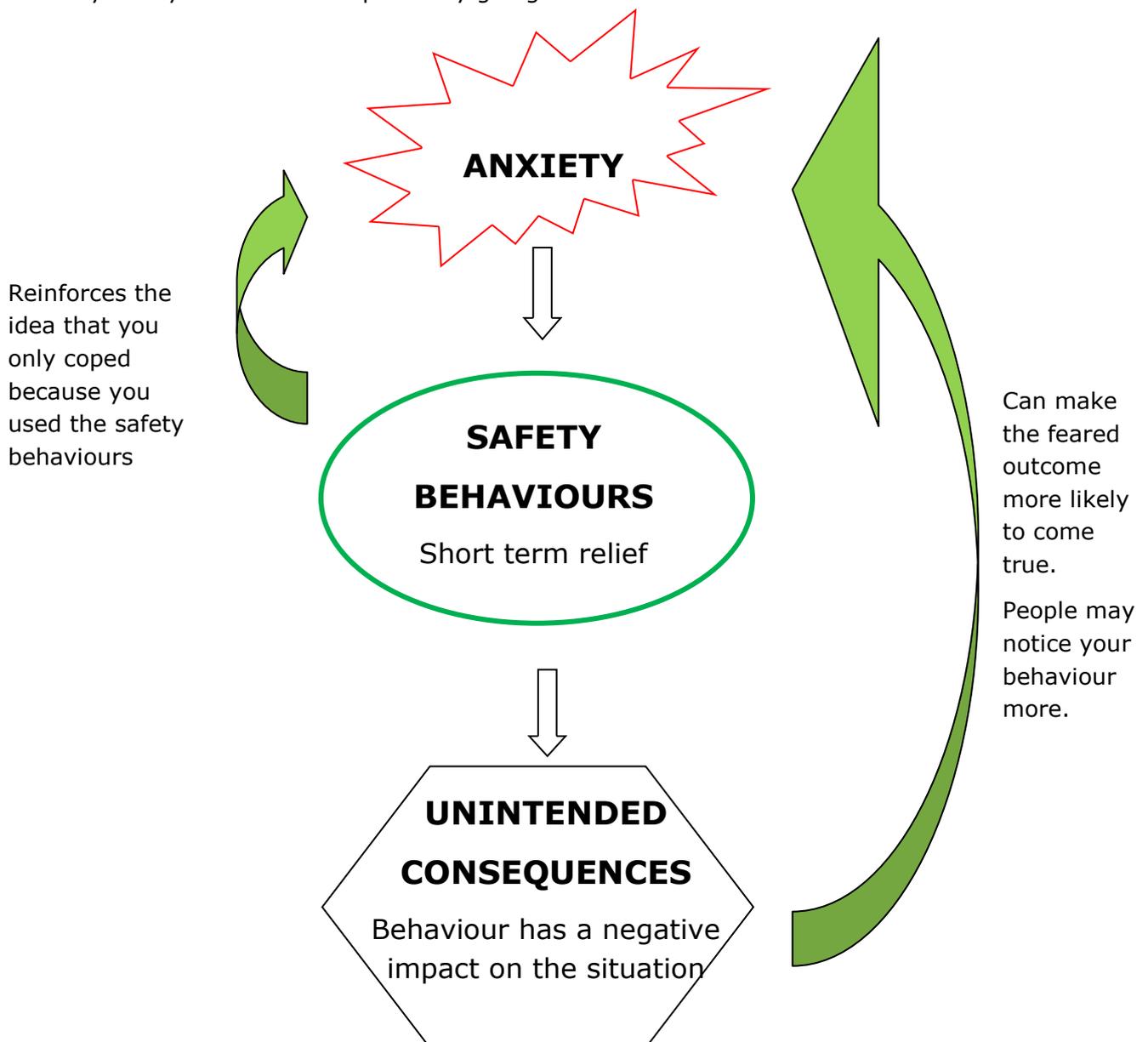
Example:

| Date/time | Situation | What I focussed my attention on | Mins | Any comments |
|-----------|----------------------|---------------------------------|--------|--|
| 14/1/19 | Making a tea at work | What my colleague was saying | 5 mins | I tried not to focus on what to say. Because I was listening more carefully I found it easier to respond. I actually felt more relaxed. I was surprised. |

Understanding Safety behaviours

Safety behaviours are actions that we carry out in order to prevent a feared outcome. In the short term they provide us with a sense of relief from feelings of anxiety, but in the long run they are ultimately unhelpful. They stop us learning that we can cope, or even worse – they may actually influence the situation and unintentionally contribute to the feared outcome happening!

The safety behaviours of avoidance or escape give short term relief but re-inforce the idea that we can't cope in certain situations. Safety behaviours such as keeping arms crossed to stop people seeing you are sweating or shaking, reinforce the idea that you only coped because of that behaviour. Ultimately safety behaviours keep anxiety going.



You can learn more about avoidance and safety behaviours by watching our video modules
www.talkplus.org.uk/anxiety-video-modules

STEP THREE

What are some of your Safety Behaviours?

Think back to your vicious cycle *during* the situation. Do you use any of the following safety behaviours, tick the ones that relate to you. Add any other ones that you have noticed.

| | |
|--|---|
| | Avoidance - if I don't go I won't be anxious and I won't embarrass myself |
| | Escape - I can't handle this anymore, I have to get out before people notice I'm anxious or I do something really stupid |
| | Avoid eye contact - if I don't look at people, they won't talk to me/notice me or see that I'm nervous |
| | Go on my phone or have my headphones in - if I look like I'm busy I won't look silly for not being involved in the conversation |
| | Rehearse what I'm going to say, check things before I say them - that way I won't say anything wrong |
| | Don't say anything - if I don't speak up I can't say anything embarrassing, they won't know what I'm really thinking |
| | Avoid talking about myself - that way they won't think I'm weird or have different opinions |
| | Ask lots of questions - deflect attention away from myself |
| | Say too much, try keep the conversation always going - I have to keep talking or they'll think I'm boring |
| | Drink too much - if I drink I'll feel more confident |
| | Keep my arms crossed - people won't see I'm sweating or shaking |
| | Cover my face with my hair/hand/look away so people won't see I'm blushing |
| | Wear clothing that will cover up that I'm sweating |
| | Try to control shaking by crossing my arms or holding them together |
| | Speak really softly - other people won't hear what I'm saying |
| | Avoid eating in front of others |
| | |
| | |

STEP FOUR

Safety behaviours and their unintended consequences

Safety behaviours can 'contaminate' the situation and actually make the situation and anxiety worse.

List your safety behaviours and their unintended consequences or impact on the situation.

| Safety Behaviour | Reason for using the safety behaviour | Unintended consequence or impact on the situation |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Sam' example—avoiding eye contact | People won't look at me that means they won't ask me any questions, so I won't feel awkward | Because Sam is not making eye contact with people she looks really bored and uninterested in making conversation Sam feels left out as people are not talking to her. Sam doesn't see cues that people would be interested in talking to her. Re-enforces the idea 'I shouldn't make eye contact' |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

STEP FIVE

Reducing safety behaviours by experimenting with graded tasks

Now that you are aware of your safety behaviours, how can you go about reducing them? Which one would be easiest to try dropping, which one would be the hardest to drop?

Which of your safety behaviours has the most impact on the situation?

Create a hierarchy of tasks to test out what happens when we drop safety behaviours. Choose the safety behaviour that would be easiest to drop first and create tasks that would be easy, moderate and difficult.

| Safety Behaviour to Drop | Graded task to test what happens |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Example: Avoiding eye contact | Easy—make eye contact with the shop keeper when I buy something at the local shop. Moderate—say hello and make eye contact with a work colleague Difficult— make eye contact when talking to my boss |
| | Easy - Moderate— Difficult— |
| | Easy - Moderate— Difficult— |
| | Easy— Moderate— Difficult— |

Now that you know what your safety behaviours are and how they may influence a situation, it is now time to test out what happens if you don't carry them out. We will do this in a gradual way by using Behavioural Experiments in Step Six.

STEP SIX

Behavioural Experiments

We know that people who are socially anxious tend to:

- Over estimate the likelihood that something will go badly,
- Over estimate how bad it will be, and
- Under estimate their ability to manage or cope.

A Behavioural Experiment is a way of testing out specific predictions about a social situation. This allows us to test out what happens when we change or reduce our safety behaviours.

An example prediction might be: If I make eye contact with someone, they will ask me a question, I won't know what to say, I'll go bright red and they will think I'm stupid.

With Behavioural Experiments it is important to take notice of the situation, not what you are *thinking or feeling*. Think of it like gathering evidence for or against your prediction.

Remember to use external focus, and if you notice your thoughts turning inward, then shift your focus of attention to what is happening around you.

Creating a Behavioural Experiment

1. Be specific about your prediction and rate how strongly you believe in it (0-100)%
2. Design your experiment, what you will do to test your prediction. It may be helpful to decide when, where and who.
3. Carry out the experiment
4. What happened, what did you observe?
5. What have you learned?
6. Rate how strongly you now believe in your original prediction.

Start carrying out your Behavioural Experiments in **WORKSHEET FOUR**

You can learn more about Behavioural Experiments by watching our video modules

www.talkplus.org.uk/anxiety-video-modules

WORKSHEET FOUR—Behavioural Experiments

| Prediction What do you expect to happen? How would you know if it came true? | Rate your belief in this prediction % | Experiment How could you test this out? What safety behaviour do you need to drop? | Outcome What happened? Was your prediction accurate? | Learning What did you learn? How likely is it that your prediction will happen in the future? | Re-rate your original prediction % |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Sam's Behavioural Experiments

| Prediction What do you expect to happen? How would you know if it came true? | Rate your belief in this prediction % | Experiment How could you test this out? What safety behaviour do you need to drop? | Outcome What happened? Was your prediction accurate? | Learning What did you learn? How likely is it that your prediction will happen in the future? | Re-rate your original prediction % |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| If I make contact with someone, they will ask me a question, I won't know what to say, I'll blush and they'll think I'm stupid | 80% | I will make more eye contact in the tea room when speaking to colleagues this afternoon. If they ask a question, I will focus on what they are saying (external focus) and just say whatever I feel like at the time (dropping my safety behaviour of planning) | I did it this afternoon. I had to deliberately go into the tea room when someone else was there to make sure I could do the experiment. Someone I didn't know particularly well asked me about my weekend. I said that I went for a run (which was true) and asked them about their weekend. | Well my negative prediction that I wouldn't know what to say was incorrect. It was quite a nice conversation There is no reason why they should think I'm stupid, so I don't believe that at all now! | 20% |
| If I speak loudly, I will draw attention to myself and everyone will look at me. | 70% | Next time I meet a friend for a coffee I will talk at a normal volume and take notice of what is happening around me (using external focus). | I had a coffee with my friend at a local café. I spoke loudly enough for my friend to hear without leaning in and it was loud enough that other people could hear. No one else seemed to notice me or care. | I learned that most people are just concentrating on their own conversations and whatever they are doing. If they did notice me it was only fleeting, I guess people have to look somewhere and sometimes it might be in my direction. | 15% |
| | | | | | |

Module 3

Bringing it together and Relapse Prevention

What have you learned about yourself and social anxiety? Were you making assumptions based on your own views? Were you ignoring times when you coped well and just focussing on things you thought went badly? Could you be kinder to yourself?

Throughout this booklet and we have looked at four main areas to help manage social anxiety:

- Understanding and mapping out the vicious cycle that maintains social anxiety
- External focus technique and shifting attention
- Understanding Safety Behaviours and their Unintended Consequences
- Using Behavioural Experiments

Think back to **MODULE ONE** when you mapped out your personal cycle of social anxiety.

You looked at anticipating an event and worrying about how you might come across. This worry affects how you feel, how your body reacts and what you do.

Next you saw what happens during a social situation or event, how you think you are coming across, how you expect that people are judging you, and where you focus your attention. We also looked at behaviours, things you do or don't do in those situations.

We then looked at how going over what you think happened affected how you feel, and therefore how you felt about going into a similar situation again.

In **MODULE TWO** you looked at being present and turning your focus outwards using the External Focus Technique. We then looked at shifting your attention in social situations, thereby engaging more in what was happening around you rather than focussing on how your body felt, or what you were thinking.

We looked at Safety Behaviours and how they can re inforce social anxiety as they never allow you the chance to discover that you can cope without using them. We looked at how safety behaviours can also have a negative impact on a situation and actually contribute to the thing you fear actually happening.

To test out your predictions about social situations you used Behavioural Experiments in a graded way.

To bring all of this learning together it can be helpful to complete a **Relapse Prevention Plan** on the following page.

My Relapse Prevention Plan

What were your main problems at the beginning of treatment?

What kept those difficulties going?

What have you learned in treatment?

What progress have you made? How are things different now?

What challenges do you anticipate in the near future?

What are your early warning signs that might indicate a lapse?

What are your future goals?

How can you be your own therapist? What could you do on a regular basis to maintain this progress?

What Sam learned about herself and social anxiety

Understanding what maintains social anxiety

Sam realised that by getting worried and overthinking what might go wrong prior to a social situation, she was getting very anxious. She could feel this anxiety in her body and always thought about the worst possible outcome.

External Focus and Shifting Attention

She started to use the external focus technique to distract herself when she noticed she was worrying.

In social situations or even just walking down the street, she practiced shifting attention to take notice of what was happening around her. When she was more aware of her surroundings rather than focussing on her thoughts, she noticed that most people were focussed on their own situation, not on her.

Understanding how safety behaviours impact the situation

By understanding her safety behaviours, she started working on dropping the ones that were having a big impact on how she came across in social situations. She tested this out using behavioural experiments.

Behavioural Experiments

Initially she tried making eye contact with a shop keeper, a stranger on the bus and then with her colleagues in the lunch room. When she made eye contact she realised that people were generally happy to talk to her.

She also found that she was more able to keep up with conversation as she wasn't always second guessing herself and rehearsing what she was going to say.

The hardest behaviour to drop was speaking really softly, but she realised that when others couldn't hear her, it actually made things worse not better. She found that this meant she had to repeat herself or people leaned in to hear what she said. She tested this out by speaking louder in a range of situations.

Sam realised that previously she had been assuming what other people thought about her, and this was largely based on her own negative views. She also realised that it is unhelpful to care too much what people think. She started noticing moments that did go well rather than just focussing on the ones that didn't.

"I have realised that I can't control what people think. It's really unhelpful to try to as it gets me in a vicious cycle of internal focus and safety behaviours and then worry, avoidance and overthinking. I still feel a bit anxious in social situations but CBT has really helped me be more confident and I'm now doing more things that I want to do". Sam

Sam's Relapse Prevention Plan

What were your main problems at the beginning of treatment?

I was always worried that I would do or say something embarrassing in social situations. I thought I wouldn't know what to say and I would go red. I worried that if I looked anxious then people would think I was boring and weird.

What kept those difficulties going?

I was worrying excessively before a social situation about how badly I would embarrass myself. This meant that I always expected the worst and went into situations really nervous.

I would focus on my negative thoughts and try to think of things to say. I would also focus on every sign in my body that I was nervous. I assumed everyone else saw this too.

Afterwards I would think about how badly I thought it went. I imagined what people thought of me.

What have you learned in treatment?

I learned that when I wasn't so focussed on my thoughts and body I could pay more attention to what was happening around me. I also learned that I was using a number of safety behaviours that were making the situation worse.

By trying some Behavioural Experiments I learned that my negative predictions rarely came true. I was able to cope better than I thought I could.

What progress have you made? How are things different now?

I am continuing to make progress. I still don't feel 100% comfortable in some social situations, but I now give myself the chance to participate rather than just saying no to everything. Sometimes I go and have a great time., other times are just ok, but I cope

What challenges do you anticipate in the near future?

Since I started treatment I have applied for a new job. I know that the interview will be stressful but I can use my skills of external focus to help me cope.

What are your early warning signs that might indicate a lapse?

If I start avoiding social situations, and making excuses to cancel.

What are your future goals?

Ultimately I would like to join a singing group. I've always loved singing but been too scared to join a group. I've even looked up our local Rock Choir.

How can you be your own therapist? What could you do on a regular basis to maintain this progress?

I need to continue using the external focus technique and practising shifting my attention as it has been really helpful so far. I need to remember to be kind to myself and notice when things go well.