

# ANXIETY

## FROM ITS GENESIS TO MANAGEMENT: PRACTICAL INFORMATION & INTERVENTIONS FOR VOCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS

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### FIRST, LET'S TALK ABOUT FEAR

- ☐ Emotional response to a real or perceived threat
- ☐ It doesn't matter if there is an actual threat
- ☐ Even a perceived threat elicits an emotional response

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)




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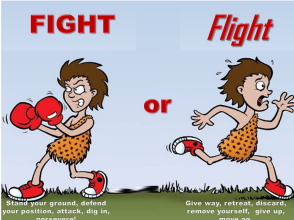
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### ...STILL TALKING ABOUT FEAR

*Confront your fear (Fight) vs. Escape behaviours (Flight)*

- ☐ Sympathetic Nervous System
- ☐ Adrenaline / Noradrenaline
  - ✦ Rapid heart rate
  - ✦ Increased blood pressure
  - ✦ Rapid breathing
  - ✦ Slowed digestion
  - ✦ Glucose release




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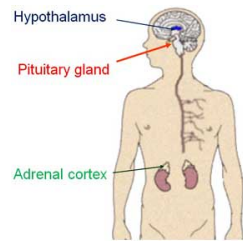
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### YUP...STILL TALKING ABOUT FEAR




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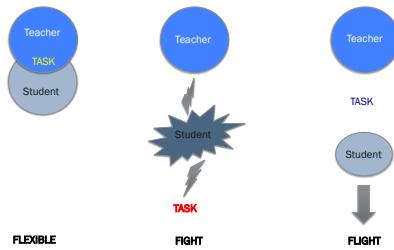
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### FIGHT, FLIGHT AND LEARNING BEHAVIOURS




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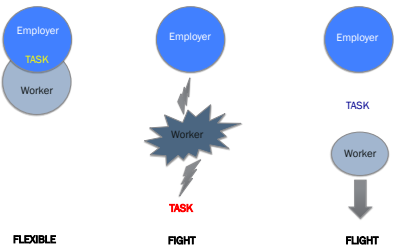
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### FIGHT, FLIGHT AND WORK BEHAVIOURS




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## ANXIETY

### Anticipation of a future threat

- ☐ Muscle tension
- ☐ Vigilant preparation for future danger
- ☐ Cautious or avoidant behaviours ("fear")

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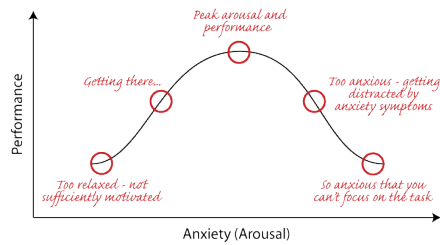
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## ANXIETY




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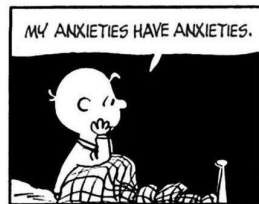
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## ANXIETY

- ☐ What situations are feared or avoided?
- ☐ What are the thoughts or beliefs about the situations?
- ☐ Comorbid conditions




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### ANXIETY "DISORDER" DEFINED

- ☐ Lasts 6 months or more
- ☐ Overestimated danger of situation
- ☐ Also...
  - ✧ Develops during childhood
  - ✧ Twice as common in females




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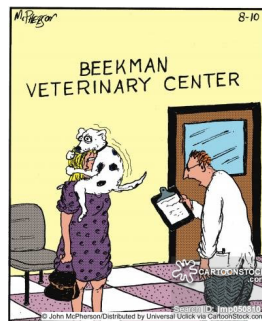
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### TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

#### **Separation Anxiety**

- ☐ Onset 6-12 months
- ☐ Through to age 12
- ☐ Prevalence = 1.6%



"OK... Ms. McCloskey and Duncan. Says here you think Duncan may have separation anxiety."

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### TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

#### **Separation Anxiety**

- ☐ Afraid or anxious about being separated from attachment figures (i.e. parents)
- ☐ Level of fear/anxiety inappropriate for age
- ☐ Fear of attachment figure being harmed
- ☐ Reluctant to leave attachment figure
- ☐ Nightmares
- ☐ Physical symptoms
- ☐ Can persist into adulthood




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### TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

#### **Selective Mutism (Age 5 +)**

- ☐ Consistent failure to speak in social situations where there is an expectation that the person will speak
- ☐ Speaks normally in other situations
- ☐ Problems at school, work or in social situations
- ☐ Up to 1% of the population




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### TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

#### **Specific Phobia (Ages 7 to 11 Years)**

- ☐ Afraid of / Anxious about / Avoids specific objects or situations
- ☐ Out of proportion to actual risk (if any)
- ☐ 5-16% of the population




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### TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

#### **Specific Phobia**

- ☐ Animals
- ☐ Natural environment
- ☐ Blood injection
- ☐ Certain situations




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#### TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

##### Social Anxiety (Ages 8 – 15 years)

- ☐ Social phobia
- ☐ Possibility of being scrutinized
- ☐ Fear, anxiousness, avoidance
- ☐ Negatively perceived by others
- ☐ Embarrassed, humiliated, rejected
- ☐ Offend others




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#### TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

##### Social Anxiety

- ☐ Meeting new people
- ☐ Eating or drinking in front of others
- ☐ Performing or speaking in front of others (i.e. public speaking)
- ☐ 7%-13% of the population




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#### TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

##### Social Anxiety

*"Social anxiety disorder is associated with elevated rates of school dropout and with decreased well-being, **employment**, **workplace productivity**, socioeconomic status and quality of life."*

DSM-5

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## VOCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

### Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)

- ❑ Substantial negative impacts on occupational functioning
- ❑ 265 low-income unemployed adults applying for vocational services
- ❑ People with Social Anxiety Disorder:
  - ✓ Perceived more employment barriers involving experience & skills
  - ✓ Reported fewer social skills
  - ✓ Had lower education level

*Himle et al. (2014)*

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## VOCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

### Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)

- ❑ Work-related impairments:
  - ✓ Reduced productivity and job performance
  - ✓ Lowered educational attainment
  - ✓ Unemployment (double that of non-impaired & also higher than people with other anxiety disorders or depression)
  - ✓ Financial dependence
  - ✓ Reduced income

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## VOCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

### Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)

- ❑ Work-related impairments:
  - ✓ Declining job offers or promotions because of social fears
  - ✓ Significantly greater absenteeism and reduced productivity
  - ✓ Only mental illness in women receiving welfare that was associated with reduced employment over time

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# TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

## Panic Disorder (Ages 20-24 years)

- ☐ Recurrent panic attacks
- ☐ Persistent worry about having attack
- ☐ Change behaviour due to attacks




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# TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

## Panic Disorder

- ☐ Abrupt surge
- ☐ Intense fear or discomfort
- ☐ Peak within minutes
- ☐ Expected or unexpected
- ☐ Physical / cognitive symptoms
- ☐ 2-3% of the population




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# TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

## Panic Disorder

*"Individuals with panic disorder may be frequently **absent from work** or school for doctor and emergency room visits, which can lead to **unemployment** or dropping out of school."*

(DSM-5)

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## TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

**Agoraphobia (Ages 17-35 years)**

☐ Fear/anxiety about two or more:

- ✓ Using public transportation
- ✓ Being in open spaces
- ✓ Being in enclosed spaces
- ✓ Being outside of the home & alone
- ✓ Standing in line
- ✓ Being in a crowd




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## TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

**Agoraphobia**

☐ Thoughts about these situations:

- ✓ Escape would be difficult
- ✓ Help may not be available

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## TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

**Agoraphobia**

☐ Leads to:

- ✓ Fear
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Avoidance
- ✓ Panic attacks

☐ 1.7% of population

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## TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder – 30 years +**

- ☐ Excessive anxiety and worry more days than not
- ☐ Lasts at least 6 months
- ☐ Worry about many activities/events (e.g. work or school)
- ☐ Difficulty controlling the worry

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## TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder**

- ☐ Associated Symptoms (Children – 1; Teens/Adults – 3)
  - ✓ Restless / on edge
  - ✓ Easily fatigued
  - ✓ Poor concentration / mind goes blank
  - ✓ Irritable
  - ✓ Muscle tension
  - ✓ Sleep disturbance

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## TYPE OF ANXIETY BY AGE OF ONSET

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder**

- ☐ Significant distress or impairment in social or occupational function (or other areas of function)
- ☐ Worry is out of proportion to the likelihood the event will occur or to the possible effect, should the event occur
- ☐ 2.9% of adult population




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## Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional



"You feel empty inside. How long has this been a problem?"

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## Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional #1 Anatomy and Framework

This information provides a tremendous relief to clients




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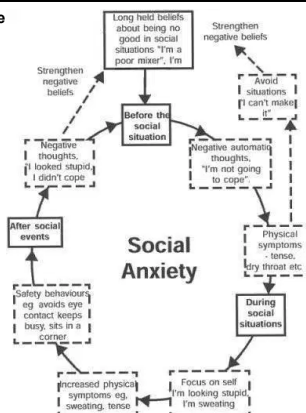
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## Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional #1 Anatomy and Framework




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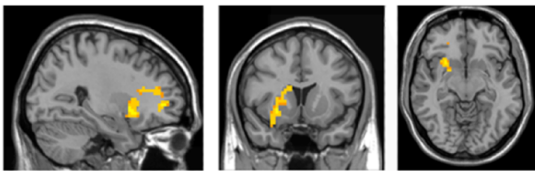
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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#1 Anatomy and Framework**



Yuan et al. (2016), BMC Psychiatry

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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#1 Anatomy and Framework**

8 Week Group-Based CBT

- ✓ Psychoeducation
- ✓ Cognitive restructuring
- ✓ Relaxation training
- ✓ Exposure exercises (public speaking)
- ✓ Social skills training
- ✓ Homework

Yuan et al. (2016), BMC Psychiatry

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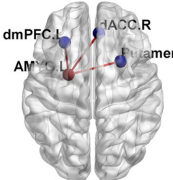
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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#1 Anatomy and Framework**

1. Left amygdala to right putamen
2. Left amygdala to left dorsal medial prefrontal cortex
3. Left amygdala to right dorsal anterior cingulate cortex




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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#2 Identify the Client's Level of Distress & Perception of Their Problem**

Overall, how distressing is your generalised anxiety?  
 (Circle the number that best describes you)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
 Not at all Moderately Extremely

Overall, how much of a problem is your generalised anxiety?  
 (Circle the number that best describes you)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
 Not at all Moderately Extremely

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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#3 Determine the Role Worry Plays in Their Life**

☐ How is worrying helping you?

☐ How is worrying harming you?




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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#3 Determine the Role Worry Plays in Their Life**

METACOGNITIVE THEORY (MCT)

**Type I Worries**

- Worrying about external events such as the evening news
- Worrying about internal events such as pain

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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#3 Determine the Role Worry Plays in Their Life**

**Type I - Positive Metacognitive Belief**

Worrying helps me cope  
 Worrying will keep me safe  
 Worrying helps me get ready for when disaster strikes

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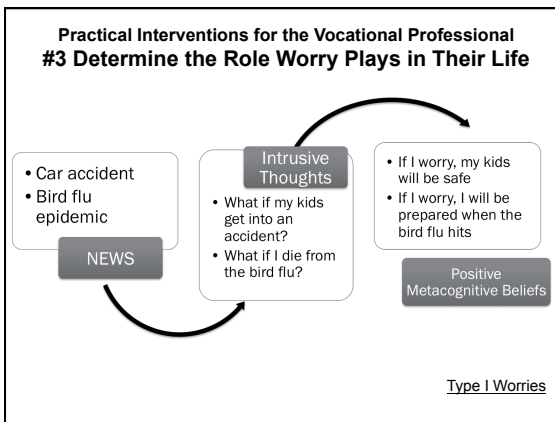
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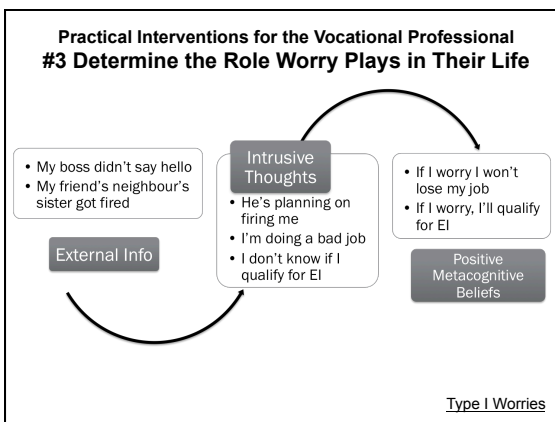
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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional  
#3 Determine the Role Worry Plays in Their Life**

Type I Worries

- ☐ Worrying will help me find the solution
- ☐ Worrying will help me understand the problem
- ☐ Worrying keeps me motivated
- ☐ Worrying prepares me
- ☐ Bad things won't happen if I worry
- ☐ If I worry, I am doing something about the problem

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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional  
#3 Determine the Role Worry Plays in Their Life**

METACOGNITIVE THEORY (MCT)

**Type II - Negative Metacognitive Beliefs**

I can't stop worrying  
Worrying is harming me

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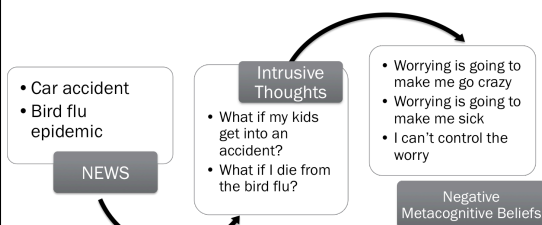
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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional  
#3 Determine the Role Worry Plays in Their Life**



Type II Worries

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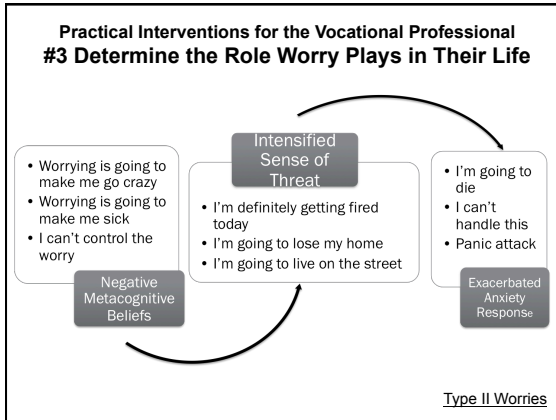
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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#3 Determine the Role Worry Plays in Their Life**

**How much do you believe that your worrying is uncontrollable?**  
 (Circle the percentage that best describes the strength of your belief)

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#3 Determine the Role Worry Plays in Their Life**

**How much do you believe your worrying is dangerous/harmful?**  
 (Circle the percentage that best describes the strength of your belief)

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#3 Determine the Role Worry Plays in Their Life**

**How much do you believe worrying is helpful?**  
 (Circle the percentage that best describes the strength of your belief)

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#3 Determine the Role Worry Plays in Their Life**

**Systematic Review of Metacognitive Therapy**  
 Sadeghi et al. (2015)

☐ Better treatment results in the MCT groups

☐ Statistically significant better results compared to the control groups in GAD (post-treatment and 12 months later)

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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#3 Determine the Role Worry Plays in Their Life**

**Worry**

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graph TD
    Worry --> A[Reinforced Belief Worry is Uncontrollable]
    Worry --> B[Failed Attempt to Stop Worrying]
    A <--> B
  
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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#4 Have the Client Challenge POSITIVE Their Worry Beliefs**

Evidence For	Evidence Against
<p><i>Worrying prepares me, so that if bad things happen, I can cope better.</i>            [What is the good in always being prepared for the worst, which never seems to happen...it just ends up making me feel awful all the time – and how can that be good coping? Maybe if I didn't worry, I would still have been able to cope if something bad had happened.]</p> <p><i>Worrying helps me get everything done properly and on time.</i>            [Sometimes I worry so much that I am unable to do things, so how does this fit with my beliefs? Maybe if I didn't worry, I would still get things done well – maybe I should try it and see.]</p> <p><i>I don't know how worrying stops bad things happening – I just feel it does.</i>            [I don't have any strong, specific or scientific evidence to back my belief. What I am thinking is really very superstitious.]</p>	<p><i>It isn't the worrying that helps me, but problem solving and taking action.</i> [I could do these things without worrying].</p> <p><i>Worrying and problem solving are not the same!</i> [Problem solving focuses on what I can do about a situation, worrying is just repetitively thinking about the situation in a negative way...how can that be helpful?]</p> <p><i>Worrying makes me upset, interferes with my ability to concentrate and make decisions, and makes me procrastinate.</i>            [What my worrying actually does to me does not match with my positive beliefs that worrying makes me cope, helps me solve problems and motivates me – maybe I need to re-think things.]</p>

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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#4 Have the Client Challenge Their NEGATIVE Worry Beliefs**

Evidence For	Evidence Against
<p><i>I don't know exactly how it will make me sick, but I have heard stress isn't good for you, so it must be something to do with that.</i>            [I haven't got a very strong, specific or scientific argument for worrying being harmful. Maybe I need to look into it more, and get the facts.]</p> <p><i>It just feels like I am going to go crazy, therefore I must be.</i>            [This isn't very solid evidence that worrying is going to harm me. It has never actually happened, it is just that it feels so bad at the time, so I assume something bad will happen. Just because I feel it is true, isn't really evidence it is true.]</p> <p><i>When I worry a lot, I get a cold, sometimes.</i></p>	<p><i>How can something be both dangerous and helpful at the same time?</i>            [My beliefs about worrying don't match up. Maybe I need to re-think.]</p> <p><i>I have never actually gone crazy or gotten really sick from worrying.</i>            [What I am worried about has never actually happened.]</p> <p><i>Plenty of people have worry and stress in their lives. While it doesn't feel great, these people don't all break down physically or mentally.</i>            [It doesn't tend to happen to other people, so why should it happen to me.]</p>

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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional**  
**#5 Practice Worry Postponement**  
 (not thought stopping)




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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional  
#5 Practice Worry Postponement**

- ☐ Set a time, duration and place to think about worries
- ☐ Accept your intrusive thoughts, then tell yourself you will worry about them at the set time
- ☐ Write down your intrusive thought in a list (to worry about later)
- ☐ Get back to what you were doing / Reassure yourself you will worry later
- ☐ Keep in mind you won't be able to control the thought popping back in your mind, let it happen, just don't "worry" about it until the set time

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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional  
#5 Practice Worry Postponement**

**Thinking Time...**

- ☐ Review your list
- ☐ Think of the things you feel you have to at that time
- ☐ If you are no longer bothered by a particular thought, you don't have to worry about it
- ☐ Make your worrying productive: write down your worries




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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional  
#5 Practice Worry Postponement**

**Thinking Time...**

- ☐ Write down alternate ways of thinking of the problem
- ☐ For more troubling thoughts, use strategies such as mindfulness meditation
- ☐ Continue to postpone remaining thoughts




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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional  
#5 Practice Worry Postponement**

**Postponement Experiment**

**My Thinking Time:**

<b>Start Time:</b>	<b>Time Limit:</b>	<b>Place:</b>
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**Prediction** (What do you think will happen if you postpone worrying? Particularly, how controllable will worrying be?)

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How confident are you of your ability to postpone worrying?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I cannot postpone worrying at all				I am moderately confident I can postpone worrying				I am extremely confident I can postpone worrying		

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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional  
#5 Practice Worry Postponement**

<b>Day:</b>	___ day	___ day	___ day	___ day	___ day	___ day	___ day
<b>Date:</b>							
What happened? Did you postpone worrying?							
What happened at thinking time? Did the thoughts still seem important?							
How controllable did worrying seem? (0% to 100%)							

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**Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional  
#5 Practice Worry Postponement**

Compare prediction with what happened. What did you learn about worrying and how controllable it is?

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Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional  
**#6 Mindfulness: Attention Training & Meditation**

BODY	MIND
Present Moment	Future (and it's not good)




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Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional  
**#6 Mindfulness: Attention Training & Meditation**

☐ Focus on mundane aspects of the task

***Touch  
Sight  
Hearing  
Smell  
Taste***

☐ Rate your level of focusing on worries prior to and during the mundane task.




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Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional  
**#6 Mindfulness: Attention Training & Meditation**

*Attention training helps  
with worry  
postponement*




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### Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional #6 Mindfulness: Attention Training & Meditation

#### Attention Training Diary

You can use this sheet to both plan your attention training and to record your progress along the way. The last column asks you to jot down any comments about the experience – What did you notice? Did you notice when your mind wandered off? Were you able to re-direct your attention? How did it compare to other times you have practiced?

Date & Time	Attention Task	Duration	Comments
<i>e.g., Monday 5<sup>th</sup>, 9.00am</i>	<i>Meditation</i>	<i>2 mins</i>	<i>My mind kept drifting to worries about the kids, but I just kept refocusing on my breath</i>
<i>Monday 5<sup>th</sup>, 6.00pm</i>	<i>Mundane task focussing (while doing the dishes)</i>	<i>10 mins</i>	<i>I noticed lots of things I didn't usually notice. It was probably a little easier than the meditation as I had something to focus on.</i>

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### Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional #7 Tolerating Uncertainty

Approach	Avoid
Do everything yourself; never delegate	Not committing to certain things
Information seeking	Imaginary excuses to avoid things
Questioning own decisions	Procrastinating
Seeking reassurance	
Rechecking and redoing	
Overprotecting others	

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### Practical Interventions for the Vocational Professional Recap...

Provide information about anatomy and framework of anxiety  
Identify client's level of distress and perception of their problem  
Determine role worry plays in their life  
Challenge positive and negative beliefs about worry  
Practice worry postponement  
Practice mindfulness (attention training and meditation)  
Tolerating uncertainty through gradual exposure exercises

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## Challenging Your Belief

Below is a list of questions you can ask yourself to challenge whether your belief that worrying is uncontrollable is really true. By using these questions you will become a detective, examining the evidence for and against your belief. An example is given below of how to use these questions to challenge your belief, and on page 4 you will find a worksheet to help you do this for yourself.

### Evidence For

- What makes you think worrying is uncontrollable?
- What's the evidence for your belief?
- Is the evidence for your belief good/solid/reliable?
- Is there another way you could view the evidence for your belief?



### Evidence Against

- Is there any evidence that goes against your belief?
- Has your worrying ever been disrupted/interrupted? Can distraction work in the short term? What does this tell you about uncontrollability?
- Does your worrying stop eventually? How can this be if it is uncontrollable? Shouldn't it just go on forever if it can't be controlled?
- Can you manipulate your worrying (i.e., increase or decrease it)? Would this be possible if it was completely uncontrollable?
- Does taking action ever work to stop your worrying? What does this tell you about whether it is controllable?
- What strategies have you tried to control your worrying? Are they mostly forms of suppression, which only increase worrying?
- Have you ever tried to properly postpone your worrying (that is, not suppress it, but instead allow yourself to have a worrisome thought, and decide not to worry about it at that particular moment)? If you have done this, what does this tell you about your worrying being uncontrollable? If you haven't done this, how do you truly know your worrying is uncontrollable?
- Is it possible that it is controllable, you just don't know how yet?

## EXAMPLE:

Belief: "My worrying is uncontrollable"	
Evidence For	Evidence Against
<p><i>When I tell myself not to think about something, I still keep worrying, so it must be uncontrollable.</i></p> <p>[I guess what I am really doing is suppressing my thoughts, which just makes them come back worse. It is possible that the strategy I am using is wrong, rather than my worrying actually being uncontrollable.]</p> <p><i>It just feels uncontrollable, therefore it must be.</i></p> <p>[This isn't very solid evidence that my worrying is beyond my control. Just because I feel it is true, isn't really evidence that it actually is true.]</p>	<p><i>Things do happen during my day that naturally interrupt my worrying.</i></p> <p>[My worrying can't be uncontrollable if something can interrupt it. If it were uncontrollable it would keep going regardless.]</p> <p><i>There have been times when I haven't worried, because I have been too busy doing something else.</i></p> <p>[My worrying can't be uncontrollable if being busy can stop it from happening.]</p> <p><i>I have only ever tried to suppress my worrying, but never tried to postpone it.</i></p> <p>[I don't truly know if it is uncontrollable if I haven't used the right strategy to try and control it.]</p> <p><i>My worrying does eventually stop, either when I have run out of steam, or feel I have worried all I can and I am prepared.</i></p> <p>[My worrying can't be uncontrollable if it doesn't actually go on forever.]</p>

## Challenging Your Belief

Belief: <i>My worrying is uncontrollable</i>	
Evidence For	Evidence Against

## Challenging Your Belief

Below is a list of questions you can ask yourself to challenge whether worrying really is dangerous. Remember, you are a detective examining the evidence for and against your belief. An example is given below of how to use these questions to challenge your belief, and on page 5 you will find a worksheet to help you do this for yourself.

### Evidence For

- What makes you think worrying is dangerous/harmful?
- What's the evidence for your belief?
- Exactly how does worrying cause mental/physical harm (be specific)?
- Is the evidence for your belief good/solid/reliable?
- Is there another way the evidence for your belief could be viewed?



### Evidence Against

- Is there any evidence that goes against your belief?
- How long have you worried for? What specific physical or mental harm has resulted over this time?
- During a worry episode have you ever become ill or gone crazy?
- Are there other explanations or greater risk factors for the illnesses you are concerned worrying will cause? (e.g., genetics, diet, exercise, lifestyle, smoking, alcohol, etc).
- Can you think of other people/professions that are constantly under intense stress or anxiety, have they all suffered physical or mental harm? (e.g., students studying for exams, people in stressful jobs – army officers, police, emergency department staff, etc).
- How can you believe that worrying is both dangerous on the one hand and has many positive benefits (motivates, prepares, prevents, etc) on the other hand?

### EXAMPLE:

Evidence For	Evidence Against
<p><i>I don't know exactly how it will make me sick, but I have heard stress isn't good for you, so it must be something to do with that.</i> [I haven't got a very strong, specific or scientific argument for worrying being harmful. Maybe I need to look into it more, and get the facts.]</p> <p><i>It just feels like I am going to go crazy, therefore I must be.</i> [This isn't very solid evidence that worrying is going to harm me. It has never actually happened, it is just that it feels so bad at the time, so I assume something bad will happen. Just because I feel it is true, isn't really evidence it is true.]</p> <p><i>When I worry a lot, I get a cold, so worrying must be bad for my health.</i> [There have been times when I haven't worried and have gotten sick. Also when I have worried a lot and gotten sick, I guess I haven't been sleeping well, eating right or exercising. So I guess it might not be the worrying itself that caused it, but how my lifestyle changes when I worry.]</p>	<p><i>How can something be both dangerous and helpful at the same time?</i> [My beliefs about worrying don't match up. Maybe I need to re-think.]</p> <p><i>I have never actually gone crazy or gotten really sick from worrying.</i> [What I am worried about has never actually happened.]</p> <p><i>Plenty of people have worry and stress in their lives. While it doesn't feel great, these people don't all break down physically or mentally.</i> [It doesn't tend to happen to other people, so why should it happen to me.]</p> <p><i>When it comes to my health, making positive changes to my diet, exercise and lifestyle might be more important to focus my energy on.</i> [Rather than worrying about worrying.]</p>

## Challenging Your Belief

Belief: <i>My worrying is dangerous</i>	
Evidence For	Evidence Against



## Challenging Your Beliefs

Below is a list of questions you can ask yourself to challenge whether your positive beliefs about worrying are really true. Remember, these questions are to help you do your detective work. An example is given below of how to use these questions to challenge your beliefs, and on page 4 you will find a worksheet to help you do this for yourself.

### Evidence For

- What makes you think worrying is helpful?
- What's the evidence for your positive beliefs?
- Can you specifically describe how worrying helps?
- Is the evidence for your beliefs good/solid/reliable?
- Is there another way the evidence for your beliefs could be viewed?



### Evidence Against

- Is there any evidence that goes against your positive beliefs about worrying?
- What is the aim of your worrying? Does worrying really achieve this aim?
- Can you achieve your aims without worrying? (i.e., problem solving, taking action)
- Is it worrying that is helpful or something else? (i.e., problem solving, taking action)
- What is the difference between worrying and problem solving?
- Have there been situations where you haven't worried, and things have still turned out okay?
- Have there been situations where you have worried, and that has actually made things worse?
- What are the disadvantages of worrying? How do these fit with it being helpful?

### EXAMPLE:

Evidence For	Evidence Against
<p><i>Worrying prepares me, so that if bad things happen I can cope better.</i> [What is the good in always being prepared for the worst, which never seems to happen...it just ends up making me feel awful all the time – and how can that be good coping? Maybe if I didn't worry, I would still have been able to cope if something bad had happened.]</p> <p><i>Worrying helps me get everything done properly and on time.</i> [Sometimes I worry so much that I am unable to do things, so how does this fit with my beliefs? Maybe if I didn't worry, I would still get things done well – maybe I should try it and see.]</p> <p><i>I don't know how worrying stops bad things happening - I just feel it does.</i> [I don't have any strong, specific or scientific evidence to back my belief. What I am thinking is really very superstitious.]</p> <p><i>The fact that nothing bad ever happens is because I worry.</i> [I have no explanation for how this is possible. How can my worrying actually affect what happens in the world?]</p>	<p><i>It isn't the worrying that helps me, but problem solving and taking action. [I could do these things without worrying].</i></p> <p><i>Worrying and problem solving are not the same. [Problem solving focuses on what I can do about a situation, worrying is just repetitively thinking about the situation in a negative way...how can that be helpful?].</i></p> <p><i>Worrying makes me upset, interferes with my ability to concentrate and make decisions, and makes me procrastinate.</i> [What my worrying actually does to me does not match with my positive beliefs that worrying makes me cope, helps me solve problems and motivates me – maybe I need to re-think things.]</p> <p><i>There have been times when I haven't worried and bad things haven't happened/ I have been able to cope/ I have gotten things done properly and on time.</i> [I guess these experiences show that the benefits I thought worrying gave me may not be real.]</p>

## Challenging Your Beliefs

<b>Belief:</b> <i>Worrying is helpful</i>	
Evidence For	Evidence Against

# Postponement Experiment

## My Thinking Time:

<b>Start Time:</b>	<b>Time Limit:</b>	<b>Place:</b>
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**Prediction** (What do you think will happen if you postpone worrying? Particularly, how controllable will worrying be?)

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How confident are you of your ability to postpone worrying?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I cannot postpone worrying at all				I am moderately confident I can postpone worrying				I am extremely confident I can postpone worrying		

Day: Date:	____ day	____ day	____ day	____ day	____ day	____ day	____ day
What happened? Did you postpone worrying?							
What happened at thinking time? Did the thoughts still seem important?							
How controllable did worrying seem? (0% to 100%)							

Compare prediction with what happened. What did you learn about worrying and how controllable it is?

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## My Attention Workout

Mundane task: _____ Where and when will I do my workout: _____	
Before starting the attention workout, where do I notice my attention is focussed?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-focussed attention (i.e., focussing on thoughts, feelings, symptoms, etc):</li> <li>Task-focussed attention (i.e., the task I was actually engaged with):</li> </ul>	_____ % _____ % 100 %
During the attention workout, anchor my attention back to the task at hand by focussing on:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Touch</u>: What does the activity feel like? What is the texture like (e.g., rough, smooth)? Where on my body do I have contact with the task? Are there areas of my body with more or less contact with the task?</li> <li><u>Sight</u>: What do I notice about the task? What catches my eye? How does the task appear? What about the light... the shadows... the contours... the colours?</li> <li><u>Hearing</u>: What sounds do I notice? What kinds of noises are associated with the task?</li> <li><u>Smell</u>: What smells do I notice? Do they change during the task? How many smells are there?</li> <li><u>Taste</u>: What flavours do I notice? Do they change during the task? What is the quality of the flavours?</li> </ul> <p>Remember that it is normal for my mind to wander off. Rather than beating myself up over this, use each time my mind wanders as an opportunity to workout my attention muscle again.</p>	
Having completed the attention workout, where did I notice my attention was focussed during the workout?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-focussed attention (i.e., focussing on thoughts, feelings, symptoms, etc):</li> <li>Task-focussed attention (i.e., the task I was actually engaged with):</li> </ul>	_____ % _____ % 100 %
What did I learn from this? What conclusions can I make from this?	

The aim is to complete this worksheet the first time you try mundane task focusing so you have a bit of guidance about what to do with your attention. You don't need to complete it every time you do a mundane task focusing exercise.



# Mindfulness Exercises



## Mindfulness Meditation

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Find a place where you can sit quietly and undisturbed for a few moments. To begin, you might want to set a timer for about 10 minutes, but after some experience you should not be too concerned about the length of time you spend meditating.

Begin by bringing your attention to the present moment by noticing your breathing. Pay attention to your breath as it enters and then leaves your body. Before long, your mind will begin to wander, pulling you out of the present moment. That's ok. Notice your thoughts and feelings as if you are an outside observer watching what's happening in your brain. Take note, and allow yourself to return to your breathing.

Sometimes you might feel frustrated or bored. That's fine--these are just a few more feelings to notice. Your mind might start to plan an upcoming weekend, or worry about a responsibility. Notice where your thoughts are going, and accept what's happening.

Whenever you are able to, return your concentration to your breathing. Continue this process until your timer rings, or until you are ready to be done.



## Body Scan

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During the body scan exercise you will pay close attention to physical sensations throughout your body. The goal isn't to change or relax your body, but instead to notice and become more aware of it. Don't worry too much about how long you practice, but do move slowly.

Begin by paying attention to the sensations in your feet. Notice any sensations such as warmth, coolness, pressure, pain, or a breeze moving over your skin. Slowly move up your body--to your calves, thighs, pelvis, stomach, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, neck, and finally your head. Spend some time on each of these body parts, just noticing the sensations.

After you travel up your body, begin to move back down, through each body part, until you reach your feet again. Remember: move slowly, and just pay attention.



## Mindful Eating

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Choose a food you would like to practice with (preferably something you can hold in your hand without getting messy). Something as simple as a single raisin will work well. Move slowly through these steps, taking a moment to focus on each one.

Before you pick up your food, notice how it looks on the table in front of you. Notice its color, how the light reflects from its surface, and its size.

# Mindfulness Exercises

Now, pick up the food. Notice the weight, and how the food feels against your skin. Roll the object between your fingers, or roll it in your hand, and notice its texture. Notice if it's smooth, rough, slick, soft, firm or if it has any other properties. Hold the food to your nose, and pay attention to its smell.

Next, place the food in your mouth, on your tongue, but don't eat it. Notice how it feels in your mouth. Does the texture feel the same as on your hand? What do you taste? Roll the food around in your mouth and pay attention to the feeling.

Finally, begin to slowly chew your food. Notice how your teeth sink into it, and how the texture is different inside. Pay close attention to the flavor, and how it spreads across your tongue. Notice how your body changes—does your mouth fill with saliva? Does your tongue feel hot or cold? Continue to chew your food, paying close attention to the many sensations as you finish.



## Five Senses

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Use this exercise to quickly ground yourself in the present when you only have a moment. The goal is to notice something that you are currently experiencing through each of your senses.

**What are 5 things you can see?** Look around you and notice 5 things you hadn't noticed before. Maybe a pattern on a wall, light reflecting from a surface, or a knick-knack in the corner of a room.

**What are 4 things you can feel?** Maybe you can feel the pressure of your feet on the floor, your shirt resting on your shoulders, or the temperature on your skin. Pick up an object and notice its texture.

**What are 3 things you can hear?** Notice all the background sounds you had been filtering out, such as an air-conditioning, birds chirping, or cars on a distant street.

**What are 2 things you can smell?** Maybe you can smell flowers, coffee, or freshly cut grass. It doesn't have to be a nice smell either: maybe there's an overflowing trash can or sewer.

**What is 1 thing you can taste?** Pop a piece of gum in your mouth, sip a drink, eat a snack if you have one, or simply notice how your mouth tastes. "Taste" the air to see how it feels on your tongue.

The numbers for each sense are only a guideline. Feel free to do more or less of each. Also, try this exercise while doing an activity like washing dishes, listening to music, or going for a walk.

## **Challenging Intolerance Of Uncertainty**

You should be quite familiar with the challenging process by now. You can use this process to dissect your intolerance of uncertainty and question your need for certainty. Do the exercise below and ask yourself some questions to chip away at your need for certainty. These questions can help you to see that trying to eliminate uncertainty and unpredictability from your life is both impossible and unhelpful.

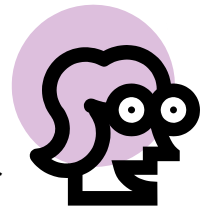
<b>Can you be absolutely certain about everything in life?</b>	
<b>What are the advantages of requiring certainty in life?</b> <i>How has needing certainty in life been helpful to you?</i>	<b>What are the disadvantages of requiring certainty in life?</b> <i>How has needing certainty in life been unhelpful to you or detrimental to your life?</i>
<b>Do you tend to predict that something bad will happen, just because you are uncertain?</b> <i>Is this a reasonable thing to do? Could something good or neutral be just as likely to happen?</i>	<b>What is the likelihood that the things you predict will actually happen?</b> <i>If the likelihood tends to be low, could you live with this small chance?</i>
<b>Are there some uncertainties in your life that you can live with?</b> <i>How do you do this? Can you do the same thing in situations where you have difficulty tolerating uncertainty?</i>	<b>Talk to the people you know. Ask how they cope with the uncertainty and unpredictability of life?</b> <i>Could you do the same thing they do in situations where you have difficulty tolerating uncertainty?</i>

## Accepting Uncertainty

What was your answer to the last two questions in the ‘Challenging Intolerance Of Uncertainty’ worksheet? One question asked about how you tolerate uncertainty in certain areas of your life. The other question asked about how other people tolerate uncertainty in their lives. Chances are you came up with a similar answer to both questions, which might sound something like: *There is nothing I can do about it, so I just have to accept it and move on.*



Letting go of your need for certainty and accepting uncertainty as being an inevitable part of life, can be easier said than done. When demanding certainty and predictability, our attention is very future-focused as our mind worries in an attempt to gain certainty. Therefore, the skills you have developed from your postponement exercises in Module 3, and attention training exercises in Module 4, will be of some assistance when it comes to practicing acceptance of uncertainty.



The first step is recognising or acknowledging when you are feeling the need for certainty and wanting to use worry to achieve this. Then making the active choice to not respond to that need, and instead let go and accept uncertainty, by turning your attention to being more present-focused rather than future-focused. Being more present-focused can help bring about an acceptance of uncertainty. If you are focused on the present rather than the future, then uncertainty about the future is less likely to bother you. Obviously, your mind may drift back to wanting certainty and control in life, but just repeat the steps again of being aware, not responding and letting the need for certainty go.

Let’s look at these steps towards acceptance of uncertainty in more detail. Below is an example, but use the worksheet on page 5 to put in your own words what would help you let go of your need for certainty.

### EXAMPLE

<b>Be Aware</b>	<i>“I’m telling myself how terrible or unbearable not knowing is”; “I’m seeking reassurance”; “I’m getting this agitated and restless feeling that comes with not knowing what will happen”; “I’m worrying about things I can’t be certain of”; “I can’t make a decision because I need to be sure of the outcome first”.</i>
<b>Don’t Respond</b>	<i>“It is interesting to notice that in this situation I have a need for certainty, predictability, a guarantee...this need is leading me to worry. I’ll just sit with these feelings a little while...observing and noticing them for a bit”.</i>
<b>Let Go</b>	<i>“My need for certainty is unnecessary...uncertainty is just a part of life...I’ll just let my need for certainty go, and accept uncertainty” (Visualise your need for certainty floating past you like clouds in the sky or as you breathe out say under your breath “let go” or “accept”).</i>
<b>Be Present-Focused</b>	<i>“I will bring my attention to the present. I’m noticing my breathing right now. When I inhale I can feel my belly rise. When I exhale I can feel my belly fall. I feel a release as the air flows out of my lungs...etc. I now notice my body sitting in this chair, how the seat supports my back, bottom, backs of my legs...I feel the weight of my feet resting heavy on the ground...etc”.</i>
<b>Deal With A Wandering Mind</b>	<i>“Ah, my mind has wandered back to needing certainty. That’s okay. I’ll just bring my attention back to the present. Back to noticing my breathing...”</i>

Once you have completed both worksheets (pages 3 & 5), remember that **challenging** and **acceptance** are two different techniques you can use to address your need for certainty. Try both techniques and see which works better for you. Use either of them, or a combination of the two. But remember, both require effort and lots of practice to be effective in addressing your need for certainty.



# **Accepting Uncertainty**

## **Be Aware**

What do you notice yourself doing when you are needing certainty?

## **Don't Respond**

What can you tell yourself to help you not respond to your need for certainty?

## **Let Go**

What can you tell yourself to help you let go of your need for certainty?

## **Be Present-Focused**

What can you tell yourself to help you be more present focused?

## **Deal with a Wandering Mind**

What can you tell yourself to help you when your mind wanders back to needing certainty?

# Attention Training Diary

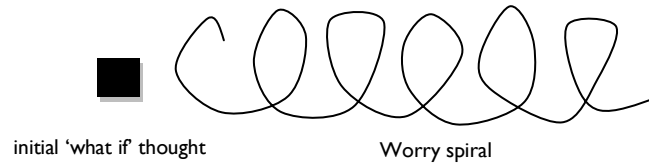
You can use this sheet to both plan your attention training and to record your progress along the way. The last column asks you to jot down any comments about the experience – What did you notice? Did you notice when your mind wandered off? Were you able to re-direct your attention? How did it compare to other times you have practiced?

Date & Time	Attention Task	Duration	Comments
<i>e.g., Monday 5<sup>th</sup>, 9:00am</i>	<i>Meditation</i>	<i>2 mins</i>	<i>My mind kept drifting to worries about the kids, but I just kept refocusing on my breath</i>
<i>Monday 5<sup>th</sup>, 6.00pm</i>	<i>Mundane task focussing (while doing the dishes)</i>	<i>10 mins</i>	<i>I noticed lots of things I didn't usually notice. It was probably a little easier than the meditation as I had something to focus on.</i>

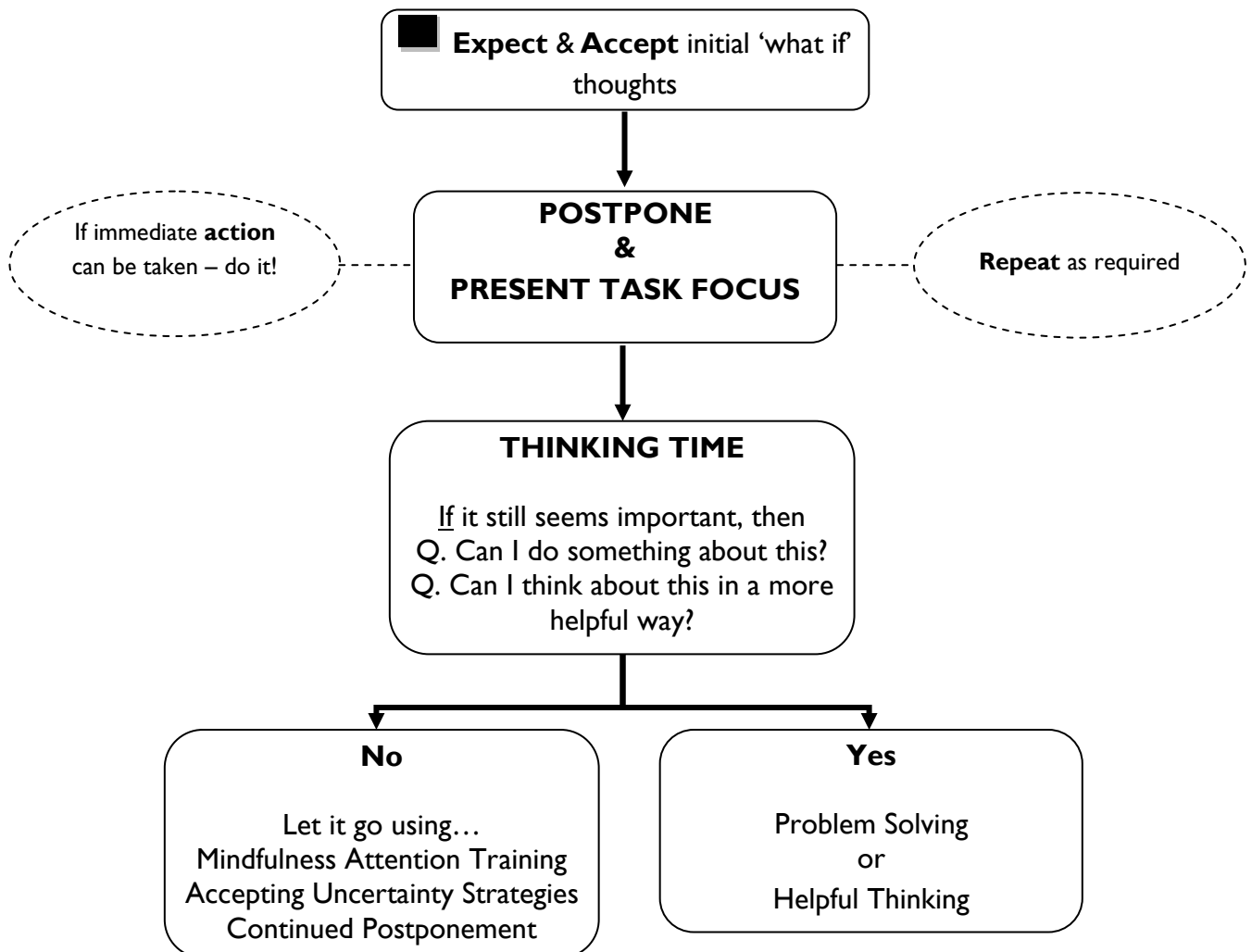


## Worry Flow Chart

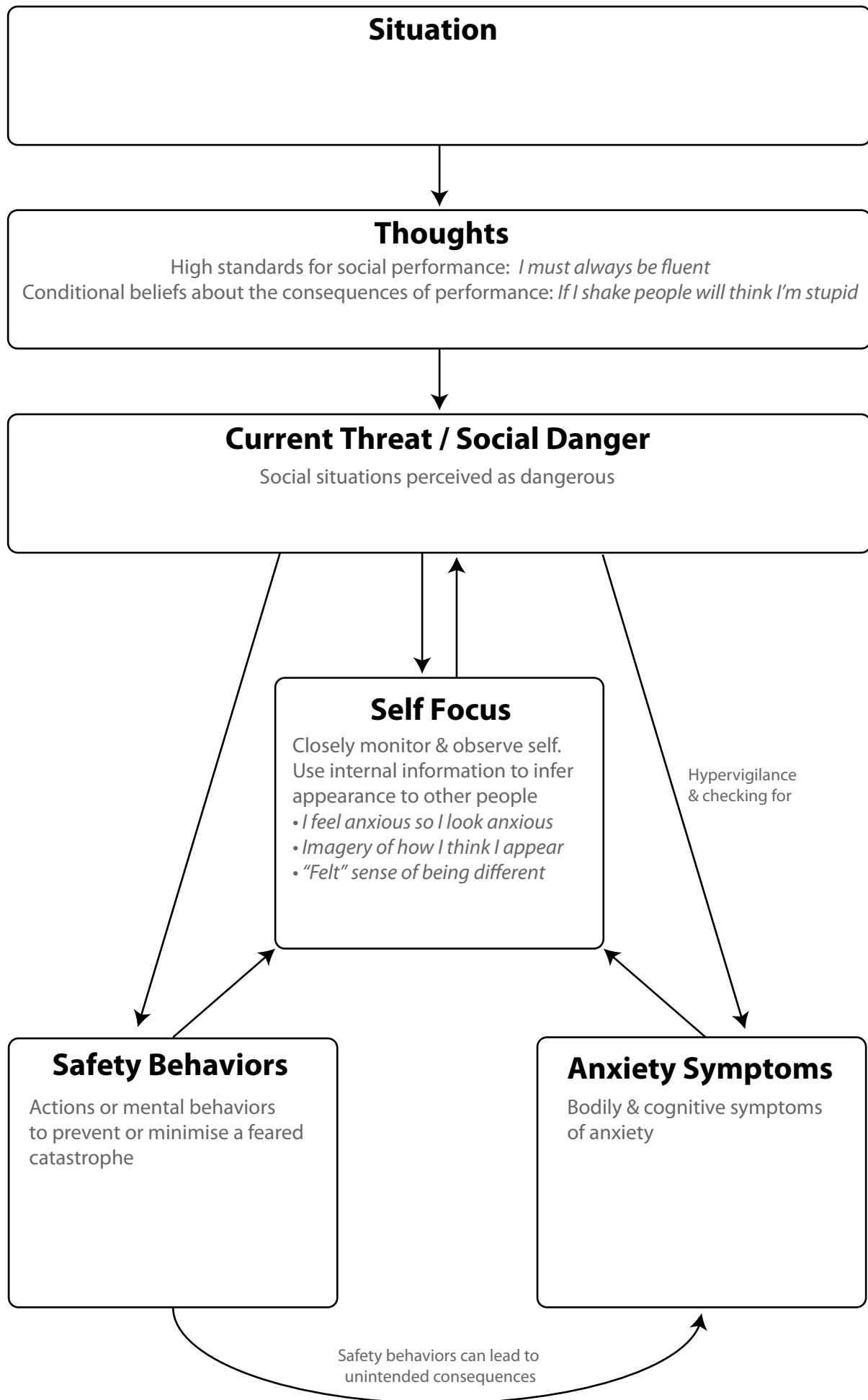
**THE OLD WAY** you use to respond was as soon as an initial 'what if' thought popped into your mind, you pulled it close and/or pushed it away, getting very caught in the worry spiral.



**THE NEW WAY** you can now respond to your negative 'what if' thoughts, given what you have learned in these modules, is represented by the flow chart below.



# Cognitive Model of Social Anxiety



Adapted from: Clark, D. M. & Wells, A. (1995). A cognitive model of social phobia.  
In R. Heimberg, M. Liebowitz, D. A. Hope, & F. R. Schneier (Eds.), Social phobia:  
Diagnosis, assessment and treatment. (pp. 69–93). New York: Guilford Press.

## Cognitive Model of Social Anxiety

