

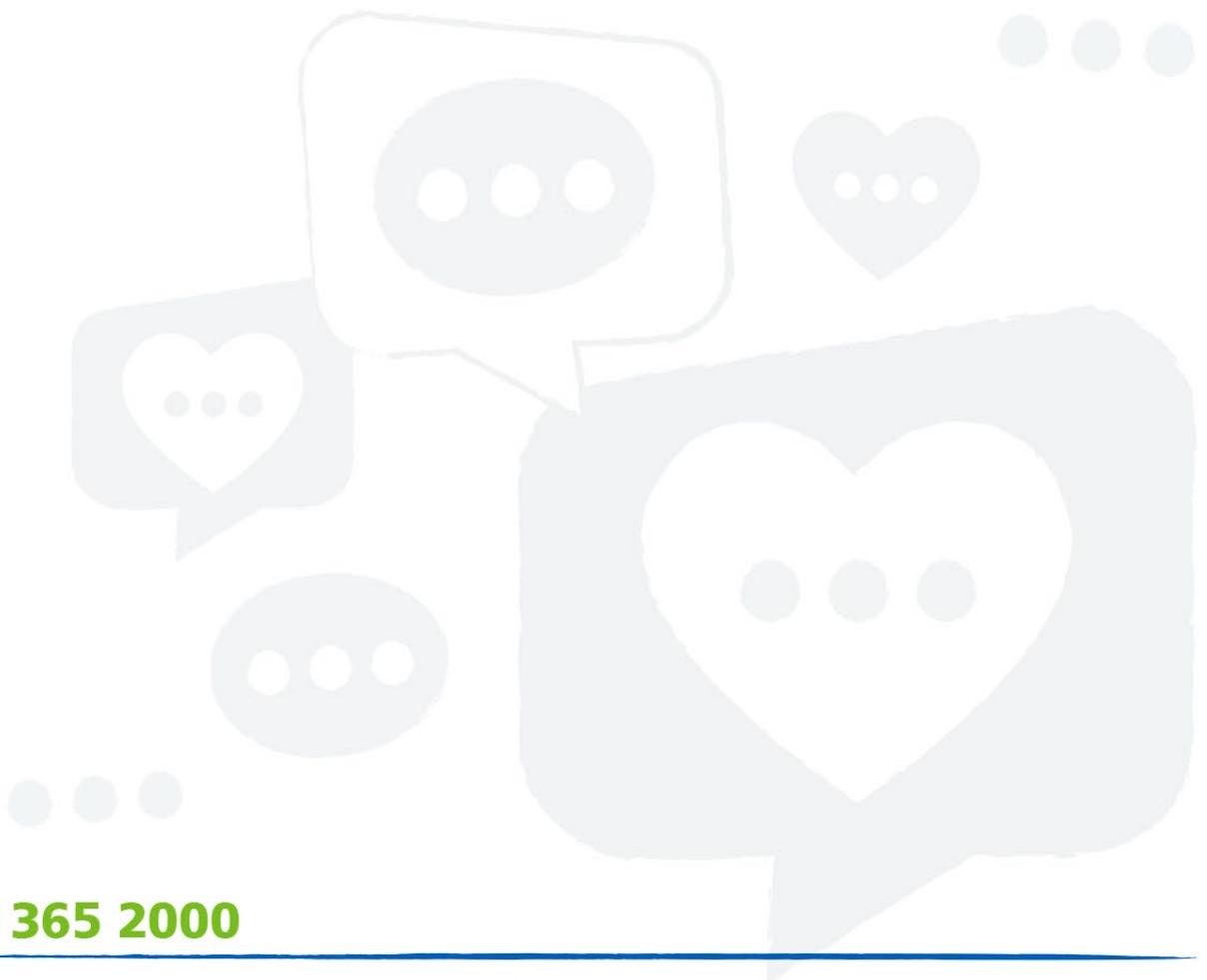


Talking Therapies
Workbook...

Workbook 5

Worry

A worry management self-help guide



 **0300 365 2000**

Contents of this booklet

❑ Worry.....	3
❑ Identifying worries.....	6
❑ Types of worry.....	8
❑ Practical vs hypothetical worries.....	9
❑ Managing hypothetical worries.....	10
❑ Attention training.....	11
❑ Managing practical worries.....	13
❑ Notes.....	18
❑ Further resources.....	19
❑ Useful contacts.....	20



As you work through the booklet, feel free to make notes on page 18.

Worry

What is worry?

Everyone experiences worry from time to time, usually when dealing with difficult or uncertain situations.

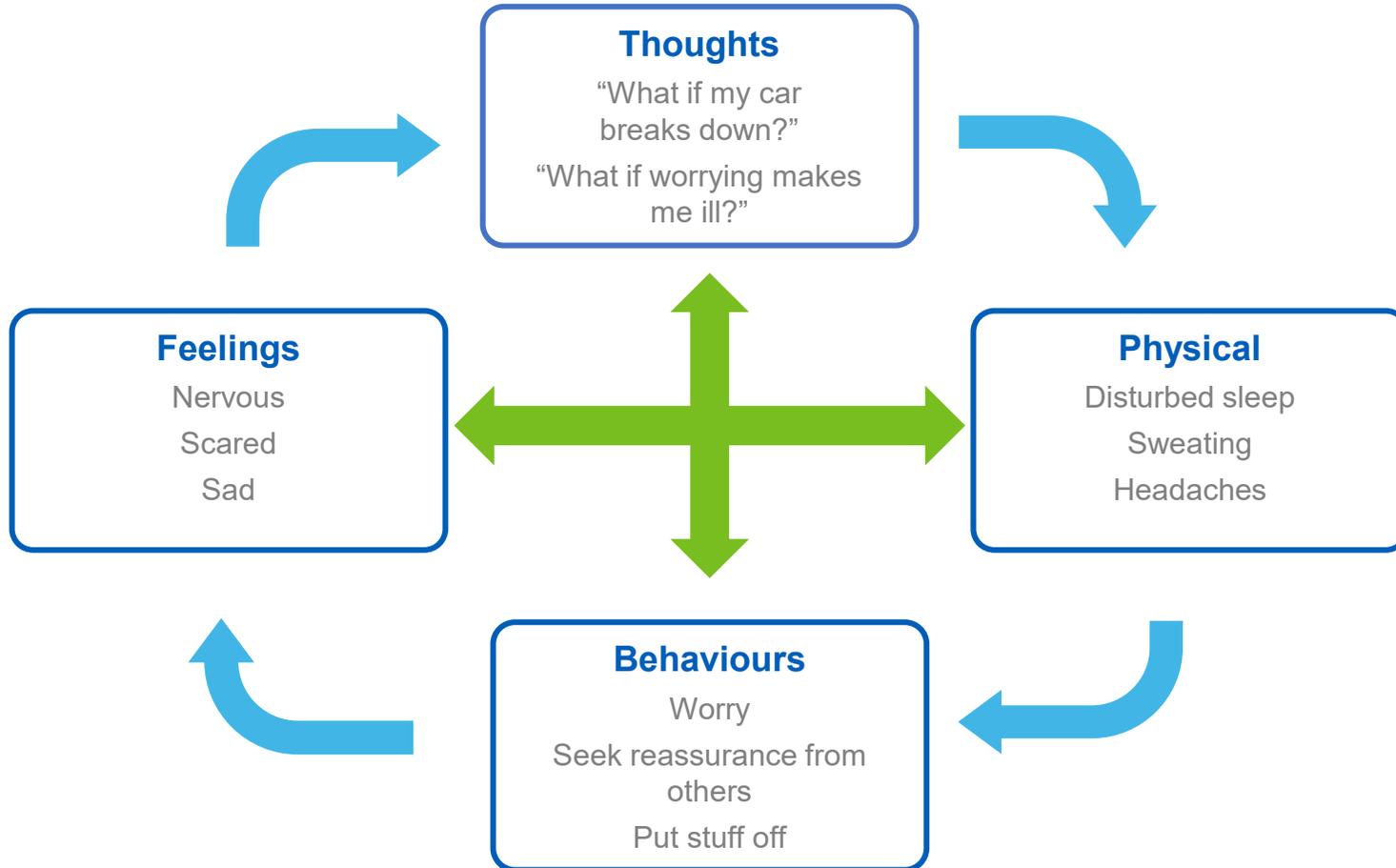
However, some people worry so much that it begins to affect their wellbeing and can cause chronic stress or anxiety.

Worry can be defined as a type of self-talk in which we predict that negative events will happen in the future and over-estimate the possibility of disaster. Worrying thoughts tend to be characterised by “What if?” statements, for example: “What if my train is delayed?”

This is usually followed by imagined situations in which we try to plan how we would cope with these events if they were to happen. Often this involves over-estimating the likelihood or severity of negative events and underestimating our own ability to cope, should the event occur.



Vicious cycle of worry



Worry

Role of uncertainty

Think about the types of things that you worry about. Would you be worried if they were completely certain? The answer is probably no.

Worrying tends to be about future events, for which certainty is impossible. Worrying is a reaction to uncertainty, people who worry a lot tend to have a low tolerance of uncertainty. Even a small amount of uncertainty can cause worry.

Intolerance of uncertainty

The inability to tolerate uncertainty is an attitude many people have towards life where uncertainty, unpredictability and doubt are seen as awful, unbearable experiences that should be avoided at all costs.

With this attitude, you may perceive worrying to be useful as you think worrying is a way to prepare for the worst case scenario and a way of attempting to predict life so there are no surprises. As such, worrying reduces your feelings of uncertainty and you will continue worrying.

Reflect

- Has your worrying made anything more certain or predictable?
- Does worrying change the outcome of what will happen?
- Does the 'false' sense of security justify all the negative consequences of worrying?

It is only your **perception** that you somehow have more control by worrying.



If this is something you relate to and would like more details on managing uncertainty, speak with your therapist for further resources.

Identifying worries

Worry diary

Before we're able to take control over our worries, we need to be able to identify them as they happen.

Try and record your worries as thoughts that go through your mind, for example, "What if the bus is late and I miss my meeting?"

You can record these directly into the worry diary sheet on the next page, jot them down in a notebook or on your phone. Choose the way of recording them that suits you, just as long as you're recording it.

The worry diary on the next page shows the headings you could be using to record these worries.

As well as writing down your worries, you can record how anxious the worry makes you feel on a scale from 0-10. This will help identify which worries are the strongest and could be more important to focus on.



Many people find they worry more at night which interrupts their sleeping. If this is you, consider keeping your worry diary and a pen next to your bed.

Types of worry

Practical vs hypothetical worries

There are two types of worry that we will be looking at in this workbook. Difficulties can arise when we try to deal with all our worries in the same way so it's important to be able to tell the difference between these two types.

1. Practical worries

These worries **centre on real life, current problems** that need to be solved. For example, if you were made redundant at work you may worry about finding another job. With a practical worry we are often trying to solve the problem by worrying about it, running through different scenarios and strategies in our minds in the hope of finding a solution. For it to be classified as a practical worry, it would have to be something we can do something about right now, either making a plan of action or completing the plan.

2. Hypothetical worries

This is when we worry about **events that may never happen** and which we have no control or influence over. For example, you may have heard a rumour in the office about possible redundancies in the workplace and begin to worry excessively that you will lose your job. This may set off a chain of further worries, for example: "What if I lose my job, and then I can't find another job, and then I don't have money to pay the mortgage, and then I lose my house, and then..." This chain can be very difficult to stop once it gains momentum, leaving you feeling anxious, nervous and tense.

Reflect

- What do you worry about?
- Are your worries practical or hypothetical?

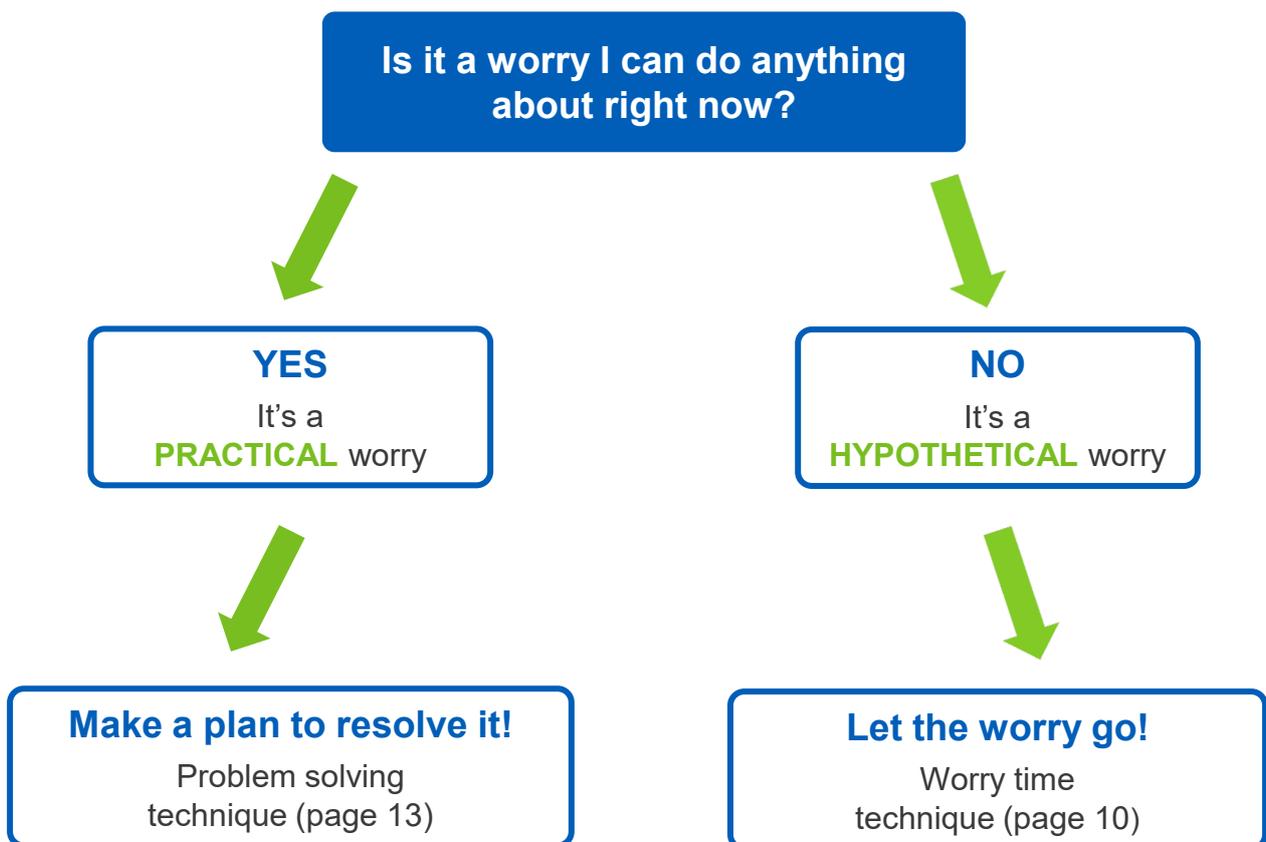


Worries can change between practical and hypothetical depending on the situation. For example, if your worry was "What if I don't reply to that email?" and you're not able to access your emails, it is a hypothetical worry. If you still worry when you do have access, you can do something about that worry so it would become a practical worry.

Practical vs hypothetical worries

Worry tree

Below is a worry tree which can help you to classify your worries. After you have identified your worry, this will help you decide whether it is a practical or hypothetical concern and then help you to identify the best way to manage it.



Over time you may start to classify worries mentally in your head but to begin with you may find it helpful to have this worry tree in front of you to help you decide what kind of worry it is.



Managing hypothetical worries

Worry time

When you find yourself worrying about hypothetical worries, a useful technique that many people have found effective is “worry time”.

Worry time is giving yourself permission to worry but at a time that you choose and are more in control of during the day. This is not to get rid of worry altogether but to reduce the impact that it has. We know with general anxiety, we can find that our worry themes can shift over time, so worry time tackles the process of worrying. This technique has four steps and like any new skill, requires practice.

✓ Step 1 – Plan your worry time

Plan a time for yourself to worry each day. This should be a period of **between 15 and 30 minutes** and can be helpful to be the same time every day. Whatever time works for you is fine as long as it's set aside just for you to worry and you don't do anything else during this time.

✓ Step 2 – Write down your hypothetical worries

When you notice you are worrying outside of your planned worry time, **notice if it is a hypothetical or a practical worry**. If it is hypothetical, write it down in your worry diary knowing that you can come back to it in your worry time.

✓ Step 3 – Refocus on the present

Once you have written down your worry, the next step is to refocus on the present. This means **paying attention to what you were doing before you were worrying**, what is going on around you and the task at hand. This can be a hard skill to learn, the next few pages will give you details on how to practice moving your attention to the present after worrying.

✓ Step 4 – Worry

When it's your planned worry time, worry! Just **take this time to freely worry** about all those hypothetical worries and accept these fears. You could go through your list of hypothetical worries and for each one, consider how you felt when you wrote it and how you feel about it now. Has the thing you were worrying about happened? How did you deal with it? Were there any worries that are no longer a problem? It is important that at the end of your worry time you stop worrying.



Make sure you are starting a new list of worries each day. Some people find it helpful to throw away their list after their worry time that day.

Attention training

When we worry, our attention is usually focused on the future and thinking about what could happen. Even though our body is in the present, our mind is normally somewhere else and therefore we miss out on what's happening here and now.



The following tasks will help you learn how to retrain your attention when you're worrying so that you can redirect your attention to the present moment.

It is not an attempt to control your thoughts or make them go away, it is about allowing these thoughts to be present in your mind and at the same time choosing to shift your attention back to the present moment.

5 Senses

Another way we can move our attention is to focus on 'external' factors rather than 'internal' factors.

An internal factor is something that happens within us; a physical feeling or a thought. An external factor is something that happens outside of us; the world and people around us.

A simple way to move our attention to focus on external factors is by using our senses. If you find it difficult to bring your attention back to the activity you're doing you can try the following which can act as a buffer to help really focus your attention and bring you back to the task at hand and to the external factors.

Notice

-  5 things you can see
-  4 things you can touch
-  3 things you can hear
-  2 things you can smell
-  1 thing you can taste



You can do these techniques as many times as needed before you feel your attention is back on the present and the worry has gone.

Task within a task

Usually, we are doing something before a worry comes into our head such as relaxing, working, reading, talking to a friend.

Once a worry has come into our head it is really hard to go back to focusing on what we were doing beforehand. The task within a task technique helps us bring our attention back to what we were doing before the worry appeared by creating a small task to tackle first.

- Step 1:** Look at what you were doing **before** you noticed the worry.
- Step 2:** Count something or **take extra notice** of something in that task (e.g. if reading, count all the words beginning with the letter 'A').
- Step 3:** After you've completed that smaller task, go back to doing the original task.

Mundane task focussing

Think of your attention as a muscle, if you don't exercise it regularly it will become weak and not work as well. We need to strengthen our attention by giving it regular exercise and practice.

When doing household chores such as washing up and hoovering, you may have noticed that your mind is rarely focused on the task but actually tends to wander. Therefore, these types of tasks are great opportunities to strengthen our attention muscle!

With mundane task focusing, the goal is to gradually practice sustaining your attention on a mundane activity to give your attention a good workout. You don't have to do anything extra in your day to practice this, just use the mundane tasks you already have to complete in your day but change how you pay attention to it.

Begin the task without intentionally trying to move your attention. As you carry out the task, try to really bring your attention to what you are doing. Using the following prompts may help:

Reflect

- **Sight:** What do you see while doing the task? What catches your eye? What colours/shadows do you see?
- **Touch:** What can you feel as you're carrying out the task? What textures do you feel?
- **Hearing:** What sounds are you hearing as you complete the task?
- **Smell:** What smells do you notice? Do the smells change as you carry out the task?
- **Taste:** Are there any flavours associated with the task?

Managing practical worries

Problem solving

When we worry, our problems can sometimes feel overwhelming, like there are no solutions and we end up with practical worries.

Problem solving helps you initially distance yourself from your worries to help you think about different types of practical solutions. This is something that we can usually do more naturally, but when we are feeling overwhelmed it is much more difficult to think in a creative way. This process can help us to think about all the possible solutions if there are any.

Problem solving has seven steps to follow:

✓ **Step 1 – Convert your worry into a practical problem**

When you identify a practical worry, **change it into a problem to solve**. For example, the worry “I still haven’t paid the gas bill” should be converted into a practical problem that can be solved such as “I need to sort the overdue gas bill by Thursday”.

✓ **Step 2 – Brainstorm solutions**

You should then try to **identify as many potential solutions as possible**. At this stage nothing should be rejected, no matter how ridiculous some solutions may seem. In fact, the ridiculous ones can help to generate other more practical solutions. You can use the next page or write this out on paper depending how many solutions you can come up with and what’s easiest for you.

✓ **Step 3 – Consider advantages and disadvantages**

Think about each potential solution that you came up with. **What are its advantages and disadvantages?** This may include the possibility of being able to undertake the solution, the resources you have to undertake the solution and how you feel about carrying it out. You can also use the worksheet on **page 16** to record your work.

✓ **Step 4 – Choose a solution**

Rate your solutions using the final column considering the advantages and disadvantages you have noted. You can now **choose one of your solutions to carry out based on which would most likely lead to the best outcome**.

Problem solving continued...

✓ Step 5 – Develop a plan

The solution you have chosen may require careful planning. **It's a good idea to think about the steps you will take** and anything you may need. Try to keep your steps specific and realistic. Use **page 17** to jot down your plan.

✓ Step 6 – Put your plan into action

Now that you have developed your plan, **it is all about putting it into action.**

✓ Step 7 – Review your plan

Review how well your plan worked. Maybe it worked a little or maybe not at all. The advantage of problem solving is that other options always exist. If the plan worked well, continue to apply it.



If you get stuck, consider the following:

1. Think about what someone else might do? What advice would someone you admire give you to resolve the problem?
2. Combine ideas or modify them to come up with new solutions
3. Take a break! If you reach a block, go away from the task and come back with a fresh outlook.



Step 2: Brainstorm solutions

Problem I'm trying to solve:

Mind map

Step 5: Develop a plan

My plan

Further resources



Workbooks

Centre for Clinical Interventions (CCI) - <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/>

A range of detailed resources and PDF workbooks available to download for free focusing on a range of depression and anxiety related difficulties

Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS – <https://web.ntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp/>

Self-help guides free to download by PDF and print on a range of difficulties including anxiety and depression

Smartphone apps (found on Apple and Google Play store)

WRAP – Wellness recovery action app

Mood Tools – Depression aid

Fear Tools – Anxiety kit

Insight Timer – meditation app

Websites

Mind – <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Mental Health Foundation - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/>

Useful contacts...



Talking Therapies:

0300 365 2000

(Open 8am to 8pm Monday to Thursday
8am to 5pm Friday)

Email:

talkingtherapies@berkshire.nhs.uk

Other contacts:

Berkshire Crisis Team:

0800 129 9999

(24 hours, specialist service for
immediate mental health crisis)

Samaritans:

116 123

(24 hours, confidential listening service)

NHS Direct / out of hours:

111

(24 hours, physical and mental
health concerns)

In an emergency always call 999

