

Stress and Worry

Your
self help
guide

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Getting started

By opening this booklet you are on the road to learning how to manage the symptoms of stress and worry that you have been feeling. It can be hard to admit that things in our lives may not be how we would like them to be, and often understanding a problem is the first step to tackling it.

This booklet aims to help you understand and manage stress and worry better, so that YOU have the tools to help YOURSELF.

What is stress and worry?

Stress is the word that many people use when they are describing how the demands of their life seem to be becoming too great for them to cope with. The ability to cope varies from person to person and what one person finds stressful may not be a problem for someone else.

Stress can affect us in many ways, affecting how we feel, how we think and behave. This booklet will help you learn more about how stress is affecting you and how to manage it better. Similarly, how much we worry varies from person to person. Worry is everywhere and all of us worry.

Do you worry you will say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing? Perhaps make a mistake at work, upset someone you care about or overlook a serious health problem? Or perhaps you just worry too much – constantly running through ‘what if’ scenarios in your head.

Many people describe themselves as “constant worriers” and say, “I’ve been a worrier all my life”.

This booklet will help you learn more about your worrying and how to control it.

Remember – The body’s stress response evolved to HELP us survive.

How can stress and worry affect me?

There are four different ways stress can affect us:

1. How we feel
2. How we think
3. How we behave
4. How our body works.

Stress checklist

Which of the symptoms below do you get?

How we feel

- Irritable
- Anxious
- Low mood
- Low in self esteem

How we think

- Constant worrying
- Can't concentrate
- Thoughts racing
- Imagining the worst
- Going over and over things

How we behave

- Temper outbursts
- Increased drinking
- Increased smoking
- On the go all the time
- Talking more and/or faster
- Changes in eating habits
- Withdrawal
- Being unreasonable
- Being forgetful or clumsy

How our body works

- Headaches
- Muscle tension/pain
- Stomach problems
- Sweating
- Feeling dizzy
- Bowel or bladder problems
- Breathlessness
- Dry mouth
- Tingling in body
- Sexual problems

It is important to get to know how stress affects YOU since that will help guide you into identifying what coping techniques will be most useful for you.

Why do I need to learn how to manage stress and worry?

If you ticked many of the boxes on the checklist on the previous page it is likely you could be experiencing stress. The symptoms on the checklist are short-term; they are how we feel in the moment when we are feeling particularly stressed. Many of us will feel stressed in our day-to-day lives, and will be able to relate to these short-term feelings.

Low levels of stress can actually be useful at times to make us concentrate on a goal, or to highlight to us something that needs to change.

However, if stress is ongoing for a long time it can cause more serious problems. Heart disease, high blood pressure, migraine, asthma, low resistance to infection, bowel problems, fatigue, sleep problems and stomach problems, especially ulcers, are all more likely in people who have been experiencing ongoing stress.

These are examples of how we can experience physical illnesses as a result of ongoing stress. However, stress can also affect our mental health. Stress and worry are a central part of depression and anxiety, and can often come before these problems present themselves.

It is therefore really important to learn how stress affects you, and to try and increase your ability to cope with it. That way you can reduce the chances of stress leading you to develop more serious problems.

Remember – Everyone is different. People will respond differently to the suggestions in this book. Read through the whole booklet and decide what would suit you best, and adapt the exercises and tips to be relevant to you.

What is it like to be stressed or worried?

"I just don't get a task finished anymore before I move on to the next thing. I keep forgetting where I'm up to, I have 20 things on the go at once and I'm not getting anywhere with any of them..."

"I keep meaning to get a little time for myself but I never manage to. Someone always asks me to help out and I never have the heart to say no, but I end up feeling really tired and irritable..."

"It just seems to be one crisis after the next in my life. I've got a constant headache and stomach problems, I keep expecting something else to go wrong, I'm at the end of my tether."

"I can never make a decision. I worry I'm going to say the wrong thing, wear the wrong outfit and look out of place. Then I can begin to worry that I'm worrying too much."

These are examples of when stress and worry can get on top of us and interfere with our lives.

If you are having thoughts like this, and ticked a lot of the symptoms on the stress checklist, then it is likely that you are suffering from stress.

Remember – If you have identified that you are suffering from stress, then you are not alone. Approximately one in every four GP consultations are about mental health concerns, many of which will involve feelings of stress.

Stress and worry diary

To tackle your own stress or worry you first need to understand what situations will trigger these feelings. Different people can get stressed or worried over very different things so it is useful to understand what happens to YOU.

	Date	Where was I?	What was I doing at the time?	Who was I with?
e.g.	29/03/12	At work	Working on a report	Alone
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

On the table below rate how worried or stressed you felt at the time on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 = absolutely calm and 10 = the most stressed/worried you could ever be.

Keeping a diary is useful as you will start to become more aware of the situations which lead YOU to become stressed or worried.

	How did I feel?	What was I thinking	What did I start doing	What happened physically?	Stress Rating (0-10)
e.g.	Irritable and anxious	I can't do this but if I don't I'll lose my job. I'm a failure.	Starting again then giving up, biting my nails	Breathing faster, neck muscles tensed	7

The stress balance

Hopefully from filling out the stress diary you will have an idea of the types of situations that cause you to worry or feel stressed. A helpful idea can be to think of ourselves as being like a balance, or a pair of scales:



On one side of the balance is what we see as demands around us, external things such as pressure at work, relationships with other people, or particular situations.

On the other side of the balance is what we view as our ability to cope with those demands.

Our coping abilities should be great enough to deal with most stresses, and to keep the balance straight. If, however, we have a high level of demands, or judge that we are not able to cope, the balance will become tipped to one side and we may feel stress or anxiety.



To make the balance even again, and to not be feeling stressed or anxious, we can: a) reduce the demands, b) increase our coping abilities, or c) do both!

That is why it is so important to understand what triggers YOUR stress symptoms the most. Have a think back to what you wrote in the stress diary.

Reducing demands

Reduce your stressful lifestyle: sometips

Life is often stressful and it is easy for pressures to build up. We can't always control the stress that comes from outside, but we can find ways to reduce the pressure we put on ourselves and help us cope better while we are experiencing stress:

- By using the stress diary, try to identify particular types of situations that you find stressful. Use the problem solving technique on the next page to see if there is a different way you could approach these situations
- Make time for the things that you enjoy
- If you aren't doing many enjoyable or pleasurable things at the moment, think about taking up a relaxing hobby. What did you enjoy when you were younger? Are there any classes, groups or activities you have been thinking about starting?
- Look after yourself. Are you getting much exercise? We saw earlier how stress can have a very negative effect on the body physically, so exercising will help you to feel healthier and stronger. Three times a week for at least 20 minutes is a general good rule. This doesn't have to be going to the gym but can be a walk, to the park or shops
- Sleep is a basic human need and if your sleep pattern is disturbed you will be more prone to stress, anxiety and depression. Try to get into a routine. (Further tips on sleep are outlined later on in this booklet)
- Good nutrition is also a basic human need – try to get into the routine of eating a well-balanced diet, and eat at regular times.
- Very often people feel stressed or anxious if they take on too much – learn how to organise your time, and say 'no' if it's too much for you.

Problem solving

Often, people will feel stressed if they feel they have problems that seem difficult to solve. Problem solving techniques can therefore be useful, to:

- Help you feel more in control of your difficulties
- Think of realistic and practical solutions.

Get a pen and paper and try the following:

1. Write down what the problem is. Be as clear and specific as possible. If you have a number of problems bothering you just deal with the one that is most important to you first
2. 'Brainstorm' – write down as many possible solutions to the problem as you can. Even if they are unlikely to work, see how many possibilities you can come up with
3. Go through each possible solution and decide on the good and bad points of each. Think about how important each good or bad point is. Some people find it helpful to put a score on each good and bad point out of 10, of how important the point is to them. By adding the scores up for each side you can see which possible solution has a higher number of good points
4. By looking at the good and bad points of each, choose one of the solutions
5. Write down each step that you need to do as part of the solution: what will be done, how will it be done, when will it be done, who is involved and where will it take place?
6. Work through each step and evaluate it afterwards.

Problem solving example

1. Identify the specific problem

The landlord is coming round tomorrow to fix the heating and collect the rent, but I don't have the money to pay the rent.

2. Brainstorm solutions

- Go out so I don't have to see him
- Give him half the rent and say I'll pay the rest next week
- Borrow £100 off Mum
- Threaten him to fix the heating and let me off the rent
- Say I'll fix the heating if he lets me off this month's rent
- Sell some jewellery to get the money
- Buy a lottery ticket.

3. Evaluate the good and bad points of each

Give each possible solution a mark out of 10, giving higher marks for more good or bad points.

4. Choose the solution with the most good points

Give him half the rent.

Possible solution	Good points	Bad points
Go out so I don't have to see him	I don't have to deal with it tomorrow (5)	I'll still be worrying about it (5)
		He will come round again and be more angry (8)
		Only a temporary solution (9)
	Total 5	Total 22
Give him half the rent	He'll be happy to have some money (6)	I'll still have to find the other half next week (5)
	I'll feel better (4)	
	He'll fix the heating (10)	
	Total 20	Total 5
Buy a lottery ticket	I could win jackpot and buy my own house and never have to pay rent again (10)	If I don't win I'll lose £1 (2) and I'll still have no money to pay rent (10)
	Total 10	

5. Write down each step of the solution

Get the half of the rent ready before he arrives. When he arrives make him a cup of tea and explain why I have had difficulties getting the money this week, that I know it is important and that I will deliver the rest to him next week. Decide with him a time and place to meet to pay the rest.

6. ACTION and evaluation

Try out this solution and later evaluate how it went. If this solution has not helped then review your list and try out another solution and evaluate.

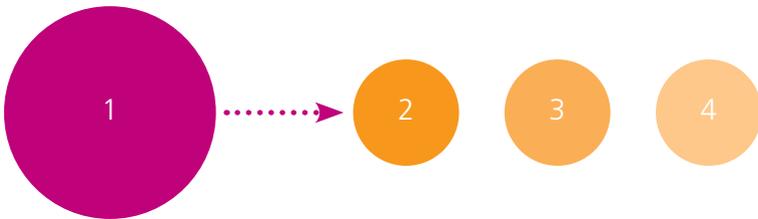
Top tips

- There is not always an immediate solution to a problem. However, by breaking things down as much as possible, there is often a small step we can take
- If it is hard to think up possible solutions, ask yourself what you would suggest to a friend in the same situation
- You could even ask a friend to help you come up with your solutions list – they may offer a different perspective
- Where possible, rehearse practicing your chosen solution, either in your imagination or with someone you could role-play with
- If the solution you chose worked, remember to **CONGRATULATE YOURSELF**
- If it didn't work out, try to understand what went wrong. It will be disappointing but pat yourself on the back for trying, and try and learn as much as you can from the experience.

Time management

If we don't manage our time successfully, we can easily feel stressed with the number of things we need to do. Often jobs can pile up and it can feel like we have a mountain to climb.

- Turn your mountains into molehills. Break down one big task into as many smaller tasks as possible
- Put these smaller tasks into order of importance, and deal with the most important one first. Do not move onto the next task until the first one is finished



- Keep an up-to-date list of what you need to do. Get in the habit of crossing each thing off as soon as you do it. You could dedicate 10 minutes before you go to bed each night to update your list and make a plan for when you are going to do these things. You will probably sleep better knowing you have a plan to deal with all these demands
- Don't put too many things on the list to start off with; this can make you feel disheartened about how much you have to do. Thinking about what you might be able to achieve in a chunk of time e.g. a morning, can be helpful
- Don't forget to timetable in things you enjoy, not just jobs you have to do!

Remember – If it is hard to get into the routine of organising your time, give yourself a small reward each time you complete a task and cross it off your list – people learn a lot quicker through reward than punishment!

Increasing coping abilities

Reducing physical symptoms

We saw earlier how stress can affect us physically and may lead to us feeling tense and uptight. This section of the booklet will focus on how we can manage these bodily symptoms better. If we can reduce the physical symptoms of stress so that we feel less tense, we can feel less stressed overall.

Relaxation

It is useful to be able to recognise the early signs of stress symptoms coming on. By knowing your warning signs, you can put relaxation techniques into practice before the physical symptoms get too strong. This way you are 'nipping them in the bud' and reducing their severity.

Some people can relax through exercise, listening to music, watching TV or reading a book.

For others it may be helpful to have a set of exercises to follow. Relaxation or yoga classes can be useful, as well as relaxation tapes and CDs.

Relaxation is a skill like any other which needs to be learned, and takes time to master.

On the following page is a technique for deep muscle relaxation, which many people find helpful to reduce overall levels of tension.

Deep muscle relaxation

- Start by selecting a place that is warm and comfortable and where you won't be disturbed. Choose a time of day when you feel most relaxed to begin with
- Lie down, get comfortable and close your eyes
- Concentrate on your breathing for a few minutes, breathing slowly and calmly – counting “In, two three, Out two three.” Say the words “calm” or “relax” to yourself as you breathe out
- You will now work through different muscle groups, teaching yourself firstly to tense, then relax. You should breathe in whilst tensing and breathe out when you relax
- Starting with your hands, first clench one tightly. Think about the tension this produces in the muscles of your hand and forearm
- Study the tension for a few seconds and then relax your hand. Notice the difference between the tension and the relaxation. You might feel a slight tingling, this is the relaxation beginning to develop
- Now do the same with the other hand
- Each time you relax a group of muscles think how they feel when they are relaxed. Don't try to relax, just let go of the tension. Allow your muscles to relax as much as they can. Think about the difference in the way they feel when they are relaxed and when they are tense
- Now do the same for the other muscles of your body. Each time, tense them for a few seconds and then relax. Study the way they feel and then let go of the tension in them.

It is useful to stick to the same order as you work through the muscle groups:

- Hands – clench first, then relax
- Arms – bend your elbows and tense your arms. Feel the tension especially in your upper arms. Remember, do this for a few seconds then relax
- Neck – press your head back and roll it from side to side slowly. Feel how the tension moves. Then bring your head forward into a comfortable position
- Face – there are several muscles here, but it is enough to think about your forehead and jaw. First lower your eyebrows into a frown. Relax your forehead. You can also raise your eyebrows, and then relax. Now clench your jaw, notice the difference when you relax
- Chest – take a deep breath, hold it for a few seconds, notice the tension, then relax. Let your breathing return to normal
- Stomach – tense your stomach muscles as tight as you can and relax
- Buttocks – squeeze your buttocks together, then relax
- Legs – straighten your legs and bend your feet towards your face. Finish by wiggling your toes.

You may find it helpful to get a friend to read the instruction to you. Don't try too hard, just let it happen.

To make best use of relaxation you need to:

- Practice daily
- Start to use relaxation in everyday situations
- Learn to relax without having to tense muscles
- Use parts of the relaxation to help in difficult situations, e.g. breathing slowly.

Audio recordings of relaxation exercises are available. Ask your GP or mental health worker.

Controlled breathing

It is very common when someone becomes stressed for changes to occur in their breathing. As the body begins to feel more tense, our heart-rate can increase and our breathing may speed up. This over-breathing can in itself increase the feeling of tension. Slowing your breathing down can help you to reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress, which will give you a greater sense of control and the ability to cope.

Try to recognise if your breathing pattern is changing when you are feeling stressed. Learn how to slow your breathing down. Get into a regular rhythm of slowly saying “In two three, Out two three.”

Feel the breath coming into your body and moving down into your stomach. You could even put your hand onto your stomach with your fingertips touching, and feel the fingers move apart as the breath comes into your stomach. Then feel the breath move out from your stomach, through your chest and out through your nose.

Try to slow your breathing rate down to 10 to 12 breaths per minute. Some people find it useful to use the second hand of their watch to time their breathing.

Managing your thoughts

How we think about a situation is crucial to how stressed or anxious we will feel about it. Managing your thoughts related to stress and worry will be another tool to stop the worry getting too bad.

Distraction

Thinking about unpleasant symptoms will often make them worse and can actually provoke further symptoms.

If you can take your mind off symptoms, they will often get better or go away. One way to do this is to distract your mind.

Try to look around you. Study things in detail – car registration plates, what sort of shoes people are wearing, what other people are talking about.

Or play mental games to keep your mind busy, for example counting backwards from 100, doing your 13 times-table or reciting a poem or the lines of a song.

Just talking to someone is useful – it takes the focus of your thoughts away from whatever is causing you anxiety, and onto engaging in conversation with someone else.

You will need to distract yourself for at least three minutes before the symptoms begin to reduce. Like all new skills, practice makes perfect. It may be helpful to practice these skills when you are not feeling very anxious first of all so you get used to this technique.

Recognising thought biases

From completing the stress diary (page 6), you should have an idea of the type of thoughts which run through your head when you are feeling stress or worry. The sort of thoughts that make people feel stressed can come and go in a flash, and may be so much of a habit that they are automatic and feel just like a part of you.

Some thought biases are particularly common when we are feeling stressed:

1. **Exaggeration** e.g. everything is bound to go wrong because it always does
2. **Jumping to conclusions** e.g. Chris was late home tonight – he must be having an affair
3. **Focusing on the negative** e.g. yesterday was such an awful day (ignoring that the few days before that were good).

Thinking like this will only increase stress-provoking thoughts and make us feel even worse.

Think of the last time you were particularly stressed or worried:

1. Did you exaggerate what was going on?

.....

2. Did you jump to conclusions?

.....

3. Did you focus only on the negative?

.....

Thought challenging

Recognising that your thoughts might be biased enables you to answer yourself back and provide a more realistic or balanced response.

Use the columns below to write down some anxious thoughts you have had and then try and come up with a more balanced thought. If it helps, think about what you would say to a friend who was thinking that way.

Stressed/worried thought	Balanced thought
e.g. Chris was late home tonight – he must be having an affair	He has got a lot of work on at the moment and I have no evidence of him having an affair

The aim is to get faster at 'catching' these stress-provoking thoughts, recognising the thought biases and answering back to them straight away. It takes a lot of practice, so you will need to keep giving this a go, but it really does work.

Challenging worry

Worry can help us or hinder us. Worry can be useful if it makes you pay attention to something, if it is turned into a plan for action, or if it helps you to be better prepared.

Worry without action does nothing and is pointless. It can spoil our enjoyment, waste our time and keep us problem-focused without moving forward.

To find out if your worry is pointless ask yourself these questions:

1. The unimportant

Ask yourself how important is the thing I am worrying about?

- The Five Year Rule – will this matter in five years time?
This is a way of looking at your worry from a long-term point of view
- The Measuring Rod – where on a scale of bad experiences is the thing I'm worried about? How does it compare to a very bad experience I have had?
- The Calculator – how much worry is this worth? We only have a certain amount of time and energy, so make sure you do not spend more worry on this problem than it is worth.

2. The unlikely

A lot of worries ask 'what if...?' questions. All kinds of terrible things could happen today or tomorrow but most things are very unlikely. If you allowed yourself to worry about the unlikely then there will be no end to your worrying. Do not waste time, energy and happiness on problems that do not actually exist.

3. The uncertain

Often we do not know how something will turn out. Many things we worry about have not yet happened, and we can only take action once we know what has happened. For example, worrying that you have failed an exam will not improve your results. It is only once the results are released that you can decide what, if anything, needs to be done.

4. The uncontrollable

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

There are two types of things not worth worrying about: those you can do something about and those you can't.

On the next page, the 'worry plan' gives you a structure for:

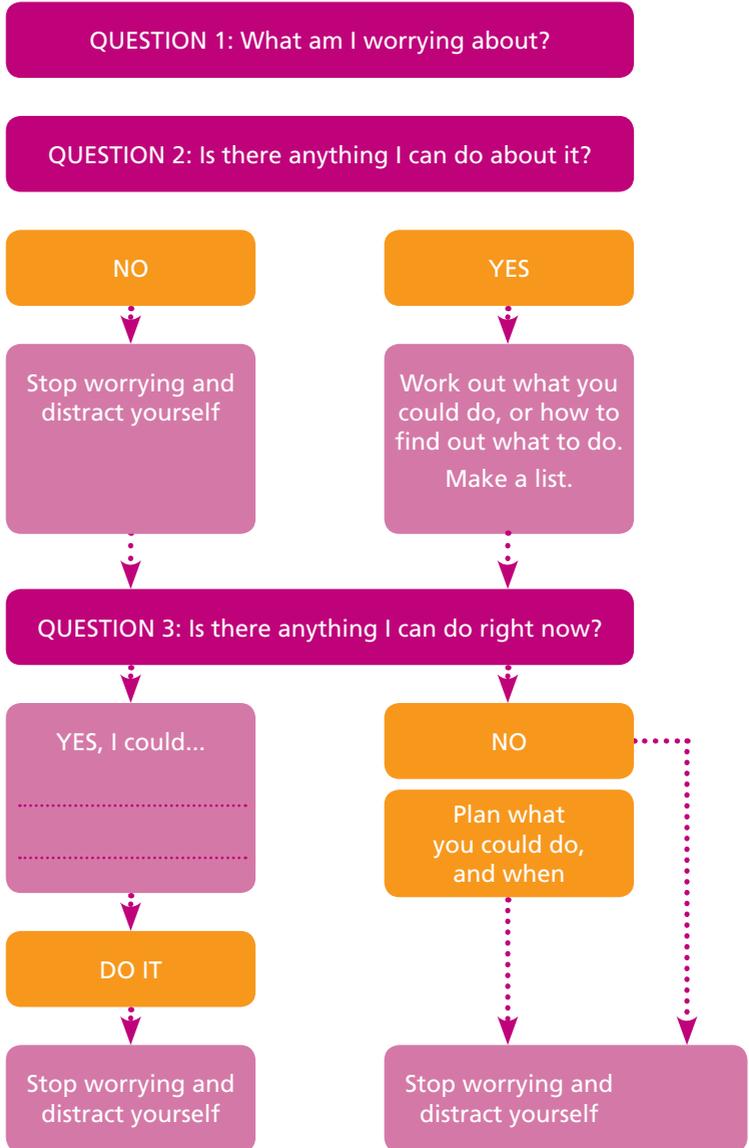
- Distinguishing between these two types of worry
- Turning worries into action
- Deciding when it is 'safe' to let worries go.

What are you worrying about? Use the worry plan for one of your own worries.

Remember – Useful worry prompts action.

All other worry is pointless.

The worry plan



Now you know it is safe to let the worries drop.

Organise your worry

As we saw before, some worry is useful if it motivates us to take action and make changes, so you should allow yourself to worry if it is this useful type. However, even useful worry can spiral out of control, so some people find it helpful to organise their worry.

Clean your head - ready for bed

People often worry more at night. Therefore it can be helpful to allow yourself to have a 'worry session' earlier in the evening to get those worries out of your head and aid more peaceful sleep.

- Set aside 20 minutes in the early evening
- Sit in a quiet room with a pen and paper
- Think about any problem areas and things you haven't finished or achieved. Write down the way you intend to tackle each of these and when you will do so. Do not do anything about them at this time
- If these matters are on your mind when you go to bed, put them off until daytime. Remind yourself that you have already written a plan for the worry
- If it is a new worry/problem and you cannot stop thinking about it, get out of bed and add it to your planning list. Remind yourself that bed is not the place to think about such things and that you can do no more. The problem is on your list and you can look at it tomorrow.

Remember – If you start to worry at other times, tell yourself you have dedicated 'worry time' later on and you will deal with it then.

Worries do not survive well outside of our heads. Talking about a worry can help us see the bigger picture and can help with finding solutions. Try and talk to someone close to you to get their perspective.

Sleep Management

Sleep problems are common with stress

You may have difficulty getting to sleep, or you may be waking frequently during the night or very early in the morning. The important thing to remember is that your sleep will improve as you start to feel less stressed.

Rules for better sleeping

There are some basic rules for better sleeping:

- Get used to going to bed and getting up at a regular time
- Have a bedtime routine and try to wind down before bedtime
- Avoid drinking tea, coffee and alcohol in the evenings
- Don't take naps during the day – even if you are feeling really tired. It will upset your body clock
- Don't eat a large meal before bedtime. If you're hungry before bedtime have a light snack
- Try to exercise during the day, but not close to bedtime
- Only sleep in your bed, not on the settee or anywhere else
- Don't watch TV, eat or write in bed unless you are certain from past experience that these activities will help you get to sleep
- Don't go to bed until you feel sleepy
- If you have not gone to sleep within half an hour, get up and do something distracting and relaxing (away from the bedroom if possible). Go back to bed only when you feel sleepy. It may also be helpful to monitor your sleep behaviour, to see when you are and when you are not sleeping, and record any activities that helped you return to sleep.

Practice makes perfect

There is no overnight cure for stress and worry. It can be hard to make changes to the things you have been doing and the ways you have been thinking for a long time. However, it can be done, and the more you practice these techniques, the more they will start to become natural to you.

Once you have practiced these techniques a lot, it could be useful to go back and take the stress checklist again. It will feel good to see that you have learnt how to manage stress and worry better.

It is not easy, but you have learnt how to help YOU!

Well done!

Coping with setbacks

Most of us get through our problems in a series of ups and downs. The diagram illustrates the progress you should expect:



“Just when I started to make progress and things were going well I had a setback and I was back to square one. I needed help from my husband to start again but I soon made up the ground I had lost and I’m still going forward. I still have one or two setbacks but I keep working at it.”

Expect setbacks, they are normal. When a setback happens, remember that they are to be expected. Try and focus on the progress you have made so far. You know you have done it once, so you can do it again.

Staying well plan

In order to feel better and to stay well, it is important to continue to look after your mental health just as you would your physical health. It can be helpful to see yourself as being on a **journey towards wellbeing**. As part of this journey, it is important to **continue** using what you have learned during your sessions in the future to help you stay well, and to improve your wellbeing further.

This section will help you to review what your difficulties were, what you did that helped to improve things, and what you can do to stay well and improve how you feel.

1. What difficulties did I ask for help with?

- What were my goals?
- What things did I want to work on?

2. What was keeping my problem(s) going?

- Behaviour e.g. avoiding situations or people
- Thinking e.g. always imagining the worst
- Difficult situations or life events e.g. relationships, work problems

3. What progress have I made in achieving my goals?
How did I do this?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. What ideas and tools have I learned that have helped me?

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. What obstacles might lead to a setback or make it harder to stay well? E.g.

- Stressful life events/situations
- Motivation and thinking negatively

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. What would I notice first if I started to have difficulties again? E.g.

- Changes in the way I think e.g. always imagining the worst
- Changes in my behaviour e.g. avoiding things, drinking
- Changes in how I feel physically e.g. feeling more tired
- Changes in how I feel e.g. tearful or irritable.

Thinking:

Behaviour:

Physical:

Emotion:

7. What strategies can I use to help me feel better again?
Who can I talk to? E.g. talking to friends or family, making time to exercise regularly

8. How can I build on what I have achieved?
What further goals could I set to help me stay well?

- Short-term

- Long-term

.....
.....
.....
.....

Many people find the structure and routine of talking to someone for regular sessions helpful. Now that your sessions are coming to an end, you might find it useful to continue having this time to check how you are doing by setting a regular review day with yourself.

When would be a good regular time for me to check how I am doing?

- What day/time of day?
- How often?
- Do I want anyone else to help me do this?
E.g. a friend or partner

.....
.....
.....
.....

Treatment options

The techniques described in this booklet focus on how our thoughts and behaviours can have a big effect on whether we feel stressed or worried.

Most people can benefit from self-help, such as this booklet.

Your family GP, health visitor or practice nurse may also be able to give you further help in dealing with these problems.

Further reading on managing stress and worry is available in your local library as part of the Books on Prescription scheme. Ask your GP or mental health worker about this.

You may also be referred to a mental health worker, counsellor or psychologist if your difficulties do not respond to self-help alone.

Stress-management groups and classes may be run in local surgeries or community centres. Ask your GP or mental health worker if you are interested in attending one of these groups.

Some people may be prescribed medication for treating anxiety. This should only be taken for short periods to get over specific anxiety provoking situations. A lot of people find these medications helpful, although they are not a cure. If you have any queries about medication you have been prescribed, you should discuss this with your GP. Alternatively, you could telephone NHS Direct for information on 0845 4647.

Further reading

Many of the ideas in this booklet are discussed in further detail in the following books, some of which are available to borrow at part of the Books on Prescription scheme in local libraries (for more information ask your GP or mental health worker):

Mind over Mood: Changing how you feel by changing the way you think (1995)

Christine A Padesky & Dennis Greenberge, Guilford Publications

The Feeling Good Handbook (2000 2nd edition)

David Burns, Plume, U.S

Teach Yourself Managing Stress (2003)

Terry Looker & Olga Gregson, Teach Yourself Books

How to Stop Worrying (1990)

Frank Tallis, Sheldon Press

The Worry Cure: Stop Worrying and Start Living (2005)

Robert L Leahy, Piatkus Books

Further support

Useful organisations

Anxiety UK

Zion CRC

339 Stretford Road

Hulme

Manchester M15 4ZY

Helpline: 08444 775 774

Opening hours: 9am–5.30pm Mon–Fri

www.anxietyuk.org.uk

This is a self-help organisation run entirely by sufferers of anxiety and their carers providing help for people with anxiety and specific phobias. It has a website providing information, chat rooms, and contacts for local self help groups for agoraphobia, panic and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

Triumph over Phobia (TOP UK)

P.O.Box 3760

Bath BA2 3WY

Tel: 0845 600 9601

Email: info@topuk.org

www.triumphoverphobia.com

This is an organisation running groups nation-wide. Groups are run by lay people and generally by ex-sufferers. They follow a structured, self-treatment, self-exposure programme. Groups run in the evenings. To join, contact Triumph over Phobia on the above number.

No Panic

93 Brands Farm Way

Telford TF3 2JQ

Freephone helpline: 0800 138 8889

Tel: 01952 680460

www.nopanic.org.uk

This site provides valuable information for sufferers and carers of people with panic, anxiety, phobias and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Its purpose is to provide members with support, advice and a chance to meet like-minded people and make friends along the way. No Panic offers a confidential helpline staffed by trained volunteers, open every day of the year, 10am–10pm (from 10pm–10am there is an answer phone service only).

Social Anxiety UK

Social Anxiety UK is a volunteer-led organisation for people with social anxiety problems and their supporters. It offers chat rooms, discussions and self help groups across the country. The London Social Anxiety Self-Help Group (known as the SASH Group) is an open group which meets regularly in central London. Its aim is to support socially anxious people in their process of self-exploration and in creating a rewarding social life for themselves. Contact them at www.social-anxiety.org.uk

Depression Alliance

20 Great Dover Street

London SE1 4LX

Email: information@depressionalliance.org

Free information pack: 0845 123 23 20

www.depressionalliance.org

This is a national charity providing information and support for those affected by depression, and their carers.

Websites

www.livinglifetothefull.com

Online life skills resource using a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) self-help approach. Sign up for free.

www.sortoutstress.co.uk

Advice and information website for young men.

www.moodgym.anu.edu.au

Free self-help programme teaching Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) skills to people vulnerable to depression and anxiety.

Emergencies

If you are in crisis, especially if you feel at risk of harming yourself or someone else, contact your GP.

Alternatively, you could contact:

Harmoni 020 7388 5800

Provides urgent medical care for people between 6.30pm–8am Mondays to Fridays, and 24 hours at weekends and Bank Holidays.

Samaritans 08457 90 90 90

Confidential emotional support, 24 hours a day, for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, or feeling suicidal.

Islington MIND Crisis Line 0845 123 23 73

Out-of-hours telephone helpline and counselling service open Monday to Saturday 5pm–10pm.

Islington Crisis Phonenumber 020 7226 9415 or Freephone 0800 345 7779

Night-time phone line for anyone resident in Islington with difficulties relating to a mental health problem.

Open every night from 5pm–6am.

You can also go to your nearest Accident & Emergency department where you will be seen by someone who can discuss your difficulties with you.

Acknowledgements

Extracts from this booklet have been taken from:

Stress and Anxiety: A Self Help Guide (2003)

Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust

Stress: A Self Help Guide (2003)

Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust

Dealing with Worry: A Self Help Guide (2005)

S Black, J Hastings, M Henderson, NHS Borders

Managing Anxiety: A user's manual (2002)

Helen Kennerley.

Distributed by Psychology Department, Warneford Hospital Oxford

Cognitive Therapy Centre Educational Self-Help Booklets

Managing Anxiety and Depression: A Self Help Guide (1999)

Nicolas Holdsworth and Roger Paxton,

The Mental Health Foundation.

Manage your Mind (1995)

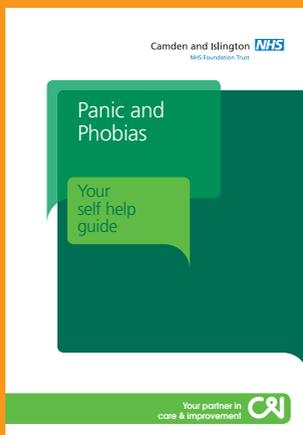
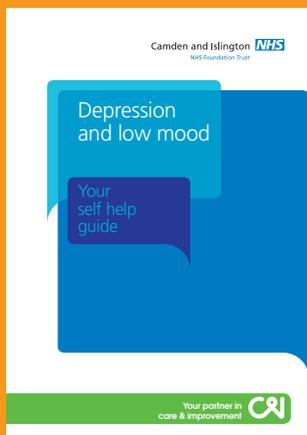
Gillian Butler and Tony Hope

Oxford University Press

This booklet is yours to keep,
so make use of it again and again

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