



Panic Stations

Module 12

Self Management

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Introduction

Congratulations on making it to the end of this information package! We're glad you stayed on with us. If you haven't read all the modules, it might be good to go back to the ones you missed. However, the most important thing for you now is to keep practising the strategies you have learned through reading the modules in this info-pack. This means continuing to apply all of the useful skills and insights about yourself you might have gained. If you continue practising the concepts and skills you have learned, they will become like habits that have been integrated into your lifestyle.

There are a few things to keep in mind now that you have learned some important skills in managing your anxiety. One area to think about is how to *maintain the gains* that you have made. Another area to think about is how to *minimise setbacks* that might occur.

Maintaining Gains

It is important to recognise the progress that you've made, and when you are reaching your goals it is useful to 'pat yourself on the back' and celebrate those milestones. This will hopefully encourage you to keep going, to keep practising, to keep applying the new skills you have learnt. Maintaining the gains you have made occurs by continuing to confront situations you may have felt anxious in and continuing to practise the skills. Developing new skills that are designed to challenge what may be years worth of old habits takes time and persistence.

So there are some important things you will need to do in order to make the most of what you have learned to stay well or gain that extra improvement. The easiest way to summarise this is by looking at the "Healthy Me" worksheet on the next page. It shows the main areas of your life that you should give some attention to in order for you to continue maintaining your gains.

You will notice that on the "Healthy Me" Worksheet, each heading has spaces left blank for you to write in what you will need to attend to. For example, under Self-Care you might write: "I will shop every week and purchase fruit and vegetables, and avoid eating take-out. Under Social Activities you might write: "I will visit friends at least once each week." You may want to update this worksheet on a regular basis when you need to extend your goals or modify them. We really encourage you to do this, as it will enable you to keep track of things.

Thinking

Social Activities

Pleasant Activities

Healthy



Exercise

Relaxation

ME

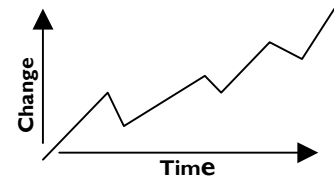
Self-Care

Social Support

Goals

Setbacks

Setbacks or slip-ups in progress can happen at any time and are to be expected. Try not to fall into the trap of believing that you are 'back to square one' as this will only make you feel worse. Change is not a steady process, it's more like the old saying: "Two steps forward, one step back" from time to time.



Think about how you learnt to ride a bike. It probably took a few unsteady attempts and a few falls before you gained your balance. Even when you get your balance, you might still be unsteady when travelling over new ground, or on different surfaces. In the same way, different situations may be more challenging, and may require extra effort and persistence, more thought disputation, or more stepladders. Even after much practice, there may be times when you think you've slipped back and feel a little off balance. Developing new skills is never a smooth process, you're always being faced with new challenges and different situations to apply those skills.

REASONS FOR SETBACKS

There are several reasons for setbacks occurring. There may be an increase in physical or mental stress. Just like riding a bike over challenging terrain, physical and mental stress can be challenges to the new ways of thinking and acting that you have developed. Also, when we are physically unwell, we are less likely to have the necessary mental and physical energy to do the detective work and dispute unhelpful thoughts.

It may help to remind yourself that most people have 'down days' or days where life's hassles are harder to deal with – its part of being human! Use your skills of challenging your thinking to help when this situation occurs. Also, you can use setbacks as a way of learning something new about yourself to help avoid similar problems in the future.

PREVENTING MAJOR SETBACKS

As you are progressing through your goals, try not to focus too much on small setbacks. If you are experiencing several small setbacks then there are some ways of preventing a major setback.

1. Identify early warning signs

The first step is to look at your own early warning signs. Some common examples are:

- Spending increased time worrying about what others think or having more unhelpful thoughts.
- An increase in the amount of time avoiding particular situations or activities.
- An increase in physical symptoms of anxiety when you are in previously feared situations.

2. Revise skills

Think about the skills you have learned and what has been helpful in reducing your anxiety (the calming technique, relaxation, challenging unhelpful thoughts, situation step-ladders). Have you stopped practising these skills consistently? You may wish to revise the modules and the techniques you have learned and perhaps increase practising those skills.

3. Social Support

It is wise to find someone with whom you can sit down and have a good talk. This doesn't mean a therapy session where you pour out your heart but rather just a chance to talk through what's going on in your life, what your goals are, and generally just to ventilate with someone you trust. Often, problems seem bigger than they really are when a person tries to deal with them on their own. Hearing yourself talk through something can help to put it into perspective.

On the next page is a self-management plan for you to complete. Make a note of the early warning signs that might signal a setback then write down the strategies and tools you have learnt about that can help you to deal with a setback.

Self-Management Plan

What are the early warning signs that tell that I might be heading for a setback and need to do something about it myself? eg. Spending more time worrying about what others think **OR** I am spending more time avoiding situations **OR** I have more unhelpful thoughts than usual

What are some of my unhelpful thinking styles that I need to watch out for?

What situations are potential problems for me?

What are my future support options? eg Friends, family, GP, other...

What strategies/techniques have I found most helpful and need to continue to practise?

Module Summary

- It is important that you keep applying and practising the strategies you learned through reading the modules in this info-pack
- Consistent and continuous practice will enable you to integrate the strategies into your lifestyle
- Setbacks are expected when we make changes to the way we think and act – challenge any unhelpful thoughts that might get in the way of your progress and repeat the modules to remind you of the skills you have learnt.
- Find some friends with whom you can be with and talk to. A group of friends can be a source of social support and good company for social activities

We hope that you have found this information package to be of benefit to you and that you will maintain the gains you have made. If you have questions about medication or psychotherapy for depression, do go and see your doctor or an appropriate mental health practitioner. For now, it's goodbye from us at CCI. Take care!



About This Module

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Some of the material in this module was taken from

Nathan, P.R., Rees, C.S., Lim, L., & Smith, L.M. (2001). *Mood Management – Anxiety: A Cognitive Behavioural Treatment Programme for Individual Therapy*. Perth: Rioby Publishing.

BACKGROUND

The concepts and strategies in this module have been developed from evidence based psychological practice, primarily Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT). CBT for panic disorder is a type of psychotherapy that is based on the theory that panic disorder 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 panic disorder, and that targeting cognitions and behaviours in therapy can help many people to overcome panic disorder. Examples of this evidence have been reported in the following:

Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists Clinical Practice Guidelines Team for Panic Disorder and Agoraphobia. (2003). Australian and New Zealand clinical practice guidelines for the treatment of panic disorder and agoraphobia. *Aust N Z J Psychiatry*, 37(6), 641-56.

FURTHER READING

There have been many other information resources written for people with panic attacks

Barlow, D. H., & Craske, M. G. (2000). *Mastery of your anxiety and panic (3rd edition)*. San Antonio, TX: The Psychological Corporation. (ISBN: 0127850783)

Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. (2003). Panic Disorder and Agoraphobia: Treatment Guide for Consumers and Carers. Available: <http://www.ranzcp.org/publicarea/cpg.asp> (click on "Panic Disorder and Agoraphobia"). Accessed Feb. 2004.

Zuercher-White, E. (1998). *An End To Panic: Breakthrough Techniques For Overcoming Panic Disorder (2nd Edition)*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications. . (ISBN: 1567313760)

"PANIC STATIONS"

We would like to thank Uta Juniper for the title of the InfoPax that this module forms part of:

Nathan, P., Correia, H., & Lim, L. (2004). *Panic Stations! Coping with Panic Attacks*. Perth: Centre for Clinical Interventions.

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