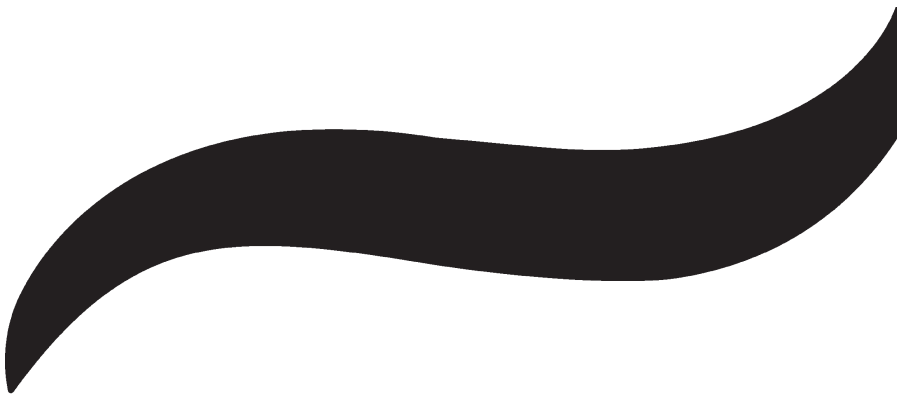




Dealing With Worry

Information for clients



WHY WORRY?

Everyone worries from time to time. Too much worry can be bad as it leaves us feeling tense and anxious. Even though we might say to ourselves and to others – “Stop worrying. It’s pointless. It won’t do any good” – there is something about worrying that makes it hard to stop. This is because worry can be helpful.

Useful worry prompts action. All other worry is pointless.

- ❖ Worry is useful if it makes you pay attention.

Worrying about the weather cannot stop it raining on your washing. However, if you watch the sky and act to bring in your washing when it rains, then being aware that it may rain will have helped.

- ❖ Worry is useful, provided it is turned into a plan for action.

For example, worrying that your electricity might get cut off might lead you to act to pay your bill on time. Once the bill has been paid the worrying would stop and you would feel better.

- ❖ Worry is useful if it helps you be better prepared.

Worry may help you think about “what you could do if...,” or “what would happen if...”. Worrying “what would happen if my house was burgled” could make you act to take out house insurance and lock your front door when you go out.

Worry without action does nothing

If worry on its own did something then we could worry all day to increase our bank balance. On the other hand taking action such as selling something, working more hours or spending less will directly affect our bank balance.

Is it worth worrying about?

There are four things that are not worth worrying about but that account for a lot of our worries: the unimportant, the unlikely, the uncertain and the uncontrollable. Ban these from your life, and you will worry less.

The Unimportant

It is easy to fill your life with worries about little things. When you find yourself worrying, start to question yourself instead. Ask yourself, "How important is the thing that I am worrying about?"

Here are three points to help you answer this question.

1. The five year rule. Ask yourself: "will this matter in five years time?" This is a way of looking at your worry from a long-term point of view. View your worries in different ways: will this still be a concern in a week, a month, a year?
2. The measuring rod. Ask yourself: "Where, on a scale of bad experiences, is the thing I'm worried about?" Think about a very bad experience you have had. How does your current worry feel when compared with this?
3. The calculator. Ask yourself: "How much worry is this worth?" We only have a certain amount of time and energy. Make sure you do not spend more worry on your problem than it is worth. You need your time and energy for more important things. Maybe some time you would have spent worrying could be used for doing something.

When you have thought about these three points, decide if your worry seems unimportant. If so, try to stop worrying and distract yourself by using some of the techniques on page six. If you still feel your worry is important keep reading.

The Unlikely

A lot of worries ask "What if..." questions. All kinds of terrible things could happen today or tomorrow but most things are very unlikely. If you allow yourself to worry about the unlikely then there will be no end to your worrying. Tackling existing problems is hard enough. Do not waste time, energy and happiness on problems that do not exist.

The Uncertain

Often we do not know how something will turn out. Many things we worry about have not yet happened and we can only take action once we know what has happened. For example, worrying that you may have failed a test or exam is not going to improve the results. It is only once the results are released that you can decide what, if anything, needs to be done.

The Uncontrollable

We have no control over many of the things we worry about. For example, worrying that you are getting older does not change the fact that in a day's time you will be a day older. This will be the case even if you worry as hard as you can.

Dealing with persistent worries

Thinking about the type of worry you have using the exercises above may help you stop worrying. However, some worries are very difficult to get rid of and keep going through your mind.

Stepping through worries

Still worrying? Try these three steps to help deal with the worries. Worries can be divided into two types: those you **can** do something about and those you **can't**.

1. Be clear what the worry is.

- a. Ask yourself "What am I worrying about?"
- b. Think about each worry and write them down one at a time.
- c. Try to write down the worries as clearly as you can.

2. Decide if something can be done.

- a. Look at each worry you have written down and ask yourself, "Is there anything I can do about this?"
- b. Use the examples on pages three and four to help you decide. Be honest with yourself when answering. If the answer is no then you can be certain that no matter how much you worry, nothing will change.
- c. Think it through and try to explain to yourself that there is no point in worrying. Try distraction, there are hints on how to do this on the next page.
- d. If the answer is yes, something could be done, go to step three and think about what it is you could do.

3. Write a list of things you could do to solve your worry.

- a. Look at your list and ask yourself "Is there anything I could do right now?"
- b. If there is something you could do right away then **do it**.
- c. If there is nothing you can do right away then make a plan of **when**, **where** and **how** you will tackle the problem.
- d. When you have done what you can, tell yourself that you have done what is needed and continue with your day.

If you would like some extra advice on how to solve problems you can request a booklet called, "How to Solve Problems: A DIY Technique," details on how to get a copy are on the back page of this booklet.

WAYS TO DISTRACT YOURSELF

You can only pay full attention to one thing at a time. Keeping yourself busy will leave no room for worry. Below are some useful hints on how to distract yourself.

Physical Activity. Giving yourself a task to do takes your mind off worrying thoughts. Keeping yourself physically active by doing some exercise is a good way to stop worrying thoughts.

Mental Games. Doing puzzles, crosswords, reciting a poem or a song and counting backwards from one hundred are all useful distraction exercise.

Focus on your Surroundings. Concentrate on a specific detail of the world around you, for example making words out of number plates of cars or guessing what people do for a living. Focusing on the outside world will prevent you from thinking about your worries.

Sometimes your attention may drift from what you are doing to a worry. If this happens, say to yourself that you have done all you can for now. Remind yourself that there is nothing more that can be done today and shift your attention back to your task.

Do not use distraction techniques as a way of avoiding dealing with your worries. Go through the steps above before using distraction.

CLEAN YOUR HEAD - READY FOR BED

People often worry more at night. One way of dealing with worrying thoughts is to plan your days ahead. Hold a daily planning session, which you use to work through your worries and problems.

Planning sessions

- ❖ Set aside 20 minutes in the early evening, after your meal.
- ❖ Sit in a quiet room. Have pencil and notebook to hand.
- ❖ Think about how the day has gone. Write down the things you achieved.
- ❖ Think about problem areas and anything you haven't finished. Write down the way you intend to tackle each of these and when you will do so. Do not do anything about them at this time.
- ❖ If these matters are on your mind when you are in bed, put them off until daytime. Remind yourself that you have already written down a plan for the worry.
- ❖ If it is a new worry/problem and you cannot stop thinking about it, get out of bed, and add it to your planning list. Remind yourself that bed is not the place to think about such things and that you can do no more. The problem is on your list and you will look at it closely the following day.

BOXING IN YOUR WORRIES

If you are snowed under by worry, try to set aside a regular half an hour every day to worry. Decide on a time and place that will be “worry time” and stick to it. If you start to worry at other times, postpone the worry until “worry time” and return your focus to what you were doing.

During “worry time” let your mind worry freely. Take a pen and paper and write down your worries one by one. Use the stepping through worries steps on page five. Some people find that they are unable to worry to order and so the worry time ends up being trouble free!

SHARE YOUR WORRIES

Worries do not survive well outside our heads. Talking about a worry can help us to see the bigger picture and can help with finding possible solutions or planning actions. Try and meet a friend or relative and tell them what is on your mind. We all worry and you can be sure they will also have things that they worry about.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT:

Useful Contacts

For information on mental services, supports, opportunities or self-help information call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133

For further information on mental health and well-being, visit Lanarkshire's Element website: www.element.org.uk

Remember, should your problems persist or you feel you need help urgently please contact your GP. The following organisations can also prove useful in and out of hours.

- ❖ **Breathing Space** - 0800 83 85 87
(Mon - Thu, 6pm - 2am; Fri 6pm - Mon 6am)
www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk
- ❖ **Samaritans** - 116 123 (24hrs) www.samaritans.org
- ❖ **NHS24** - 111 (Out of hours) www.nhs24.com
- ❖ **Healthy Working Lives** - 08452 300 323 (Local),
0800 019 2211 (National),
www.healthyworkinglives.com
- ❖ **Childline** - 0800 11 11 (24hrs) www.childline.org.uk
- ❖ **NHS Inform** - 0800 22 44 88 www.nhsinform.co.uk
- ❖ **Parentline Scotland** - 0808 800 22 22
www.children1st.org.uk/parentline
- ❖ **National Debt Line Scotland** - 0808 808 4000
www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/scotland
- ❖ **National Domestic Abuse Helpline** - 0800 027 1234

WHAT IS WELL CONNECTED?

Well Connected is a programme in Lanarkshire, sometimes referred to as social prescribing or community referral. It makes it easier for us and people we know to take part in and benefit from activities and services that we know improve our well-being which means how we feel about ourselves and our lives. There are a number of Well Connected areas available to us and we can benefit from more than one:

- ❖ Physical activity and leisure opportunities
- ❖ Volunteering
- ❖ Employment
- ❖ Arts and culture
- ❖ Benefits, welfare and debt advice
- ❖ Learning opportunities
- ❖ Calm Distress online course
- ❖ Health Walks
- ❖ Mindfulness Classes.

For information on any of the above call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133
- ❖ Visit: www.elament.org.uk/self-help-resources/well-connected-programme.aspx

HEALTHY READING

All public libraries have a healthy reading section making it easier to access mental health and well-being leaflets, books, CDs, DVDs and web-based support. All libraries across Lanarkshire have resources to help us get the most from life such as living life to the full, sleeping better and becoming more confident or overcoming and coping with mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, stress, dementia and panic. There are also resources for all ages including supporting young people, adults and older people as well as items on positive parenting. Simply pop into your local library.

GUIDED SUPPORT:

Calm Distress

Calm Distress is a new online course from NHS Lanarkshire Psychological Services, designed for you to use in your own time and at your own pace. It is all about understanding emotions and wellbeing, during Covid-19 and beyond. It is open - and free - to all adults who have a Lanarkshire GP.

Over five friendly sessions, Calm Distress will help you learn new ways to cope with difficult thoughts and feelings. Each session lasts about 20 minutes, giving you lots of useful information in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea.

You can access Calm Distress through the NHS Lanarkshire Mind Matters website:

www.lanarkshiremindmatters.scot.nhs.uk

Living Life to the Full - Online Course

Living Life to The Full is a free web-based life skills course that aims to help us tackle and respond to issues/demands which we all meet in our everyday lives. It will explore issues such as understanding why we feel the way we do, problem solving, noticing and challenging unhelpful thoughts and behaviours and anxiety control. You can register for the course at www.llttf.com and complete as many or as few modules as you wish.

If you feel you need additional help, the Living Life to The Full course is also available with support from self help coaches (via Action on Depression Scotland). To find out more visit www.aod.llttfionline.co.uk

Living Life: Guided Self Help and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - Telephone Support

Living Life is a free telephone support service for people suffering from low mood, mild to moderate depression, symptoms of anxiety or a combination of both. Trained Self-help coaches and therapists will guide us through a range of workbooks over a series of telephone sessions. For more information or to make a telephone appointment, call **0800 328 9655** (Mon–Fri 1–9pm).

If you need this information in another language or format, please e-mail: Translation.
Services@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk

Pub. date:	May 2023
Review date:	May 2025
Issue No:	05
Produced by:	MMMHP
Clinical Lead:	