



What? Me Worry!?!

Module 6

Challenging Worries

Introduction	2
The Thinking-Feeling Connection	2
Your Worry Diary	3
Worksheet: Worry Diary	5
Module Summary	6

Introduction

In this module, you will learn an active way of dealing with the specific worries you have by challenging them head on. In the next module, you will learn a different technique, which is a more passive way of dealing with your specific worries, that is, letting them go. Both techniques are useful. Some people prefer one over the other and some find that they like to use both at different times. This is for you to decide. The main thing is that you will have a couple of techniques up your sleeve to deal with your specific worries when they start to hassle you.

The Thinking-Feeling Connection



What you think, and the thoughts that go through your mind, are very important in determining how you feel. Stop for a moment and think: when you are feeling good, what sorts of thoughts roam around in your head? Conversely, when you are feeling bad, what sorts of thoughts are you having?

It makes sense to most people when we say that:

*It is not the situation you are in that determines how you feel,
but the thoughts, meanings, and interpretations you bring to that situation.*

Here is an example of what we mean. Imagine you are told that you will have a pop quiz on Monday. Below are three different ways of thinking about this same situation and the different emotions, behaviours, and physical sensations that would result from thinking in these different ways.

Example event: <i>Being told you have a pop quiz</i>			
	Emotions	Behaviour	Physical
Thought 1 <i>I love quizzes! I know this stuff quite well so I think I'll do fine.</i>	<i>Happy</i>	<i>Do a bit of revision</i>	<i>Quite relaxed</i>
Thought 2 <i>I don't know anything, I am going to fail for sure.</i>	<i>Anxious Sad</i>	<i>Try to study hard, can't concentrate, don't get much done</i>	<i>Sick in stomach Tense</i>
Thought 3 <i>So what? I don't care. This subject isn't important anyway.</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Do no study</i>	<i>Quite relaxed</i>

Can you see how what we think can be so important in determining how we feel emotionally and physically, and can influence what we do?

As we have already explained, worrying is a type of thought process where you engage in negative and catastrophic thinking about things you predict could happen. When such a negative thinking style is constantly hassling you, emotions like anxiety may result, and you may experience unpleasant physical sensations and avoid doing certain things. One way to lift those negative emotions and unpleasant bodily sensations and get you back to doing things, is to challenge those worrisome thoughts. This means that you don't just accept them as true, but analyse and take them apart, just like the previous detective work you did with your beliefs about worrying. However this time, we will try something a little different.

Your Worry Diary

We would like you to start using what we call a 'Worry Diary'. A good time to use a Worry Diary might be during your worry period, after having postponed your worrying. By using a Worry Diary, you get all those worrisome thoughts that are going round and round in your head out on paper. Just putting them all on paper can be very helpful in itself, as it frees your mind, making it less cluttered so you are able to think more clearly. Remember, writing your worries down on paper is a good strategy to use when you find that your worries are interfering with your sleep or work.



On the next page is an example of how to complete a Worry Diary, and following that is a blank Worry Diary for you to practice on. The Worry Diaries guide you through how to get your worrisome thoughts out on paper.

The Worry Diary will first ask you to write down information **About Your Worries**. For example:

- What am I worrying about?
- List my worrisome thoughts.

After seeing these worrisome thoughts written down, you'll then need to ask yourself:

- What am I predicting is going to happen? Usually you are predicting that something bad is going to happen, so be specific and write down exactly what it is you fear might happen.
- How strongly do I believe this will happen? Rate the strength of your belief between 0 and 100%
- What emotion(s) am I feeling?
- How intense are these emotions? Rate the intensity of your emotion(s) between 0 and 100%

You are not just going to get those worrisome thoughts out on paper, you are also going to start **Challenging Your Worries** on paper. Here are the questions asked in your Worry Diary to challenge your worries:

- What is the evidence for my prediction?
- What is the evidence against my prediction?
- How likely is it that what I am predicting will actually happen (Rate 0-100%)?
- What is the worst that could happen?
- What is the best that could happen?
- What is the most likely thing that will happen?
- How helpful is it for me to worry about this?
- If the worst did happen, what would I be able to do to cope?
- How else could I view the situation?

Based on your answers to the questions in your Worry Diary, you will then engage in more **Balanced Thinking** by asking:

- What would be a more balanced and helpful thought to replace my worry?

The final step is to:

- Re-rate how much you now believe the original prediction you were making.
- Re-rate how intense the emotions are that you were originally feeling.

If you follow through with this strategy of challenging your worries, it is likely that you will experience a decrease in your belief in the negative predictions you were making and a decrease in the intensity of your emotions. Keep chipping away at your worries. It will take time, persistence, and practice, but combating your worries will be very rewarding.

Worry Diary (Example)

About Your Worries

<p>What am I worried about? <i>A work project</i></p> <p>List my worrisome thoughts <i>Will I be able to meet the deadline? What if I don't do a good job? What if I don't get it in on time? What will my boss do to me?</i></p>	<p>What am I predicting? <i>I won't meet the deadline. I won't do a good job. My boss won't be happy with me.</i></p> <p>How much do I believe it will happen (0-100%)? 80%</p>	<p>What emotion(s) am I feeling? (Rate the intensity 0-100%) <i>Anxious (80%) Depressed (50%)</i></p>
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Challenging Your Worries

<p>What is the evidence <u>for</u> my prediction? <i>I am very busy, so getting the project done will be a challenge. My boss hasn't been very friendly to me of late.</i></p>	<p>What is the evidence <u>against</u> my prediction? <i>I have always finished on time before. My work is generally of a high standard. I have worried about stressful work situations before and gotten through them okay. My boss either praises my work or doesn't say anything - they have never really criticised my work.</i></p>
<p>How likely is it that what I am predicting will actually happen (0-100%)? 20%</p>	
<p>What is the worst that could happen? <i>I could get fired.</i></p>	<p>What is the best that could happen? <i>I could do such a good job that I get lots of praise from my boss. I may even get a bonus.</i></p>
<p>What is the most likely thing that will happen? <i>I'll get it done on time, and the quality of my work will be O.K. My boss will either be happy or neutral about it.</i></p>	<p>How helpful is it for me to worry about this? <i>Worrying about this doesn't do any good, it just makes it worse because I find it hard to focus on getting the job done.</i></p>
<p>If the worst did happen, what would I be able to do to cope? <i>I could find another job - I'd be O.K. financially until I did. If my boss criticised my work it wouldn't feel good, but I guess I could take it constructively. It wouldn't be the end of the world, I'd get over it.</i></p>	
<p>How else could I view the situation? <i>I have done this sort of thing before, so I can probably do it again. I am good at what I do, so I'll probably do a good job - it doesn't have to be absolutely perfect. I could tell my boss I am under a lot of pressure - they don't expect me to be a 'superhero'. Other people's work is not as good as mine, and they don't get fired. I can be happy with just getting it in on time, and doing a good job - I don't also need my boss to praise me.</i></p>	

Balanced Thinking

<p>A more balanced and helpful thought to replace my worry is: <i>Worrying about this is unhelpful. I know I can do this job on time and well. All my past experiences show me that. I should remember that, rather than thinking the worst.</i></p>	
<p>How much do I believe my prediction now (0-100%) 40%</p>	<p>How intense are my emotions now (0-100%) <i>Anxious (40%) Depressed (10%)</i></p>

Worry Diary

About Your Worries

<p>What am I worried about?</p> <p>List my worrisome thoughts</p>	<p>What am I predicting?</p> <p>How much do I believe it will happen (0-100%)?</p>	<p>What emotion(s) am I feeling? (Rate the intensity 0-100%)</p>
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Challenging Your Worries

<p>What is the evidence <u>for</u> my prediction?</p>	<p>What is the evidence <u>against</u> my prediction?</p>
<p>How likely is it that what I am predicting will actually happen (0-100%)?</p>	
<p>What is the worst that could happen?</p>	<p>What is the best that could happen?</p>
<p>What is the most likely thing that will happen?</p>	<p>How helpful is it for me to worry about this?</p>
<p>If the worst did happen, what would I be able to do to cope?</p>	
<p>How else could I view the situation?</p>	

Balanced Thinking

<p>A more balanced and helpful thought to replace my worry is:</p>	
<p>How much do I believe my prediction now (0-100%)</p>	<p>How intense are my emotions now (0-100%)</p>

Module Summary

- How you think affects the way you feel emotionally and physically, and also affects the way you behave
- Worrying is a negative thought process that makes you feel anxious and tense, and makes you avoid things
- One way to deal with the specific things you worry about is to challenge your worrisome thoughts
- You can challenge your worries by using a **Worry Diary**
- Using your Worry Diary, write down what it is you are predicting, and rate how much you believe it. Also rate your emotions
- Then challenge your worries by asking yourself:
 - What is the evidence for and against my prediction?
 - How likely is it to happen?
 - What is the best, worst, most likely scenario?
 - How helpful is it to worry?
 - What could I do to cope if things went wrong?
 - How else could I see things?
- Through all this challenging, you can develop a more balanced/helpful thought to replace your worries
- Finally, re-rate your belief in your worries and re-rate your emotions, to see if your Worry Diary has helped you combat the specific things you worry about.



Coming up next ...

In the next module, you will deal with your specific worries, by learning how to let go of them.

About The Modules

CONTRIBUTORS

Dr Lisa Saulsman (MPsych¹; PhD²)

Centre for Clinical Interventions

Paula Nathan (MPsych¹)

Director, Centre for Clinical Interventions

Adjunct Senior Lecturer, School of Psychiatry and Clinical
Neuroscience, The University of Western Australia

Dr Louella Lim (DPsych³)

Centre for Clinical Interventions

Dr Helen Correia (MApp Psych¹; PhD²)

Centre for Clinical Interventions

¹Masters of Psychology (Clinical Psychology)

²Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical Psychology)

³Doctor of Psychology (Clinical)

Some of the materials in the modules of this information package were taken from:

Nathan, P., Smith, L., Rees, C., Correia, H., Juniper, U., Kingsep, P., & Lim, L. (2004). *Mood Management Course: A Cognitive Behavioural Group Treatment Programme for Anxiety Disorders and Depression* (2nd ed.). Perth, Western Australia: Centre for Clinical Interventions.

BACKGROUND

The concepts and strategies in the modules have been developed from evidence based psychological practice, primarily Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT). CBT for generalised anxiety is a type of psychotherapy that is based on the theory that generalised anxiety and worry is a result of problematic cognitions (thoughts) and behaviours. There is strong scientific evidence to support that cognitions and behaviours can play an important role in generalised anxiety, and that targeting cognitions and behaviours in therapy can help many people to overcome generalised anxiety. Examples of this evidence are reported in:

Barlow, D.H., Raffa, S.D., Cohen, E.M. (2002). Psychosocial treatments for panic disorders, phobias, and generalized anxiety disorder. In P.E. Nathan & J.M. Gorman (Eds.), *A Guide to Treatments that Work* (2nd ed., pp. 301-335). New York: Oxford University Press.

Gould, R.A., Safren, S.A., O'Neill Washington, D., & Otto, M.W. (2004). A meta-analytic review of cognitive-behavioural treatments. In R.G. Heimberg, C.L. Turk & D.S. Mennin (Eds.), *Generalized Anxiety Disorder: Advances in Research and Practice* (pp. 248-264). New York: Guilford Press.

REFERENCES

These are some of the professional references used to create the modules in this information package.

Barlow, D.H. (2002). *Anxiety and Its Disorders: The Nature and Treatment of Anxiety and Panic* (2nd ed.). London: Guilford Press.

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