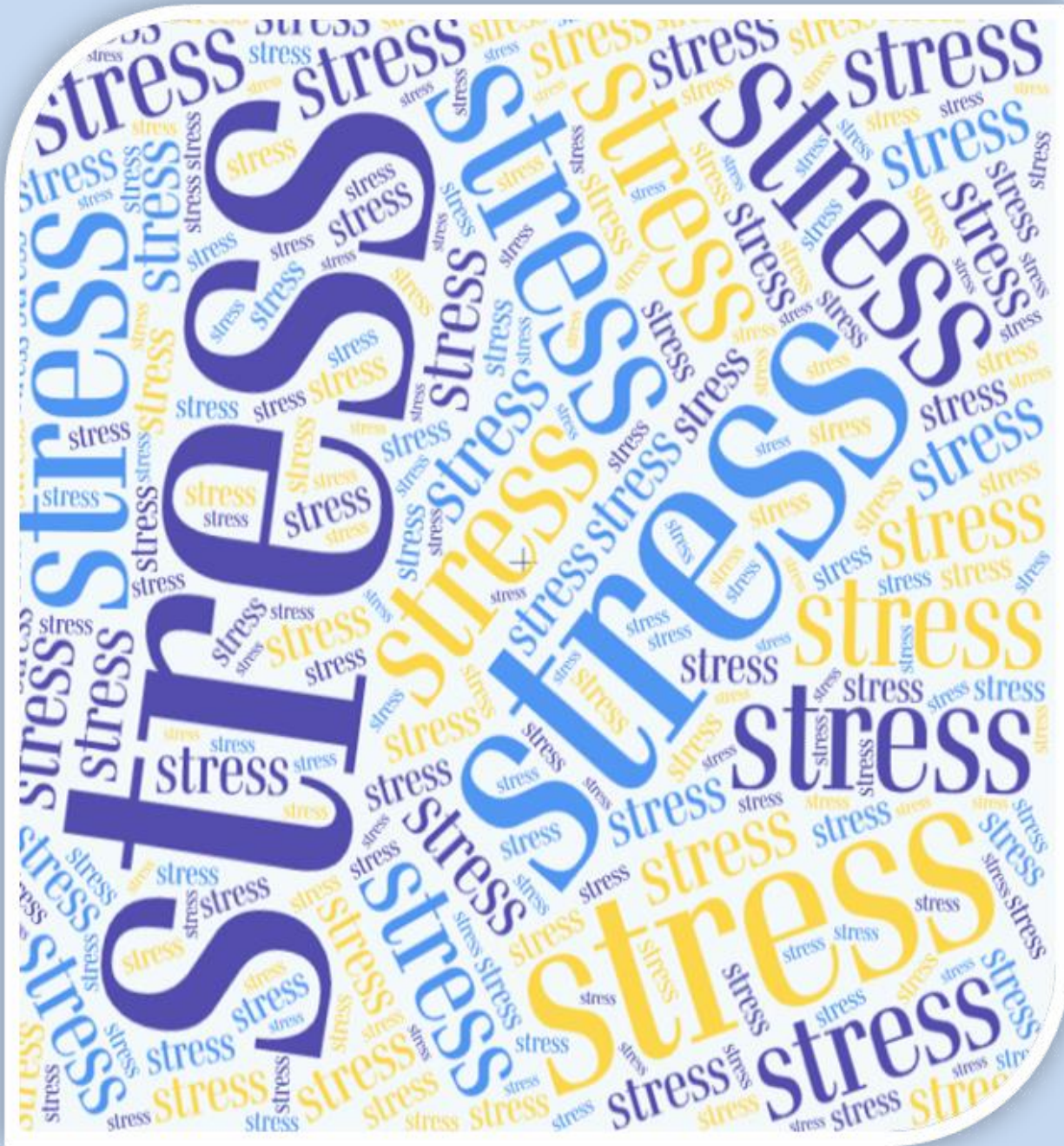


Stress Management Workbook 4



Problem Solving
and Wellbeing

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PROBLEM SOLVING & WELLBEING

The aim of these Wellbeing Workbooks is to help you learn more about stress and the things you can do to help reduce your stress when you feel very worried or anxious.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- There are four workbooks altogether and they should each take around 2 hours to complete
- The workbooks should supplement the information you are learning about mental health in your school classes
- Each workbook has information, exercises and games to help you learn about wellbeing
- The exercises in the workbooks are simply there to aid your learning. You do not have to share any of your answers to the exercises; you can keep them as private as you would like to
- If you are feeling really stressed and think you would like to talk to someone about this, there are phone numbers and websites at the back of this book which might be useful

➤ Problem Solving and Staying Well

At this stage, you may now be able to notice when your behaviour and your thinking are unhelpful, as well as noticing any bodily symptoms associated with stress.

EXERCISE 1: HOW IS LIFE JUST NOW?



On the scale below where would you rate your quality of life this week?

0 _____ 10

As **bad** as it could possibly be

As **good** as it could possibly be

What is happening in your life that might be contributing to you feeling this way?
Record the positive as well as the negative as it may be that you feel okay just now:

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WHAT IS WORRY



An important thing to remember is that feelings largely come from thoughts, so what's going through your mind will affect how you feel. As humans we are more likely to acknowledge how we feel (stressed, angry, sad, anxious, etc.) rather than identifying what we are thinking. For example, if you have money worries you can get caught up in the feeling of panic, fear and anxiety. However, if you can think "I need help to sort my money problem" and "where can you get help", you go into problem solving mode which can help you to feel less emotionally stressed and more in control.

Worry is a thought process driven by uncertainty or fear which either helps us to get things done or which can overwhelm us. As covered in previous workshops, uncertainty and fear drive stress when having to deal with things like money problems, relationship problems, problems at school, worries about fitting in, a relative being unwell, a pet being unwell, assignment deadline and exams.

Worry is a chain of thoughts which usually makes us anxious about future events, to which we then add judgements about our ability to cope with them and ourselves.

IMPACT OF WORRY

Worry can affect our behavior by causing us to do less (to avoid the stressful situation) or do more (to compensate for our worry). When worried our capacity to cope can be diminished and we may need to rely on others more often, rather than being able to cope on our own.

Worry also affects our thinking. When we are worried we tend to see more problems than there are, and make life more difficult than it needs to be. We can even become problem-focused and jump from one worry to the next. In this frame of mind it is much more difficult to make decisions and we can become gloomy.

TACKLING WORRY

When you notice you are stressed ask yourself what is happening.

- When did the worry start?
- What started it this time?
- What's so bad about it?
- What's the worst that could possibly happen?

Now be more specific and ask yourself what you think will happen.

- What is going to happen?
- How likely is this going to happen?

Please keep in mind the information from Session 1 about internal and external stressors - ask yourself:

- Are my worries internal or external?
- How much control do you have over this?





Write down any things that are worrying you or problems you are facing at the moment. Then, write about what you can do about them.

These might be:

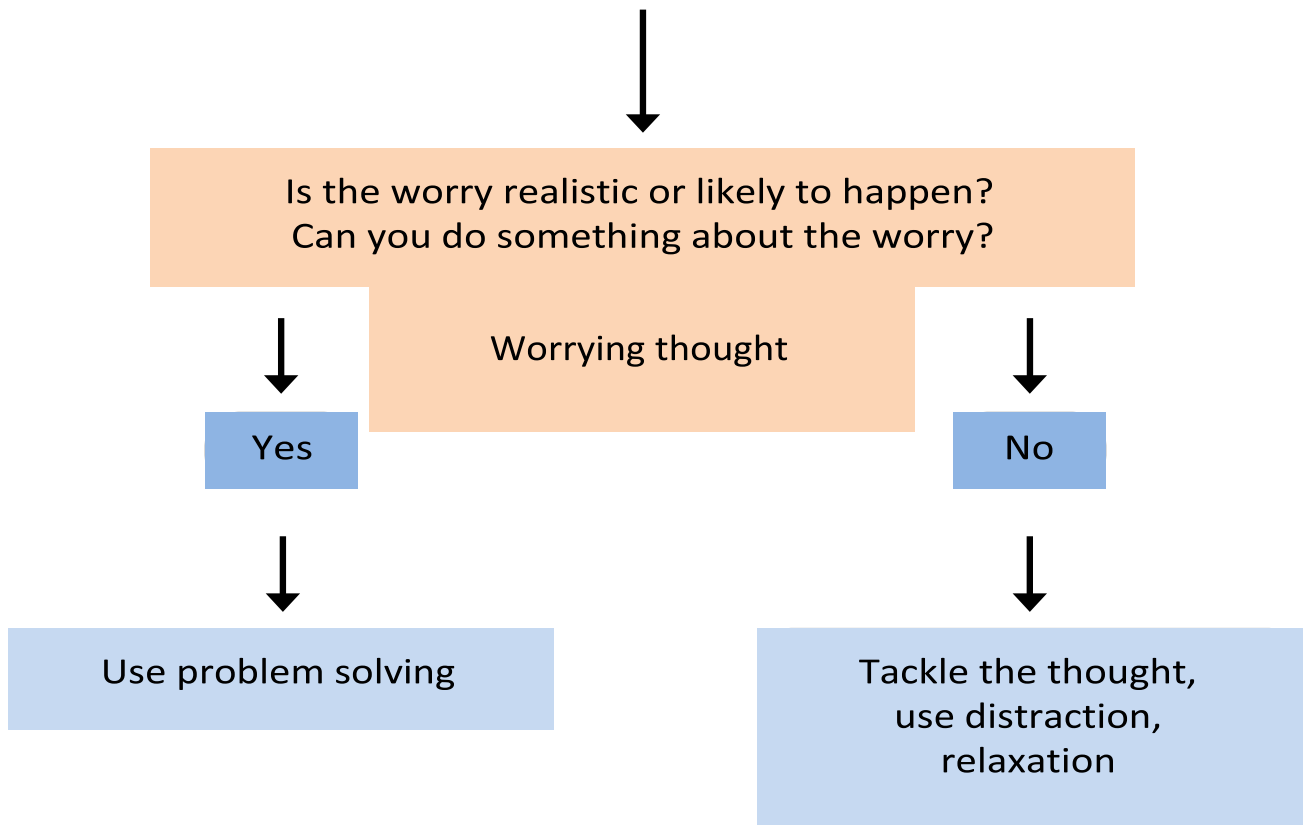
- Money related
- To do with where you are living
- Relationship difficulties
- Your own or someone else's poor health
- Not fitting in at school
- Others - anything at all that causes you to worry

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TACKLING WORRY

When tackling our worries effectively we need to first notice that we are having worrying thoughts. Ask yourself:

- Is the worry realistic or likely to happen?
- What can I do about the worry?



EXERCISE 4



Look back at the worries you wrote down in Exercise 3.
Think about each one:

IS THIS WORRY REALISTIC OR LIKELY TO HAPPEN? CAN YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS WORRY? DO YOU HAVE MUCH CONTROL OVER IT?

Yes

No

Write your worries in either the **YES** column or **NO** column

USE PROBLEM SOLVING

TACKLE THE THOUGHT, USE DISTRACTION, RELAXATION

PROBLEM SOLVING

If you feel overwhelmed with many stresses and worries, then it is useful to be able to break it all down into more manageable parts.

- Everyone at some point in their life has problems or worries.
- Is there anyone that you trust or think may be able to help you?
- Can you talk to them about it?



Instead of thinking you cannot cope with all your worries, try tackling one at a time. It is better to deal with some worries than none at all! Tackling too many problems at once is overwhelming for most people!

Start with the easiest problem first. If you are worried about your parents getting divorced, or worried about your health, or getting an outfit for the school dance next week or buying your friend a gift for her birthday then start with what you think would be easiest.

Once you have broken your problems down you may find that a lot of them can be tackled one at a time.

REVIEW: THE SEVEN STEPS TO PROBLEM SOLVING

1. Make a list of the problems you have been worrying about.
2. Choose which one to tackle first, by arranging your list in order of difficulty and start with what you will find the easiest to tackle first.
3. State clearly and specifically what it is you want to do.
4. Make a list of options and look at the advantages and disadvantages of each one.
5. Choose a solution.
6. Plan the steps to carry it out.
7. Do it and review it.





Seven Steps to Problem Solving

Step 1. Write a list of all the things you have been avoiding.

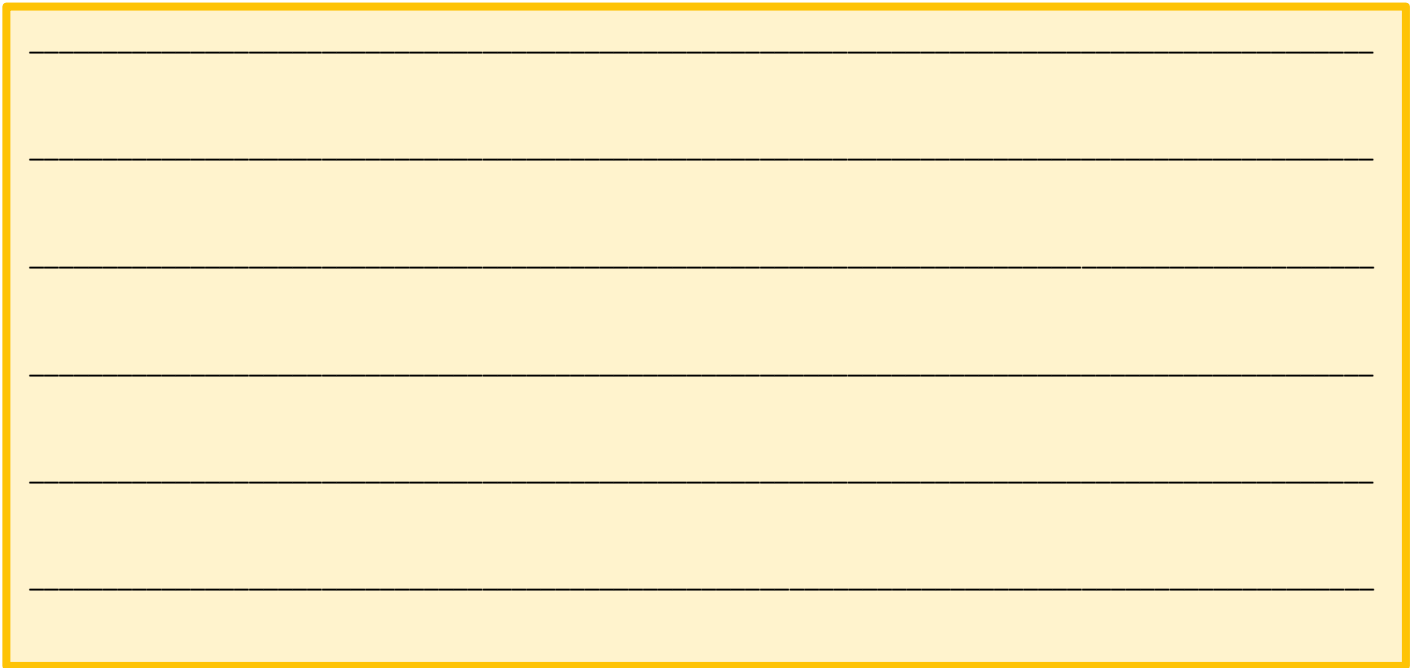
Step 2. From the list, choose ONE thing which you will tackle first.

You could do this by arranging the list in order of difficulty. Start with the thing you will find easiest to tackle, and put the hardest things last

Write your first (easiest) one here:

Step 3. Decide clearly what it is you would like to be able to do.

Give specific details about where, when and how you imagine yourself doing it and getting a positive outcome.



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Step 4. Make a list of possible things you could do to help you achieve this.

In the table, write down your list of ideas to help you reach your goal. Be as creative as you like. This might include a list of any services that you may want to visit and explore if they can help you in anyway e.g. pastoral care teacher, friend. Also, write the Advantages and Disadvantages of each solution you have thought of.

Solution	Advantages	Disadvantages

Step 5. Choose which solution you think is best. Write it here:

Step 6. Plan how you will carry this out. This may be just making a call to speak to someone about your problem to help find a solution or make an appointment.

Give specific details: dates, times, exactly what you will do - all the when's, where's and how's. Look out for little things which might get in your way at the time.

Step 7. Do it & review it

Make a note of how things went - what went well, what didn't go so well, what you have gained from this experience and any ideas for next time. Write your notes here:

Finished! Well done for using the *7 Step method* to problem solving successfully to the end. Use the same *7 Step method* to tackle any other problems you want to solve.



Remember

IF IT WENT WELL

- Acknowledge it and reward yourself
- Share your success with friends and family
- Use the same plan to deal with any other problem that comes along

IF IT DIDN'T GO SO WELL

- Don't be put off
- There may be good reasons why this approach didn't work
- Go back to the list of suggestions and choose another solution



FUTURE PROBLEMS

- Face problems that lie in the future
- Don't just worry about the problems - work out how you are going to deal with them
- Never just wait to see what happens - take control
- Don't leave things to chance - think and plan ahead

WHAT ABOUT WORRIES YOU CANNOT DO ANYTHING ABOUT



What to Do When You Can't Change Things

As has been covered earlier, uncertain situations and fear can lead to stress. You may be worried about changing schools, your performance at school, someone close to you being ill or your friendship with someone. These issues may seem impossible to tackle because of the level of uncertainty involved. Again, ask yourself, "is it an internal or external stress, can I do something about it or not?"

Uncertainty is difficult to handle when the situation is uncontrollable and when you cannot predict what will happen.

As a general rule do what you can and then deal with your reactions to uncertainty.

- Recognise your uncertainty
- Limit the problem
- Are you the only one?
- If you can, keep a regular daily routine
- Be reasonably selfish - deal with your own problem first
- Do not withdraw from enjoyable activities
- Talk to someone else about the problem
- Take the pressure off - do something you enjoy, e.g. relaxation



SOME TIPS TO HELP YOU TACKLE WORRY

- *The 1 year rule*
Will it really matter in a year's time?
- *The whole picture*
Are you looking at the bigger picture?
- *The calculator*
How much worry is the situation worth?

- Ban yourself from worrying about the unimportant
- Keep yourself busy or keep your mind busy with other things
But do not use this as a way of avoiding the task of problem solving

- Ban night time worry
 - At night worries tend to get out of proportion
 - Tell yourself this is not the time to worry
 - Use relaxation techniques
 - If a worry comes into your head, write it down and deal with it in the morning

SUMMARY

- Worry is a chain of unhelpful thoughts about the future
- These thoughts can be unlikely or unrealistic
- Develop a plan for what can be changed
- Accept what cannot be changed

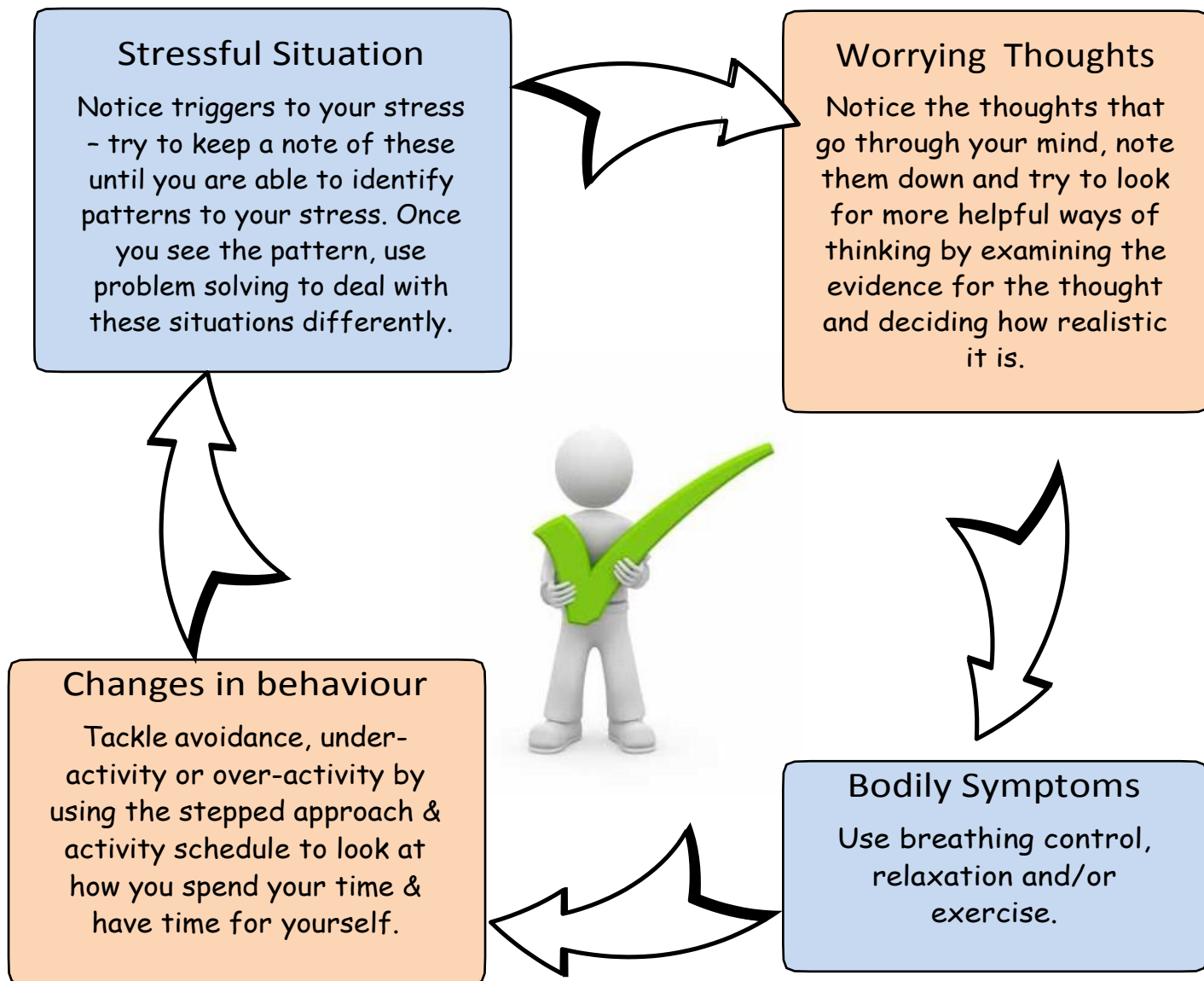


Staying Well

The workshops have highlighted what stress is and ways it can be tackled. Life can be stressful but applying the problem solving techniques in these workshops will support you to tackle stress and to take steps to tackling your worries.

The following diagram highlights the cycle of stress and what you can do to overcome it. The more aware you are of your thoughts, feelings, bodily symptoms and behaviour, the more likely you are to be able to tackle stress.





At the beginning of each session we asked you to mark on 'the scale of change', a scale from 0 to 10, to rate your quality of life. Continue to use this scale to make plans to get you to the next point on the scale and to review where you are. Ask yourself what has changed that got you to that point.

When you are thinking about what to do to move up a point, make sure your goals are realistic and take one step at a time no matter how small.

0 _____ 10

As **bad** as it could possibly be

As **good** as it could possibly be



SETBACKS

If you notice that you are struggling to move up the scale, that's OK. We all suffer setbacks in life which can seem difficult. Applying your learning at those times may help.

Remember that progress is not always smooth or easy and set-backs are common. Try to identify those situations which trigger your stress and explore ways of addressing it using the techniques suggested in these workshops.

Don't panic if you have a set-back. Set-backs are natural and you just need to work out what you can do about it and how you can approach things differently the next time.

A set-back doesn't mean that you are back to square one. Use the scale of change to work out what has changed and why this may have caused you to move back.

Look at what you need to put back into place to get you back to where you were.

What if I am slipping down the scale?

Watch out for early warning signs:

- Bodily symptoms e.g. tension
- Unhelpful behaviour e.g. avoidance
- Unhelpful thinking e.g. catastrophizing
- How you feel e.g. stressed What to do:
- Review your plans
- Put what you have learned into practice
- Have an emergency plan e.g. you may have an agreement with someone who you can phone at any time if you really don't feel you are coping - you could use this as a last resort or use your list of helpline numbers
- Seek additional support
- Talk to people around you - you don't have to cope on your own
- Don't withdraw from those around you as support is important if you are experiencing stress



7 STEPS TO MANAGING STRESS

Life can be a challenge and that's a fact. The more we care for ourselves, the more able we are to meet those challenges without feeling too stressed or overwhelmed. This doesn't mean we won't get overwhelmed at times, but if we incorporate steps to managing stress into our daily routine, it might just help.

The following are the 7 steps to managing stress which is part of the stress management support at the partner agencies. See if you can introduce these into your life and remember if things are getting to you then speak to someone.



Keep stimulants to a minimum

Stay away from excessive amounts of tea, coffee, fizzy drinks with high caffeine levels and alcohol.

Drink at least 2 litres of water a day

Drink water or diluted juice from morning to evening this is important to keep your body hydrated.



Eat a healthy, balanced diet

Eat 3 meals a day never missing breakfast and have fruit or vegetables or fruit juice with every meal.



Take time to relax every day

Listen to a relaxation audio clip or relaxing music every day. Practice slow, regular breathing techniques. Breathe in for 3 seconds and breathe out for 3 seconds. Use the second hand on a clock or watch until you get comfortable with how long 3 seconds is.



Exercise regularly, be active!

Do some sort of exercise or activity at least 3 times a week. Walking, swimming or even housework would count, anything which keeps you active.

Ideally you should be aiming for 10,000 steps a day, buy a pedometer and check your activity levels.

If you have not been active for a while, it is advisable to seek medical advice before starting any exercise regime.



Have fun on a regular basis

Make an effort to have fun if you haven't in a while. Watch a funny video; go out with people who make you laugh, smile just for the fun of it. With practice it will be effortless to have fun.



If something or someone is bothering you, do something about it

If someone or something has upset you and you are holding onto this deal with it, don't just ignore it and allow it to fester.

SUMMARY QUIZ

- 1) What is worry?
 - a. Thought process driven by uncertainty and fear
 - b. Chain of thoughts which usually makes us anxious about the future
 - c. An anxiety disorder
 - d. Both a & b

- 2) Identify one bodily symptom of worry or anxiety
 - a. Slower heart rate
 - b. Feeling relaxed
 - c. Sweating
 - d. Slower breathing

- 3) Put these 7 steps to problem solving in the correct order
 - a. State clearly and specifically what it is you want to do.
 - b. Make a list of options and look at the advantages and disadvantages of each one.
 - c. Plan the steps to carry it out.
 - d. Do it and review it.
 - e. Choose a solution.
 - f. Make a list of the problems you have been worrying about.
 - g. Choose which one to tackle first, by arranging your list in order of difficulty and start with what you will find the easiest to tackle first.

- 4) What might be the best way to tackle worrying about something you don't have control over?
 - a. Distraction
 - b. Relaxation
 - c. Trying to problem solve
 - d. Both a & b

- 5) What might be the best way to tackle worrying about something you do have control over?
 - a. Distraction
 - b. Relaxation
 - c. Trying to problem solve
 - d. Both a & b

Answers: 1-D, 2-C, 3-F, 4-D, 5-C

USEFUL CONTACTS

- Childline
 - Phone: 0800 1111 (free 24 hour)
 - www.childline.org.uk
- Mental Health Foundation
 - Information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities
 - www.mentalhealth.org.uk
- Mind
 - Promotes views and needs of people with mental health problems
 - Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm)
 - Website: www.mind.org.uk
- NHS
 - NHS 24: phone 111
 - www.nhs.org.uk
- PAPYRUS
 - Young suicide prevention
 - Phone: 0800 068 4141 (Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm & 7-10pm. Weekends 2-5pm).
 - www.papyrus-uk.org
- Rethink Mental Illness
 - Support and advice for people living with mental illness
 - Phone: 0800 5000 927 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm)
 - www.rethink.org
- SafeSpot
 - An app and website designed for young people to improve coping skills and access information about mental health
 - Website: www.safespot.org.uk
 - App: available on Google play/Apple store for free
- Samaritans
 - Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair
 - Phone: 116 123 (free, 24hour)
 - www.samaritans.org.uk