

UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS:

CHALLENGING AND TESTING THEM OUT



UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

Welcome!

Well done for getting this far to try and get on top of the emotional difficulty you're currently experiencing, for example, low mood, depression, stress, anger, anxiety. Seeking help can be one of the most difficult steps to make!

The *Unhelpful Thoughts: Challenging and Testing Them Out* workbook is based on an evidence based psychological treatment known as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). It will guide you through two specific CBT techniques called *Thought Challenging and Behavioural Experiments*. These techniques have been shown to help many people experiencing common emotional difficulties such as low mood, depression, or anxiety.

This workbook is designed to be supported by a mental health professional trained to help people get the most out of it. This may be a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner, or often shortened to PWP, working within the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies

(IAPT) programme in England. Given the success of this way of working, similar roles to that of PWP working have also become increasingly available in other countries.

You are in control of the way you choose to work through this workbook. Therefore, the speed you want to go is down to you alongside how you put the techniques you'll learn into practice.

So What is Thought Challenging and Behavioural Experiments?

Having unhelpful thoughts is something we all experience. These unhelpful thoughts may upset us, but usually we are able to move on quickly with what we are doing.

However, sometimes unhelpful thoughts can be so powerful they are difficult to ignore and control. This is especially the case when we are experiencing a common mental health problem, such as depression or anxiety. Unhelpful thoughts may feel so overwhelming and distressing they can influence how we behave and even how we feel physically, having a further negative impact on our mood. This can maintain what we call a vicious cycle, which we'll talk more about later in the workbook.

The techniques presented in this workbook are based on two evidence-based techniques for the treatment of common emotional difficulties called *Thought Challenging and Behavioural Experiments*. These techniques can help break into that vicious cycle, which can keep unhelpful and distressing emotions going and a lot of research has found these techniques to be effective, especially for people experiencing difficult life events and other problems.

Thought Challenging is a technique to help you reduce the impact of your unhelpful thoughts. Instead, you will learn how to recognise and challenge your unhelpful thoughts by examining evidence for and against them. This will help you create new more balanced thoughts. *Behavioural Experiments* then provide a way to test out these new balanced thoughts in everyday life if you feel this may be of additional benefit. This can be helpful as sometimes, although we may have created a more balanced thought, we might still find ourselves

not believing it very much. *Behavioural Experiments* can therefore help us put the new revised more balanced thought into action – providing us with more believable evidence for our new thought.

Before we get started, it's important to find out a little bit more about the techniques used in the *Unhelpful Thoughts: Challenging and Testing Them Out* workbook. You are then more able to decide whether using these techniques is best for you. You will also be helped to identify if there's anything that may get in the way of you getting the most out of the workbook.

To find out more about the *Unhelpful Thoughts: Challenging and Testing Them Out*, let's hear a little about Robert's story and how he used this approach to overcome his depression. Remember, whilst Robert's story is focused on his struggles with depression and low mood, the approach may also be equally useful for people who are stressed or anxious. ▶

If you are experiencing stress or anxiety, and need some support identifying how you might apply the techniques used in this workbook, speak with your PWP or anyone else who may be supporting you.

Robert's Story



I am 47 years old and started feeling low after my marriage broke down 18 months ago. Over time I found myself feeling more and more depressed. I gradually lost contact with a lot of mutual friends – I was pretty certain they sided with my ex-wife. I only saw my two children, Amy and Olivia, every other weekend, which I found really difficult.

I felt like a failure and blamed myself for the breakdown of our marriage. As the months slipped by I found myself doing less and less and I wasn't speaking to friends. If I wasn't seeing my children at the weekend I would stay in bed for hours, and even when I dragged myself out of bed I would spend the day staring at the TV.

My low mood was also impacting on my work. I had really poor concentration and found myself forgetting a lot of important tasks. I then became worried my boss thought I was useless, sure I was going to lose my job. I was also really struggling keeping on top of things like bills at home. Since the divorce I was having quite a few financial difficulties and the unpaid bills were piling up. All this just made me feel like I was even more of a failure and slowly began to stress me out too!

I wanted to get on top of these unhelpful emotions but I had no idea where to start. I went to speak to my GP about how I was feeling and he recommended I saw a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP). At first, I was really unsure. I just couldn't see how speaking with someone could help with all my problems. However, about a month later I had an appointment with my PWP, Hannah. She asked me a lot of questions about the things going through my head, how I felt in my body, things I was doing more or less of and how I was feeling.

Initially, all these questions seemed a bit odd and I could not see how they were really that relevant to me. However, when Hannah related my difficulties to something called a **Vicious Cycle Worksheet** it started to make sense. For the first time, I could see that *what I did, what I was thinking and how I felt physically and emotionally* all impacted on one another and made things even worse. Hannah also explained that she supported people to use approaches based on a psychological therapy called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, or CBT for short. With CBT I could look to break the **Vicious Cycle** by either focusing on changing my thoughts, or changing my behaviour. I explained to Hannah I was really struggling with a lot of overwhelming and upsetting negative thoughts I really wanted to try to get on top of.

Hannah explained how she worked with a supported self-help approach based around a self-help workbook called *Unhelpful Thoughts: Challenging and Testing Them Out*. She explained how the approach was made up of two techniques called *Thought Challenging and Behavioural Experiments*. At first, the idea of challenging my thoughts seemed pretty odd – especially as I was pretty convinced my negative thoughts about myself and other things were true! However, Hannah explained *Thought Challenging and Behavioural Experiments* would help me recognise that thoughts can just be thoughts – and not necessarily facts! She explained how I would work through the *Unhelpful Thoughts: Challenging and Testing Them Out* workbook in my own time, but that she would support me every week to keep me on track and help me overcome any difficulties if I ran into them.

Each support session would last about half-an-hour and given how busy work was for me, this sounded just about manageable.

Over the coming weeks, Hannah helped me work through the workbook. First of all, She asked me to complete a **Thought Diary Worksheet** whenever I felt low or down. She also suggested I read through some information on *Unhelpful Thinking Styles*. This would help both of us understand some of the unhelpful thoughts I was experiencing and how they are linked to how I was

feeling. When I started to write down all my thoughts I realised just how many there were and it all seemed a bit much. However, when reading through the information on **Unhelpful Thinking Styles**, I realised that although I was having a lot of difficult thoughts, a lot of the most troubling were related to the negative view of how others see you thinking style. Hannah explained in our next session that recognising our **Unhelpful Thinking Styles** can make it easier for us to become more aware of our thoughts, as well as recognising them as just thoughts, and not necessarily facts.

Next, I had to pick the thought I wanted to work on – the thought causing me the most distress – known as a **Hot Thought**. Whilst I was experiencing a range of different unhelpful and troubling thoughts we decided to work on “*None of my friends want to be around me anymore. No one likes me*”. This one seemed to cause me real difficulties. Not least as it made me feel so low that it actually got in the way of me trying to sort out other things causing me to be stressed and anxious. Hannah said how this can often be the case, and where people were experiencing both low mood and were stressed, sometimes working on the low mood first could actually help them address some of those things causing stress as well.

I rated the strength of this thought at 90% and wrote this thought at the top of my **Thought Challenging Worksheet**. The next step was to gather evidence for and against this **Hot Thought**. Hannah explained that the *Revised, More Balanced Thought*

Column on the **Thought Challenging Worksheet** was there to help me get a more balanced view on the situation. Hannah and I decided I would complete the evidence for and against my **Hot Thought** for ‘homework’ and try to come up with a *Revised, More Balanced Thought*. I found gathering evidence for this thought quite easy, but struggled with identifying evidence against it. Using the **Gathering Evidence Against the Hot Thought: Questions to Ask Yourself** section in the workbook helped me come up with a little bit of evidence against my **Hot Thought**, but I really struggled to come up with a *Revised, More Balanced Thought*. However, when I saw Hannah for my next appointment she explained that when learning a new skill, it usually takes time and a few attempts before it starts working. She suggested I look at the **Evidence for my Hot Thought** and consider how much evidence was fact, and how much was opinion. In hindsight, I recognised some of this evidence was more opinion than fact and I had fallen into the **Unhelpful Thinking Styles** trap again. After reconsidering the evidence, I actually found there was very little **Evidence for my Hot Thought** and I managed to come up with a *Revised, More Balanced Thought* – “*I do have friends who care about me, I just need to make more effort to see them*”. Whilst only having 50% belief in this thought however, it still made me feel sad. Hannah explained that sometimes, although we might logically think something to be true, we just don’t **feel it**. In these cases, Behavioural Experiments can be a way of testing your thoughts in everyday

life. Together, we planned a Behavioural Experiment to test out my new thought using the **Behavioural Experiments Plan Worksheet**. I decided to contact one of my oldest friends, Steve, and ask him out for a drink. This actually went much better than I had predicted and Steve was really pleased to hear from me and we had a great time catching up. I now believed much more in my revised thought!

Over time things really started to improve for me. I even managed to start challenging my negative thoughts in the moment – something called **Thought Catching**. Doing this really helped with those other thoughts that made me feel stressed and anxious as well. For the first time in ages I actually felt I could take the things causing me to be stressed on. I still have days when I feel down and times I feel stressed and anxious, but feel much more in control of my negative thoughts and things feel much less overwhelming. I’m now back in contact with a lot of old friends and much more on top of work and my finances.

Finally, I seem to be regaining some control over my life and feel able to enjoy things again!

What is Depression or Low Mood?

Depression or low mood is common. During their lifetime, around 1 in 5 people will experience depression or low mood to such an extent that it has a significant impact on their lives. People with depression may find themselves giving up activities they used to do, feeling down or flat, tired and exhausted and experiencing difficult, unhelpful thoughts.

Although there are lots of theories about what causes depression, experts are still uncertain as to any specific cause, but here are some possibilities:

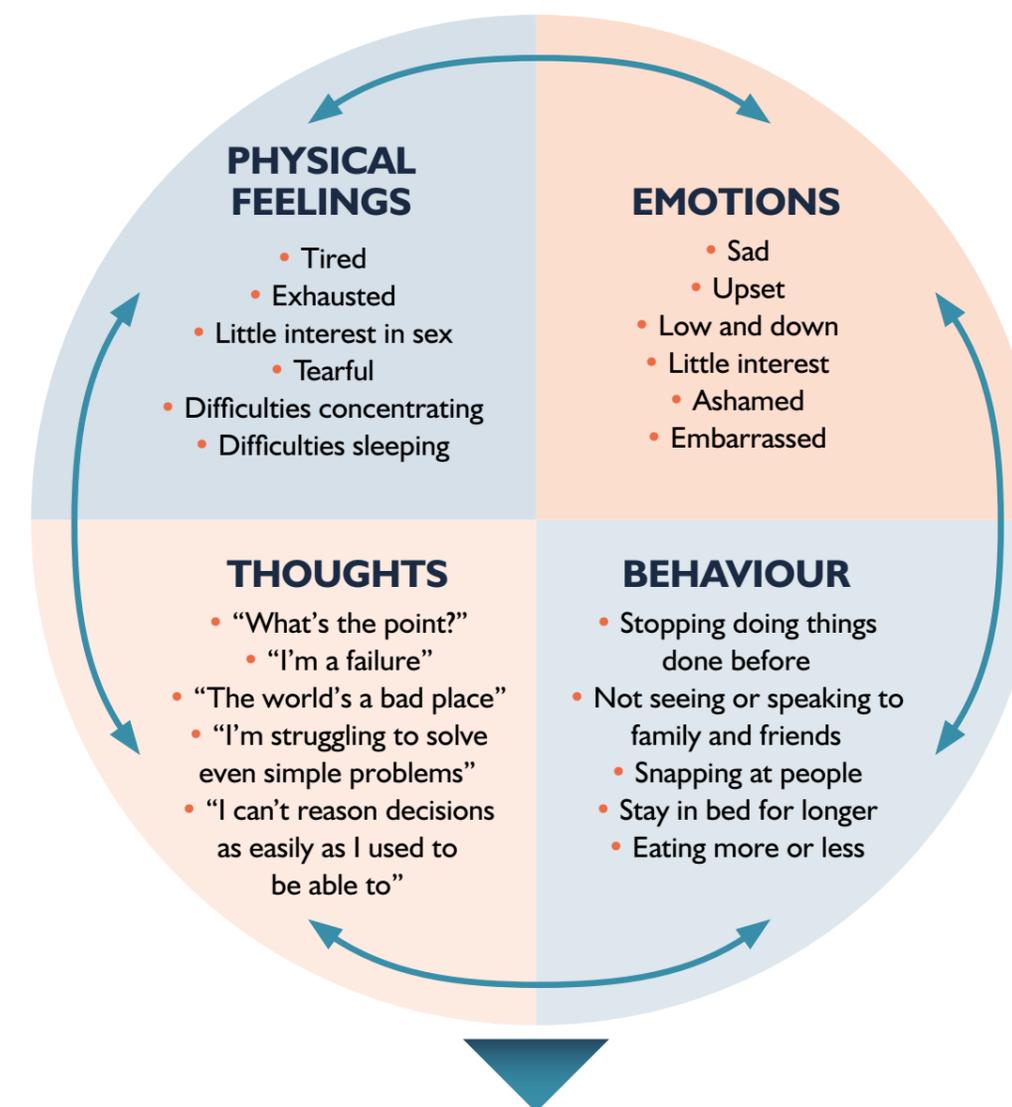
- Triggered by difficult and stressful life events.
- Giving up activities of importance, value and enjoyment.
- Thoughts going round and round in our heads becoming unhelpful and negative.
- Low levels of a chemical in the brain called serotonin.

Whilst any of these possibilities may contribute to our mood, it's likely the way we feel is influenced by a mixture of them.

What Does Depression Look Like?

Although depression and low mood are experienced by people in different ways there are a number of common signs and symptoms.

These are related to four main areas and may include things like:



Like a vicious cycle, each of these areas has a knock-on effect on the others and can impact on significant areas of life such as work, relationships and hobbies.

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is also common, and indeed sometimes can be helpful when a normal response to danger and stress. However, sometimes anxiety can become severe, frequent and unhelpful. Around 1 in 3 people will experience difficulty with anxiety during their lifetime to such an extent it has a significant impact on their lives. There are a number of different types of anxiety disorder, such as specific phobias, panic disorder and generalised anxiety disorder. If you are experiencing difficulties with anxiety your PWP, or anyone else who may be supporting you, will be able to help you identify the specific type of anxiety you are experiencing.

Although there are lots of theories about what causes anxiety, experts are still uncertain as to any specific cause. But here are some possibilities:

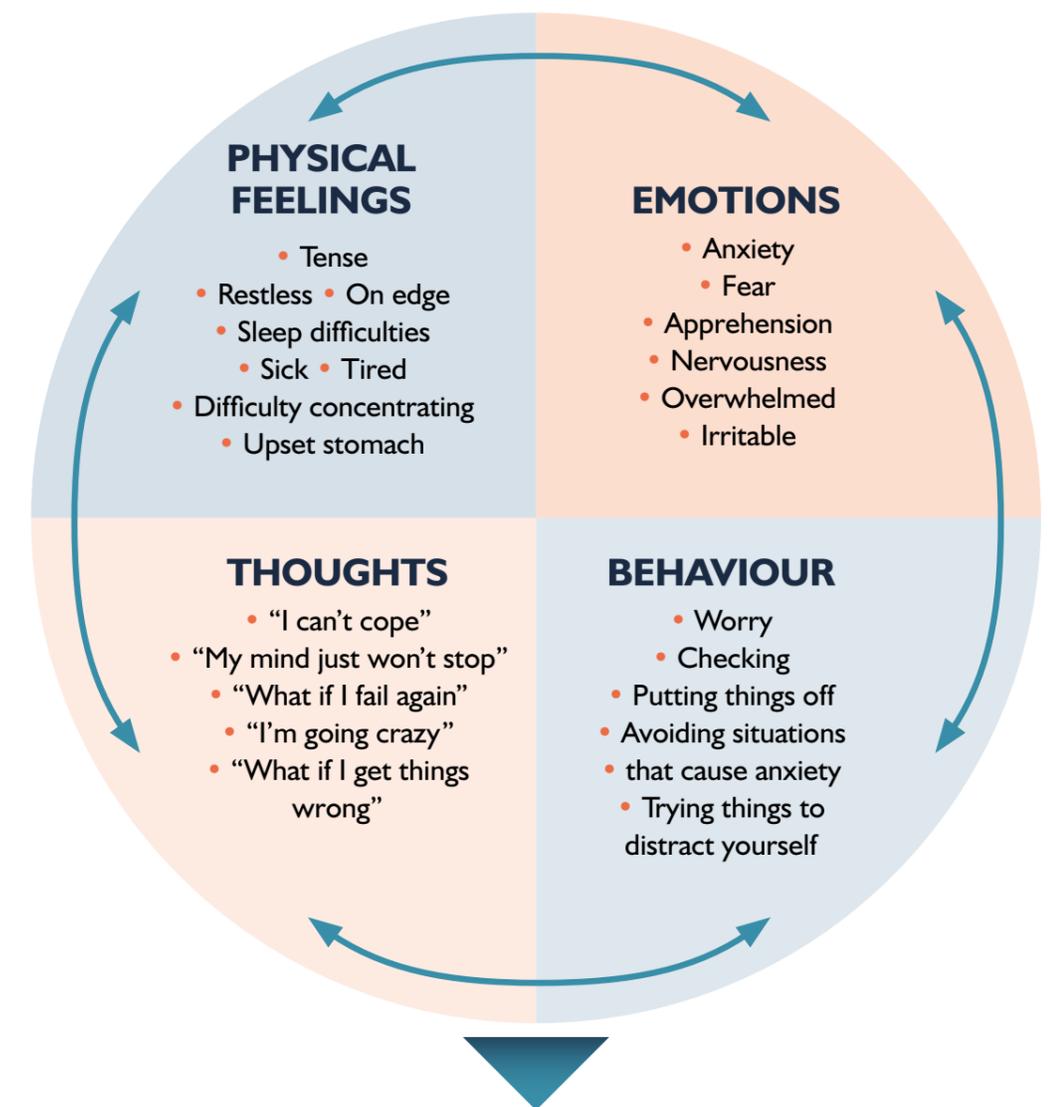
- Triggered by difficult and stressful life events.
- Family history of mental health difficulties.
- Thoughts going around and around in our heads becoming unhelpful and negative.
- An imbalance of neurotransmitters (brain chemicals) such as serotonin, norepinephrine and gamma-aminobutyric acid.

Whilst any of these possibilities may contribute to anxiety, as with depression, it's likely the way we feel is influenced by a mixture of them.

What Does Anxiety Look Like?

Different anxiety disorders are experienced by people in different ways, however there are a number of common signs and symptoms.

These are related to four main areas and may include things like:



Again, like a vicious cycle, each of these areas has a knock-on effect on the others and can impact on significant areas of life such as work, relationships and hobbies.

In order to gain a further understanding of what a vicious cycle looks like, have a look at the Vicious Cycle Worksheet completed for Robert below. Remember, this is a

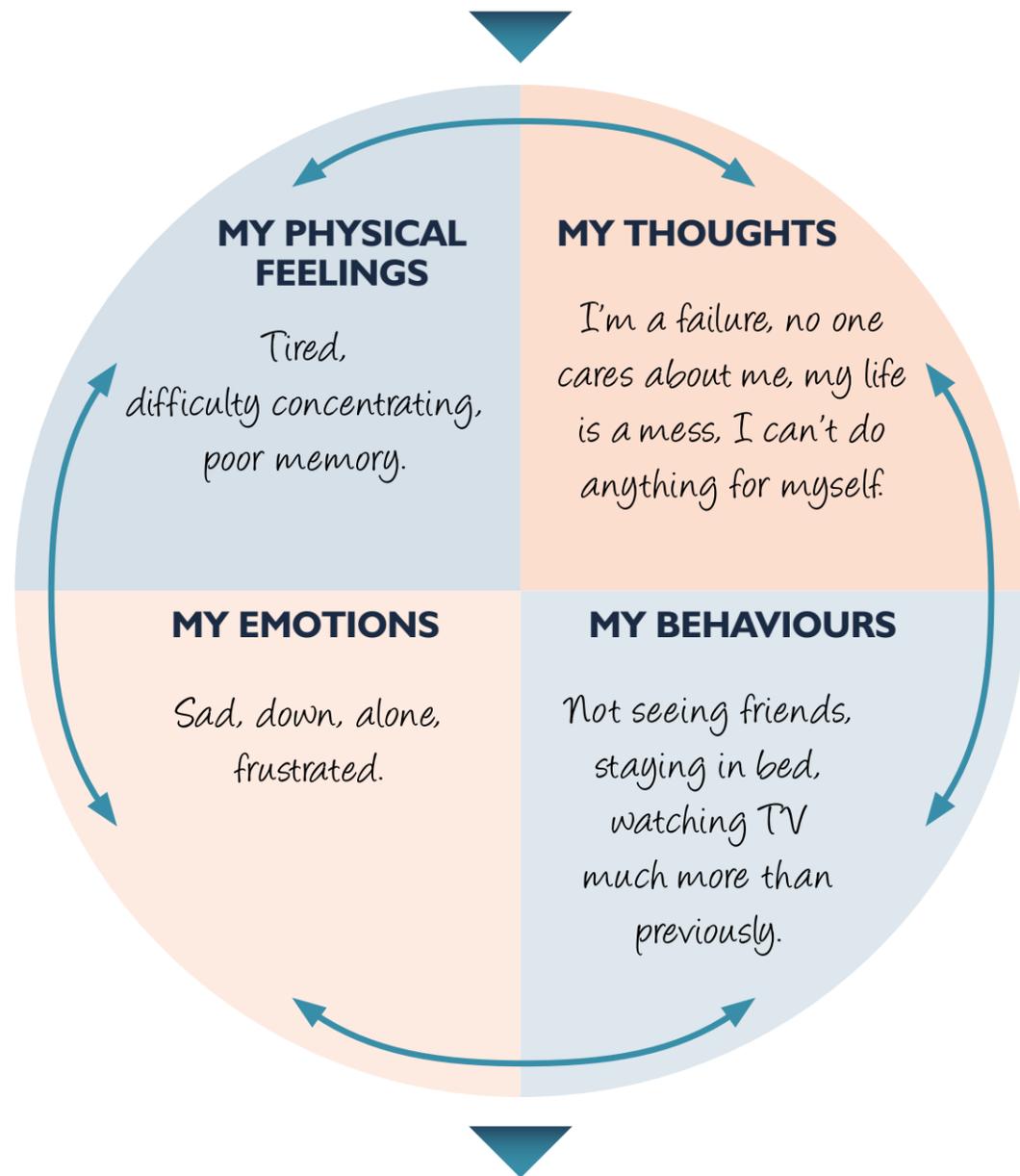
vicious cycle of low mood and depression. However the vicious cycle is also applicable for difficulties with anxiety. You can then fill in your own vicious cycle on the next page.



Robert's Vicious Cycle Worksheet For His Low Mood

MY SITUATION

I got divorced.

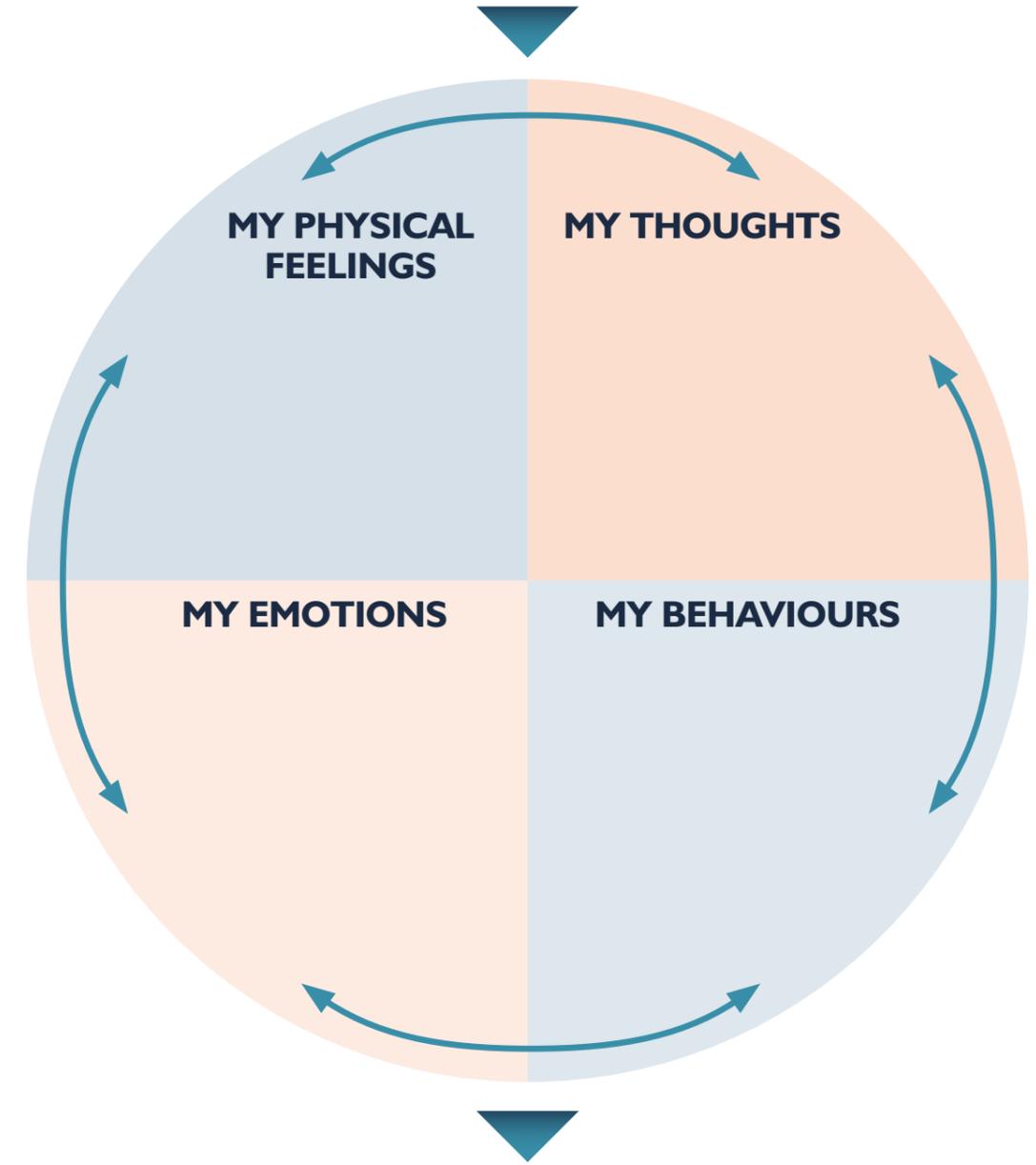


IMPACT

I feel really isolated from my friends. My finances feel out of control, and I don't know how to manage them.

My Vicious Circle Worksheet

MY SITUATION



IMPACT

Setting Goals

Now you've completed your Vicious Cycle Worksheet, the next step is to begin to think about setting yourself some goals you'd like to achieve by the time you've completed this workbook.

When setting goals it's important to think about the following ►

Top Tips

Be Specific

It's important to set specific goals you'd like to achieve by the time you have completed this workbook. People often think about setting broad goals for themselves such as "feel better" or "not feeling as anxious". However, it can be hard to know if, or when, a goal like this has been achieved. So instead, when setting goals, think about how you would know you were not feeling as low, depressed or anxious. Try thinking about the type of things you might be doing then set more specific goals around these things. For example, "I would like to be able to walk into town at least twice a week".

Be Realistic

To begin with, it's important to set yourself some goals you feel you can realistically achieve over the next few weeks. Therefore, think about initially setting yourself **Short Term Goals** – goals that are just out of reach, but not out of sight, and begin working towards these before moving onto goals that are **Medium** or **Long Term**. However, it's still worth thinking about Medium and Long Term goals at this point, as they may begin to look more achievable when using this programme and your low mood, depression or anxiety begins to lift.

Be Positive

It can be tempting to consider stating goals in terms of doing less or stopping something. For example "watch less TV" or "I will stop putting things off at work". However, as far as possible it's often more helpful if goals can be expressed in a more positive way, or as striving towards something. Rather than "watch less TV", think about what you might do instead. For example, "Take up painting again". Or, rather than "I will stop putting things off at work", think about some of the benefits you may have from achieving this goal. For example, "I will strive to get on with more things I am given to do at work, and see how far I get with them before seeking any help if I need it".



Here is an example of Robert's goals:

Robert's Goals Worksheet

GOAL 1	Today's Date: Monday 23rd November						
	Go for a drink with my oldest friend Steve.						
	I can do this now (circle a number):						
	0 Not at all	1	2 Sometimes	3	4 Often	5	6 Anytime

GOAL 2	Today's Date: Monday 23rd November.						
	Contact the electric company about a difficulty paying the bill.						
	I can do this now (circle a number):						
	0 Not at all	1	2 Sometimes	3	4 Often	5	6 Anytime

Now you've seen the **Short Term** goals that Robert set for himself, using the **Goals Worksheet** on the next page, it's time to set some **Short Term** goals for yourself.



My Goals Worksheet

GOAL 1	Today's Date:						
	I can do this now (circle a number):						
	0 Not at all	1	2 Sometimes	3	4 Often	5	6 Anytime

GOAL 2	Today's Date:						
	I can do this now (circle a number):						
	0 Not at all	1	2 Sometimes	3	4 Often	5	6 Anytime

GOAL 3	Today's Date:						
	I can do this now (circle a number):						
	0 Not at all	1	2 Sometimes	3	4 Often	5	6 Anytime

GOAL 4	Today's Date:						
	I can do this now (circle a number):						
	0 Not at all	1	2 Sometimes	3	4 Often	5	6 Anytime

GOAL 5	Today's Date:						
	I can do this now (circle a number):						
	0 Not at all	1	2 Sometimes	3	4 Often	5	6 Anytime

Well Done Getting This Far

Now it's time to start working through Thought Challenging and Behavioural Experiments. This may sound a bit daunting! But remember you're in control of how much you do at any time, and you do have support.

Sometimes progress will be slow and setbacks will happen. This is perfectly normal and to be expected. If you find yourself facing

difficulties, speak with your PWP or anyone else who may be supporting you.

Stage 1:

Understanding the Power of Our Thoughts

From completing your **Vicious Cycle Worksheet**, you may have noticed the impact your thoughts are having on your emotions, how you feel physically and how you behave. Understanding the impact of our unhelpful thinking can mean we can target this area of the vicious cycle through **Thought Challenging**.

Unhelpful thoughts can be so powerful they can be difficult to ignore. Sometimes, trying to ignore unhelpful thoughts can actually make us think about them more often.

Also, when we're experiencing problems or difficulties in our life, unhelpful thoughts can be more common and difficult to control.

To understand the power of our thoughts, imagine the following situation:

You are walking down your local high street. You see a friend walking down the other side of the road. You wave and shout hello at them, but they carry on walking and don't respond.

You might think:

"They are ignoring me. I must have done something to upset them"

This might leave you feeling sad or guilty. You might go home and worry you have done something to upset them. Alternatively, you might think:

*"They are ignoring me!
How dare they ignore me!"*

This thought may leave you feeling angry. You might find yourself feeling hot and sweaty. You might change your behaviour by shouting at them, or sending a text message demanding to know why they were ignoring you.

The content of our thoughts does not just influence our emotions, but can also change the way we feel physically and also how we behave. These changes can have a serious impact on our life.

Now we know a little more about how powerful our thoughts can be, we will start to work through **Stage 2: Thought Challenging** to help you with your difficulties.

Stage 2:

Thought Challenging

Now we'll start to work through the 4 Steps of Thought Challenging. This technique will help you begin to tackle your unhelpful thoughts by helping you to examine your thoughts in more detail and begin to challenge them.

Step 1	Identify Your Unhelpful Thoughts
Step 2	Label Your Unhelpful Thinking Styles
Step 3	Challenge Your Thoughts
Step 4	Revise Your Hot Thought



Step 1: Identify Your Unhelpful Thoughts

First, use the **Thought Diary Worksheet** on page 23 to record your unhelpful thoughts as they occur. To begin with, fill out the first 3 columns of this worksheet: **Situation**,

Emotion and **Thought** and leave **Unhelpful Thinking Style** blank – we'll come back to this column later.

Situation:

To begin with, think about a recent situation where you noticed you were experiencing a change in your emotions for the worse. For example, feeling low or anxious. It's important to try and be as specific as possible by writing down the 4 Ws:

- **When** was the situation
- **What** were you doing
- **Where** were you
- **Who** were you with

Emotion:

Next, write down the emotion you had in the situation as well as how much you experienced the emotion on a scale of 0-100% where 0% is not at all, and 100% is the worst it could be.

Thought:

Finally, write down what was going through your mind at the time. Some people might have one thought going round and round. Others may have lots of different thoughts. If you find yourself having lots of different thoughts, you don't need to write them all down, but instead write down the most powerful thoughts. Sometimes people might experience a thought as an image rather than words. If you find this is the case, try to write a description of the image you had.

For each thought you write down also record how much you currently believe that thought on a scale of 0 –100 %. 0 % is not at all, 100 % is total belief in the thought.

*Before you begin to complete your own **Thought Diary Worksheet**, let's have a look at **Robert's Thought Diary Worksheet** related to the low mood he was experiencing.*



Robert's Thought Diary Worksheet

Situation Describe when it was, what you were doing, where you were, and who was with you.	Emotion Write down the emotion(s) you felt and how strong this emotion was (0-100%)		Thought Write down the thoughts(s) you had and how strong this thought was (0-100%)		Unhelpful Thinking Style For example, 'jumping to the worst conclusion'
When: Friday evening. What: Saw on Facebook some of my friends had gone out for drinks without me. Where: In my lounge. Who: On my own.	Sad	%	None of my friends want to be around me anymore. No one likes me.	%	Negative view of how others see you.
		90%	90%		
When: Saturday morning. What: Got an electric bill reminder in the post. Where: Home. Who: On my own.	Overwhelmed	%	I can't do anything on my own. I'm useless.	%	Being your own worst critic.
		80%	85%		
When: Monday afternoon. What: Forgot to send an important email at work. Where: In the office. Who: On my own.	Frustrated	%	My boss must think I'm useless. He is bound to sack me sooner or later.	%	Negative view of how others see you.
		80%	75%		

My Thought Diary Worksheet

As situations arise during the week, record them in this worksheet.

Situation Describe when it was, what you were doing, where you were, and who was with you.	Emotion Write down the emotion(s) you felt and how strong this emotion was (0-100%)		Thought Write down the thoughts(s) you had and how strong this thought was (0-100%)		Unhelpful Thinking Style For example, 'jumping to the worst conclusion'
When: What: Where: Who:		%		%	
When: What: Where: Who:		%		%	
When: What: Where: Who:		%		%	

Step 2: Label Your Unhelpful Thinking Styles

When we experience unhelpful thoughts, it can be very difficult to tell that they are just thoughts – and not facts. This is because unhelpful thoughts can feel very powerful and believable.

To help us to recognise when we are having unhelpful thoughts, it can be helpful to understand the different types of unhelpful thoughts we have. These are called **Unhelpful Thinking Styles**.

Unhelpful Thinking Styles:

Being your own worst critic

I am stupid and no use to anyone

Negative view of how others see you

They only agreed to go for a drink with me because they feel sorry for me

Having a gloomy view of the future

There is no point trying. I will never get better

Jumping to the worst conclusion / catastrophising

My pulse is racing again. I may pass out

Unfairly taking responsibility

My son failed his maths exam. It's my fault. I'm a lousy parent.

Making extreme overgeneralising statements or rules

I made a mistake at work. I always mess everything up.

Being aware of the **Types of Thinking Styles** we have can help us to:

- Recognise our unhelpful thoughts more easily and therefore do something about them.
- Recognise our unhelpful thoughts are most likely just thoughts rather than facts. This can make it easier for us to challenge them.

Next, go back to your **Thought Diary Worksheet** on page 23 and label each thought with the Unhelpful Thinking Style you think it falls under.

Step 3: Challenge Your Thoughts

The next step is to challenge your thoughts by examining the evidence for and against it.

First, choose a thought from your **Thought Diary Worksheet** that causes you the most distress and has the strongest link to the emotion you've identified. This is called your **Hot Thought**. Where possible, it's helpful to work on a thought with at least **60% belief** and emotion **60% strong**.

Write your **Hot Thought** at the top of your **Thought Challenging Worksheet**

on page 28 with the strength of the belief in this thought. Next you will put your **Hot Thought** on trial, by gathering evidence for and against it. It's important the evidence you record is based on 'fact' rather than 'opinion'.

Your PWP can help you separate opinion from fact if you find this difficult at first. Often people find it easier to begin with gathering Evidence for the **Hot Thought** first. Write the evidence supporting your thought into your **Thought Challenging Worksheet**.

Next, move onto recording **Evidence Against the Hot Thought** in your **Thought Challenging Worksheet**. It's common to find this difficult to do at first. However, like all new skills, over time it will become easier. If you find yourself struggling

with this, chat to your PWP or the other person supporting you. At times you may also find it helpful to ask for help from someone you trust, like a family member or friend.

Gathering Evidence Against the Hot Thought: Questions to Ask Yourself

To help you gather **Evidence Against the Hot Thought** you may find it helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

What would I say to a friend who had this thought in a similar situation?

What evidence would my friends or family give me against this thought?

If I rate the belief in my Hot Thought as 85% then there is 15% of the thought I don't believe to be true. What makes up that 15%?

If I wasn't feeling this way, would I believe this? If not, why?

Am I looking at the whole picture, or is there another way of looking at this situation?

Will this matter in 6 months' time? If not, why?

You can see Robert's **Thought Challenging Worksheet** on the next page.

Robert's Thought Challenging Worksheet

My Hot Thought:		Strength %
None of my friends want to be around me anymore. No one likes me.		90%
Evidence for My Hot Thought	Evidence Against My Hot Thought	
John told me he didn't want to be around me any more as I'm no fun.	My oldest friend sent me a text last week to see how I was doing.	
Some of my friends went out without me for drinks.	I was invited out for drinks with colleagues the other week after work.	
Since I got divorced I heard Aki say I was a loser and no-one wanted to be around me.	Sam at work could see I was upset and asked me to go to the rugby.	

▶ IMPORTANT

Try to avoid creating a revised thought which is too much in the opposite direction.

Your Hot Thought was unhelpful because it was an extreme way of thinking. Extreme thinking in either a negative or positive way can be unhelpful. Instead, try to create a more balanced thought.

My Revised More Balanced Thought Worksheet



My Revised Thought:		My Belief in My Revised Thought (0-100%)
The Original Emotion I Felt:	Strength of this Emotion in Light of My Revised Thought (0-100%)	

▶ IMPORTANT

- Changing the way we think takes time and effort. It can take a few weeks to start noticing your hard work is paying off.
- Over time the steps should become easier. However, suddenly you may have a thought which is really difficult to challenge. If you find yourself struggling with this, chat to your PWP or other person supporting you.
- Although many of our unhelpful thoughts are just thoughts and not facts, sometimes you may find an unhelpful thought to be true. Understandably this can be distressing. However, sometimes realising that there may be some features in our unhelpful thoughts that may have some truth in them can be the first step to sorting out a problem or difficulty. Once again, if this is the case, chat to your PWP or other person supporting you.

Help! I Don't Have Much Belief in My Revised, More Balanced Thought

Sometimes people find they don't have much belief in their Revised, More Balanced Thought the first time round. This is completely understandable as learning any new skill, such as changing the way we think, takes time and practice. Over the coming weeks have a go at Thought Challenging with other thoughts that arise.

Another helpful way to increase the strength of your belief in your **Revised, More Balanced Thought** is to test it out

in everyday life. We'll learn more about testing your thoughts in the next part of this workbook: **Stage 3: Behavioural Experiments**. However, you only need to work through this stage if you find yourself having little belief in your **Revised, More Balanced Thought**. If you are unsure about whether you need to work through Stage 3, chat to your PWP or other person supporting you. If you don't need Stage 3 then great news and move straight to **Stage 4: Thought Catching** on page 39.

Stage 3:

Behavioural Experiments

Although we may be able to create a Revised More, Balanced Thought and logically think it to be true, sometimes we may just not ‘feel’ it – we may not believe it enough. This can happen when there is a lag between what we may logically know to be true and how we feel about it.

When this is the case, it can help to stop gathering evidence against your **Hot Thought** on paper and actually try and test out your thought in everyday life through a technique called *Behavioural Experiments*. This can be very powerful, as learning through experience may provide you with evidence you have greater belief in. Behavioural Experiments can help you to test the truth of a **Hot Thought**, or put a **Revised, More Balanced Thought** into

action. However, remember if you feel **Thought Challenging** has been enough and your depression or anxiety has begun to lift you may not need to move to *Behavioural Experiments*. Discussing this more with your PWP or other person supporting you may help you decide.

If you feel moving on to *Behavioural Experiments* will be helpful then these are the **3 Steps** we will start to work through:

Step 1 Plan Your Behavioural Experiment

Step 2 Do Your Behavioural Experiment

Step 3 Review Your Behavioural Experiment

Step 1: Plan Your Behavioural Experiment

Using the **My Behavioural Experiments Plan Worksheet** on page 35, write down the thought you want to test in the **Thought to be Put into Action** column. This may be a **Hot Thought**, or a **Revised, More Balanced Thought**. Rate your current belief in this thought (0-100%).

Next, plan how you are going to test out the thought – how are you going to *put the thought into action*? It’s important to try and be as specific as possible by writing down the 4 Ws in the **Designing the Experiment** column.

- **What** are you going to do
- **When** are you going to do it
- **Where** are you going to do it
- **Who** are you going to do it with

In the **Predicting the Worst** column, write down the worst thing you think could happen and rate how likely you think this is to happen on a scale of 0-100%. Next, predict an alternative outcome and write in it the **Predicting an Alternative** column.

This might be another bad thing, or it may be more balanced – however, ensure it’s at least slightly different from your worst prediction. Again, rate how likely you think this is to happen on a 0-100% scale.

Next, it can be important to think about barriers that might get in the way, or stop you, from acting on your plan. Try to consider internal things, for example, off-putting thoughts, motivation, lack of energy. Also consider external things, for example, childcare, not having enough time, not having enough money. Write down these barriers in the **Possible Barriers** column. Finally, make a plan in advance for overcoming these barriers in the **Overcoming Barriers** column. Planning in advance will make it much more likely that you will succeed in carrying out your plan.

You can see **Robert’s Behavioural Experiments Plan Worksheet** on the following page.



Robert's Behavioural Experiments Plan Worksheet

Thought to be Put into Action		
The thought I want to put into action is:	I believe this thought (0-100%)	50%
<i>I do have friends who care about me, I just need to make more effort to see them.</i>		
Designing the Experiment		
I am going to test this thought by:		
What?	<i>I am going to telephone my friend Steve and ask him out for a drink one night after work next week.</i>	
Where?	<i>My house.</i>	
When?	<i>Tuesday evening at 8pm.</i>	
Who?	<i>On my own.</i>	
Predicting the Worst		
I predict the worst that will happen is:	I think this will happen (0-100%)	70%
<i>He'll hang up the telephone.</i>		
Predicting an Alternative		
<i>He'll answer the phone call but he won't be able to make it for a drink and make an excuse.</i>		
I think this will happen (0-100%)		90%
Possible Barriers		
The following things may get in the way:		
<i>My unhelpful thoughts about what will happen – it'll make me feel even worse if he doesn't answer my call or turns me down. I am really tired in the evenings and might not have the energy.</i>		
Overcoming Barriers		
I might overcome these problems by:		
<i>Although I am worried about what might happen, I need to give it a go. After all, he did text me last week so maybe it will be OK. I might be tired but I need to try my best to give it a go.</i>		

My Behavioural Experiments Plan Worksheet

Thought to be Put into Action		
The thought I want to put into action is:	I believe this thought (0-100%)	
Designing the Experiment		
I am going to test this thought by:		
What?		
Where?		
When?		
Who?		
Predicting the Worst		
I predict the worst that will happen is:	I think this will happen (0-100%)	
Predicting an Alternative		
I think this will happen (0-100%)		
Possible Barriers		
The following things may get in the way:		
Overcoming Barriers		
I might overcome these problems by:		

Step 2: Do Your Behavioural Experiment

Now it's time to carry out your plan and test out your thought in everyday life.

Step 3: Review Your Behavioural Experiment

Try to fill in your **Behavioural Experiments Review Worksheet** on page 38 as near to completing your Behavioural Experiment as possible. This can help to ensure you remember as many details as possible.

Write down your **Thought to be Put into Action** from your **Behavioural Experiments Plan Worksheet** into the first column of your **Behavioural Experiments Review Worksheet** and how much you believe you had in the thought.

Next, write down your **Predicting the Worst** information from the **Behavioural Experiments Plan Worksheet** into the second column of **Behavioural Experiments Review Worksheet** and record how much you believed this prediction. In the **What Happened** column, note down how the *Behavioural Experiment* went – so what actually happened when you tried putting your thought into action.

Next, reflect on what you've learnt from the Behavioural Experiment in the **My Learning** column.

As a result of what you've learnt from the *Behavioural Experiment*, how might you be able to change your thought? Write down your new thought in the **Revising My Original Thought** column and also rate how strongly you believe in this new thought and how strongly you believe in your original thought.

Based on your new thought, it can be helpful to think about how you might do things differently in the future as a result – note this down in the **Changing Behaviour** column.

Finally, some people find it helpful to think about what they want to do next. For example, do you need to think about doing another *Behavioural Experiment* to build on this? If so, you can begin to think about the thought you want to test or the next experiment you'd like to do. Alternatively, it might be that this experiment had helped you move forward enough to continue with *Thought Challenging*, in which case you might want to go back to page 39. Write down what you want to do next in the **Next Steps Column**.

You can see Robert's **Behavioural Experiments Review Worksheet** on the following page.

Robert's Behavioural Experiments Review Worksheet

Thought to be Put into Action	
The thought I want to put into action is:	I believe this thought (0-100%) 50%
<i>I do have friends who care about me, I just need to make more effort to see them.</i>	
My Original Prediction	
I predicted the following would happen	I believe this thought (0-100%) 70%
<i>He'll hang up the telephone.</i>	
The Results	
What actually happened was:	
<i>Steve answered the phone! We actually had a really long chat. Steve said he had been pretty worried about me and we ended up arranging to go for a beer after work the following week.</i>	
My Learning	
From this Behavioural Experiment I have learned:	
<i>I do still have friends, and although things have happened in my marriage it is not necessarily the case that everyone blames me for them. Maybe I have been too hard on myself.</i>	
Revising My Original Thought	
I would now change my original thought to:	
<i>I have friends who still care about me and don't necessarily blame me for everything that's happened.</i>	
I believe this new thought (0-100%) 100%	I believe my original thought (0-100%) 10%
Changing Behaviour	
Based on my new thought I'm going to do the following differently:	
<i>Making the effort and calling Steve was really helpful. I am going to make sure I get in touch with other friends I've not seen for a while – I can't just wait for people to get in contact with me!</i>	
Next Steps	
Other Behavioural Experiments I may want to try:	
<i>This experiment went really well. However, I am still experiencing other unhelpful thoughts that I am really struggling with. I am going to go back to my Thought Diary and start challenging and testing out some other difficult thoughts.</i>	



My Thought Challenging Worksheet

Thought to be Put into Action	
The thought I want to put into action is:	I believe this thought (0-100%)

My Original Prediction	
I predicted the following would happen:	I believe this thought (0-100%)

The Results	
What actually happened was:	

My Learning	
From this Behavioural Experiment I have learned:	

Revising My Original Thought	
I would now change my original thought to:	

I believe this new thought (0-100%)	I believe my original thought (0-100%)
-------------------------------------	--

Changing Behaviour	
Based on my new thought I'm going to do the following differently:	

Next Steps	
Other Behavioural Experiments I may want to try:	

Moving on with Thought Challenging

Well done for getting this far. Hopefully by this point all your hard work is paying off and you're beginning to see the benefits.

Thought Catching. However, it's important not to rush to Thought Catching before you feel ready.

If you're finding completing the worksheets easier, then it may be time to move on to the next stage of Thought Challenging –



Stage 4:

Thought Catching

Thought Catching is putting Thought Challenging into practice at the moment you notice yourself having an unhelpful thought. You try to catch the thought before it starts to feed your vicious cycle, and use Thought Challenging steps to weaken the thought before it impacts on the other areas of your vicious cycle.

As with any new skill this may take time to master, or you may find you've already started to do this quite naturally. Either way it's important to remember that different thoughts affect us differently at different times. Thought catching may be progressing really well, but all of a sudden one particular thought is very difficult to work through. If this happens it can be helpful to take a step back and consider completing the worksheets for this particular thought. Once you have completed the worksheets on this **Hot Thought** you'll be in a stronger position to apply Thought Catching to it, when it comes into your mind again.

As you progress with Thought Catching you may find different steps of Thought Challenging more helpful.

Some people find that **labelling** their unhelpful thought using one of the **Unhelpful Thinking Styles**, allows them to see that the thought is just a thought and not a fact. This then makes it easier for them to dismiss it. Others find considering the **Evidence For and Against the Hot Thought** more helpful and they learn to do this really quickly.

Finally, some people find they can quickly create a **Revised, More Balanced Thought** in their minds.

Staying Well

Hopefully over the last few weeks you've started to become more able to develop more balanced thoughts and break the vicious cycle that has been affecting your emotions in an unhelpful way.

To stay well in the future, it's also important to try and make the techniques you've learnt in this workbook part of your daily life. So have a think about the things you've found particularly helpful.

What Signs and Symptoms May Indicate You're Experiencing a Common Emotional Difficulty, such as Low Mood, Depression, Stress, Anger, Anxiety again?

At the beginning of the workbook you wrote down the physical feelings, emotions,

thoughts and behaviours you'd experienced that indicated you were experiencing a common emotional difficulty. In the future, these can serve as **warning signs** that you're experiencing these difficult emotions again. To make you aware of your **warning signs** it can therefore be helpful to fill out a **My Warning Signs Worksheet**. So, have a look back at the **My Vicious Cycle Worksheet** you filled in at beginning of the workbook to identify your warning signs. Then use this to fill in the **My Warning Signs Worksheet** below.



My Warning Signs Worksheet

My Physical Feelings

My Thoughts

My Emotions

My Behaviours

Staying Well Toolkit

Now, use the My Staying Well Toolkit below to write down activities, strategies or techniques you've found helpful whilst using this workbook. You can then refer back to this if you find yourself struggling with a common emotional difficulty again in the future.

However, remember that feeling low, anxious, fed-up, sad, angry or tired, for a short amount of time is perfectly normal. However, if you experience them for a while and they begin to have an impact on how you live your life again, it may be important to do something.

Remember the techniques in this workbook worked last time and they can do so again!

My Staying Well Toolkit Worksheet



What activities helped me feel better?

What skills have I learnt working through this workbook?

What helped me put these activities, skills and techniques into practice?



Checking-in with How I am Doing

As you finish this workbook it can be helpful to find a regular time to check-in and see how you're doing managing the emotion that has been troubling you.

To help ensure you're keeping up with the activities that helped you last time and to make them a part of your daily life, you may find continuing this regular **check-in** useful for a number of weeks.

Some people find a **weekly check-in** is initially helpful. However, over time find they can reduce the frequency. Once again, you're in control and are the best person to know what you find most helpful.

If you think having a weekly check-in would be helpful, have a go at using the **My Checking-in Worksheet** over the coming weeks or months. Making a **written commitment** to use your **Checking-in Worksheet** can make it more likely that this is something you'll do. You can use the space below to make this **written commitment**:



My Written Commitment to Check-in With Myself:

I will check-in with myself about the emotion that has been troubling me every over the next week

My Checking-in Worksheet

Have I started doing more or less of those unhelpful behaviours that may indicate I'm experiencing difficulties again?

Am I experiencing any thoughts similar to those I had when I started this workbook?

Am I experiencing any physical feelings similar to those I had when I started this workbook?

Am I experiencing any emotions similar to those I had when I started this workbook and been troubled by these?

If I think my difficulties are returning again, what sorts of things could I do to help me start overcoming these difficulties so I can manage again?



My Notes



My Notes



My Notes



My Notes

Authors

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