

Lighten the load

Managing Worry



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Discipline of Behavioural Health - Flinders University

Margaret Tobin Centre

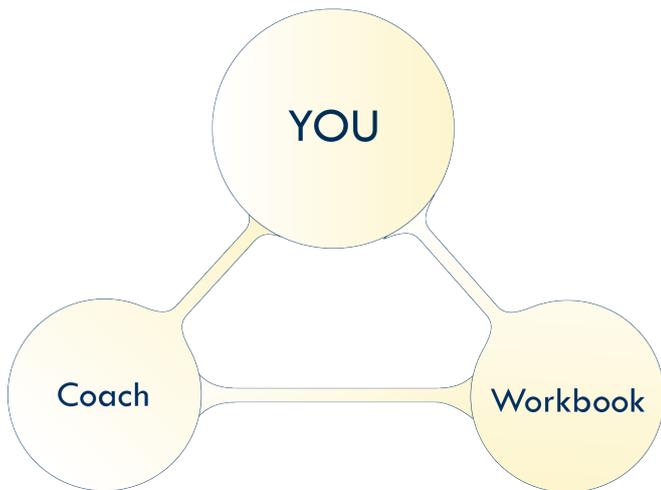
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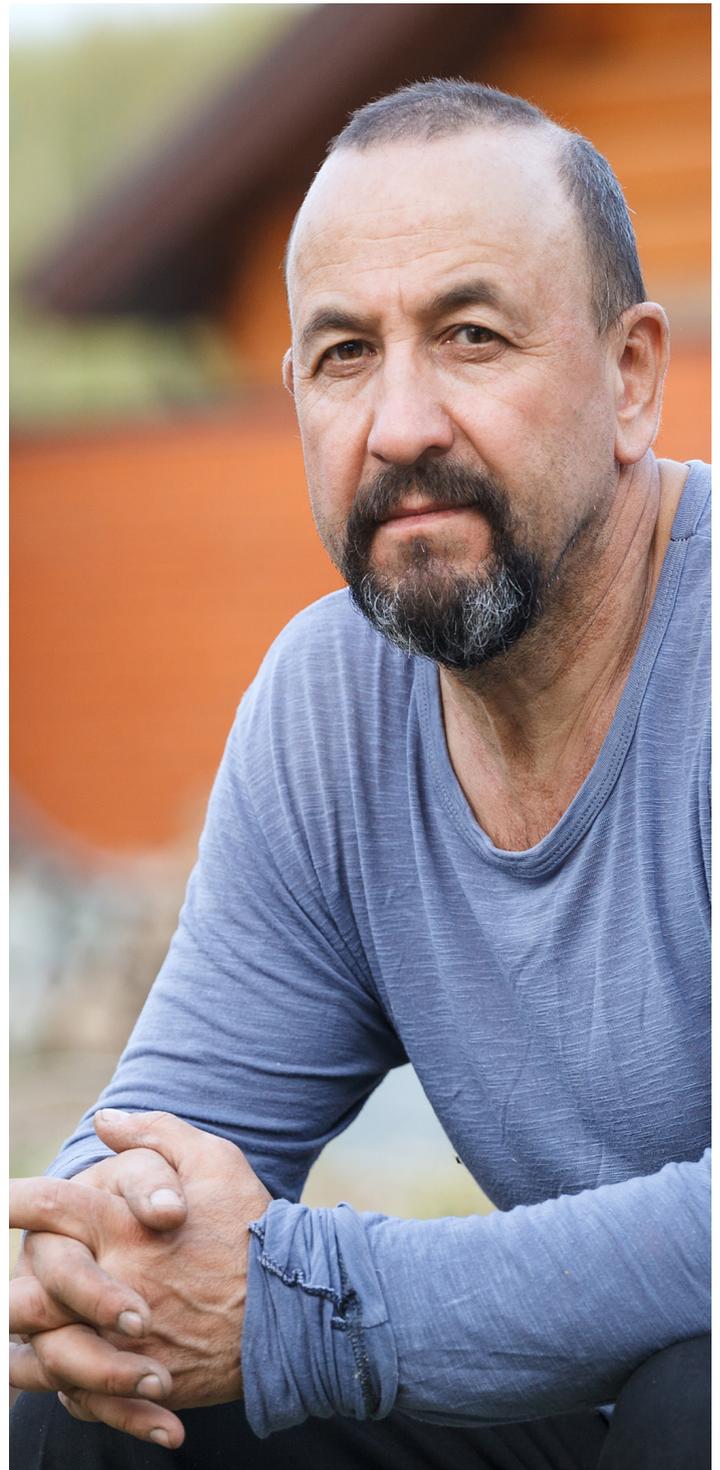


Congratulations, you have committed to making changes in your life by signing up to this program! You have now met with your coach and received this workbook. The hardest part is seeking help, so you are already well on your way to making changes. This guided self-help program is made up of three major components: *you*, *your coach* and this *workbook*.

The most important component of the program is You. Your coach's role is to guide and support you to use the strategies in this workbook, to make the most of this program.

This workbook contains information, worksheets and resources to guide you through the program. Making any change takes time and persistence. Your willingness to give new challenges a go will be an important factor in seeing the change you want in your life.

*Help yourself with
the right tools and
support....*



4I'S



This workbook is made up of the four sections we call the 4I's:

- **I**nspiration - to help connect you with why you're doing this.
- **I**nformation - to let you know what this is all about.
- **I**mplementation - to direct you how to start.
- **I**nto the future - to show you how to maintain the changes that have been made.



INSPIRATION



Inspiration



When you first met with your coach, you identified the main problem you are currently experiencing. You also talked about how your behaviours, feelings, and thoughts contribute to, and maintain, the problem. Now that you have started, you and your coach will work together to identify goals to work on. Fill out the worksheets in this section of the book based on what you discussed with your coach.

As you work through this program, you will learn more about how anxiety and depression impact on your life. Sometimes it can be difficult to recognise the progress you have made. You might like to come back to the pages in this section as sources of inspiration and motivation to see how far you've come since you started.



Problem statement

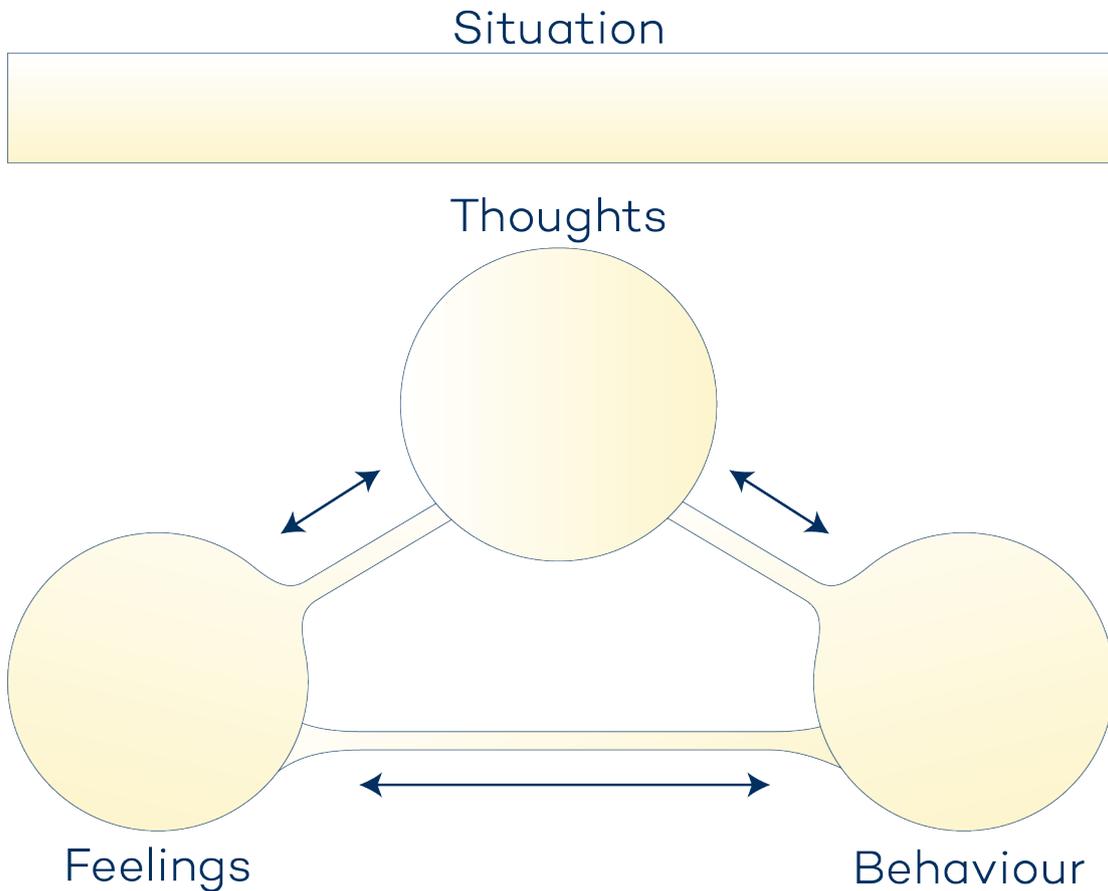
WHEN (trigger)

WHAT (behaviour)

BECAUSE I THINK / FEAR THAT (consequences)

WHICH AFFECTS (impacts)

Impact of the problem



Setting goals



Working out at the beginning where you hope to be at the end is useful for identifying clear and meaningful changes. Together with your coach, you will work out some goals so that you are able to determine if what you are doing is making a difference.

Treatment goals should be S.M.A.R.T.



Goal 1

What will I do differently?

Where will I be doing it?

How regularly will I do it?

Currently, I can complete my goal



Anytime



Often



Occasionally



Not at all

Goal 2

What will I do differently?

Where will I be doing it?

How regularly will I do it?

Currently, I can complete my goal



Anytime



Often



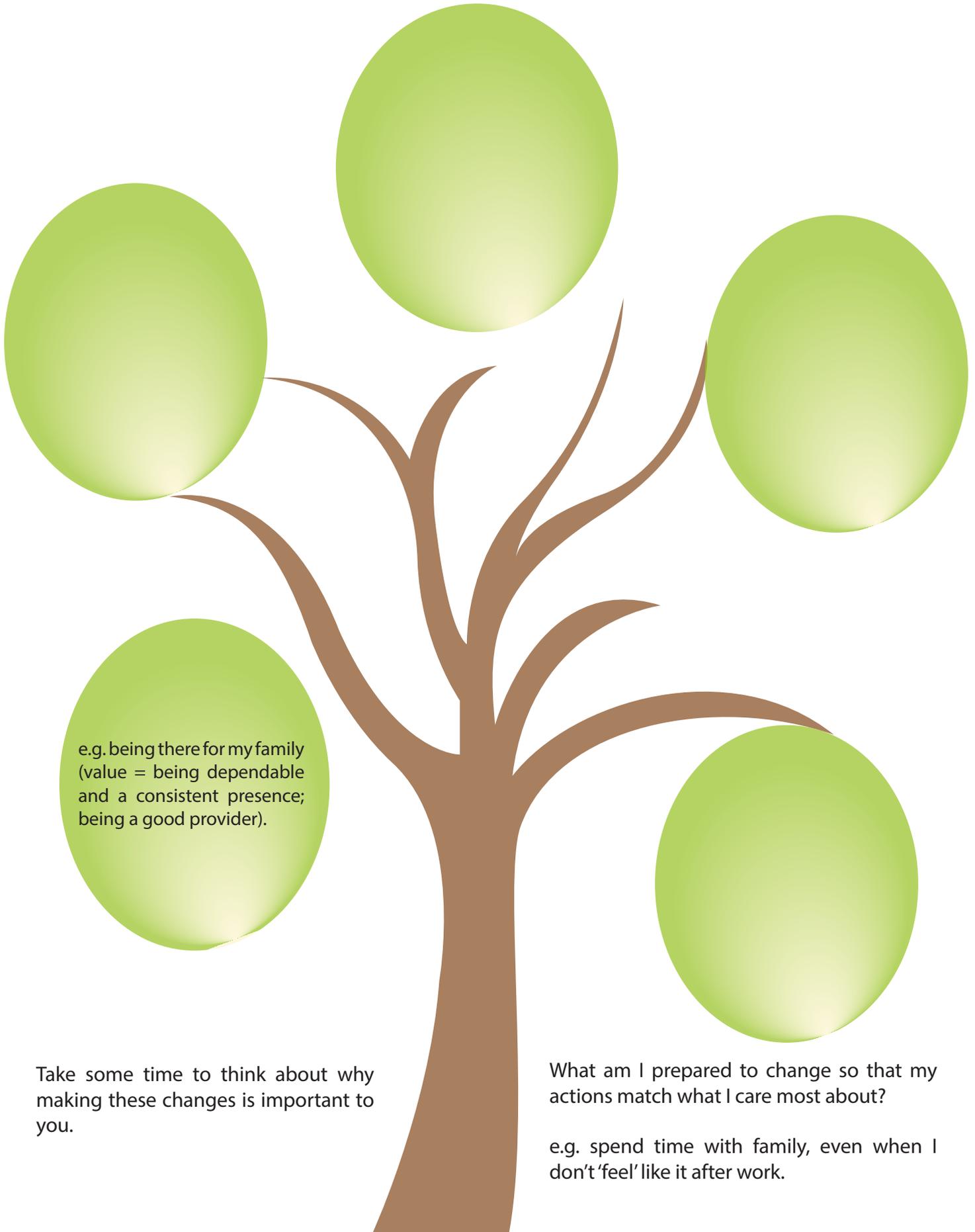
Occasionally



Not at all

Values

Areas in my life that matter the most
and give me reason to change



Take some time to think about why making these changes is important to you.

What am I prepared to change so that my actions match what I care most about?

e.g. spend time with family, even when I don't 'feel' like it after work.

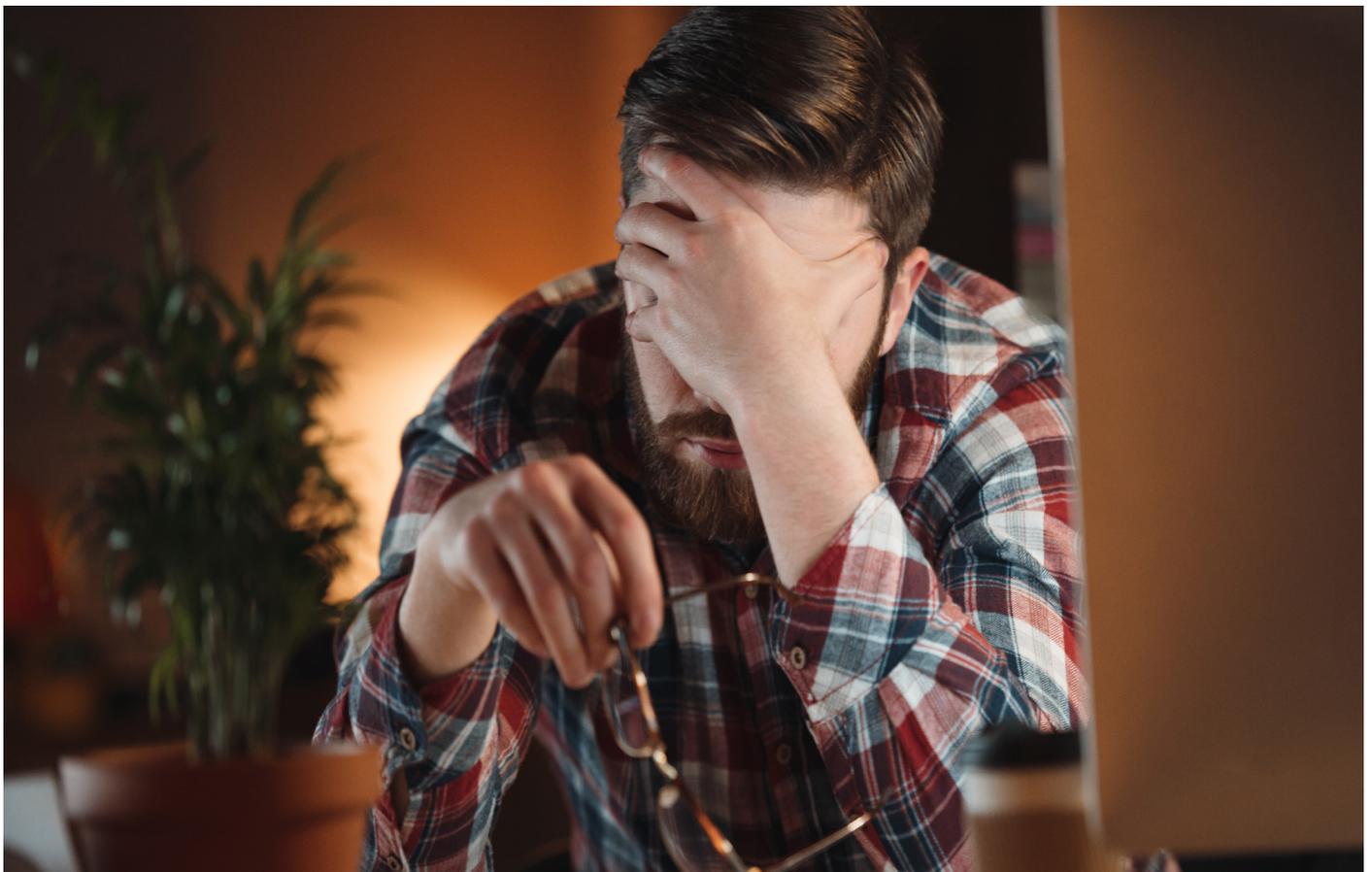
James' story



James is 30-years old; he lives with his wife and 1-year-old son. Since graduating university he has been employed as an accountant. Recently, James has accepted a new management position. Lately he has started to worry that he is taking too long to complete jobs and is preoccupied with the possibility of making mistakes and not meeting the expectations of senior management. Because he is worried that he will lose his job, James has been putting in longer hours at work; this is taking him away from spending time with his wife and son. James worries that if he loses his job he will no longer be able to support his family.

James has been feeling tense, irritable and tired, and headaches have become a daily occurrence. The night before his weekly meeting with senior management James' anxiety intensifies, he worries all night that he'll say something wrong. He is concerned that all his worrying might be making him sick. James believes that if he doesn't worry about things, he won't be prepared for them. He also feels as though things are spiraling out of control and finds that he is unable to wind down without a few beers in the evening. He does, however, recognise that his worrying is getting out of hand, but is not sure why.

An online search has led him to the program. With the help of his coach, James was able to identify his problem, put it into a statement, and rate the impact it was having on his life.



James' problem statement

I am worrying a lot about my job and my stress level, which is impacting on my relationship with my family, the amount of time I spend at work and my sleep. To cope, I am drinking more alcohol, but still feel tense, irritable, and as though things are spiraling out of control.

Impact of the problem



The coach then helped James to identify clear goals, to work toward them and to rate the level of difficulty associated with achieving them right now.

Goal 1

To improve my performance and time management at work. I will do this by setting myself timeframes to work on certain activities, then seek feedback from my boss about what I have done so far. I will do this once a week for the next 2 months.

Currently, I can complete my goal



Goal 2

To get home by 5:30pm at least two nights a week to give my son a bath and put him to bed for at least the next 2 months.

Currently, I can complete my goal



After first meeting his coach, James and his coach spoke weekly by phone for five weeks. Together, James and his coach worked through the *Managing Worry* workbook, reviewing and re-rating his problem statement and goals. The activities and regular contact helped James see that he was making progress towards achieving his goals.

Where is James now?



Through the program, James realised the impact and intensity of his worries. He became aware of the spiral effect each worry had on the next, which led to feeling overwhelmed and out of control. James also came to see that there are different types of worry, and different techniques to deal with worries. James found better ways to manage his time at work and his confidence in his new role continues to grow. Because James is now using his time more effectively at work, he is able to get home earlier and is taking less work home with him, leaving him more quality time to spend with his family.

The *Implementation* section of this workbook will show you some of the activities James completed to get to where he is now, and will be a space for you to try your own!



INFORMATION



Anxiety and Depression



Anxiety is when you might feel overwhelmed, upset, or worried about things in your life. When this happens what you **Do**, what you **Feel**, and what you **Think** impacts on how you go about your life. For example, you may go out less, avoid seeing friends, or continually take days off work.

When you are anxious;

You might **Do**
Avoid the situation, keep to what's safe....

You might **Feel**
Tense, short of breath....

You might **Think**
I can't escape, I can't handle this....

Depression may be when you feel consistently low for two or more weeks and lose interest in the activities you used to enjoy. When this happens what you **Do**, what you **Feel**, and what you **Think** impacts on how you go about your life. For example, you may stay home more, stop going to work and seeing friends, and stop participating in activities.

When you are depressed;

You might **Do**
Spend more time alone, enjoy things less....

You might **Feel**
Flat, unmotivated, sad....

You might **Think**
It's too much effort, I'm useless....





We all worry



People worry about a range of things - our family, friends, money, and responsibilities. Some people worry more than others about these things. Worry involves going over and over things that may or may not happen. Not being able to cope with uncertainty about things in the future can lead to too much worry which then leads to doubts about our ability to manage and respond to change.

On the other hand, worry can also involve thinking over and over about things that have happened in the past. This is known as rumination. Rumination can lead to depression, as low mood is caused by continually revisiting past events through a negative lens. Too much rumination leads to reduced enjoyment in activities and withdrawal, because we are no longer able to pay attention to the experiences that we are having in the present.

Identifying types of worries

'Likely' Worries are worries that come about from general day-to-day concerns, and for which there is usually a relatively clear solution. For example keeping the house clean, spending enough time with family or friends, or having enough money to do what you want to.

'Unlikely' Worries are worries which are exaggerated and tend to be based on future uncertainties that we have limited control over. The outcomes of unlikely worries may never eventuate as they tend to be ideas or scenarios that have very little chance of ever happening. But when we experience lots of unlikely worries, it can lead to feeling out of control or being unable to cope.



Worry can be useful when it only lasts as long as it is needed, to deal with the problem at hand – particularly when something of great value to us is under threat. In these cases, worry lets us know that we need to put something in place to resolve the problem and protect what we value. Worry, however, does not come without a cost, it can preoccupy our mind, impact on our sleep, and cause us to feel tense and irritable. In situations where something we value is directly under threat, these side effects may be tolerable as we attempt to navigate our way through to an acceptable solution.

When you worry about unlikely events/situations it can cause increased self-doubt, indecisiveness, and lead to less confidence in your ability to cope. When we worry under these circumstances, what starts out as worrying about a particular situation can quickly snowball into a series of loosely connected worries that continually occupy our thoughts, drain our mental and physical energy, and takes us further away from resolving the problem.

People gather bundles of sticks to build bridges they never cross.

Unknown

A guide for dealing with worry in your own life



1

DEFINE

Monitor and record your worries in the worksheets.

2

DO

Decide:

Decide on a technique to help manage or deal with your main worry.

At different times, you will apply different techniques.

Do:

Start using the chosen technique.

Use the worksheets to guide you.

3

DISCOVER

Discover what works for you:

After you have implemented the technique, review it with your coach in the next session.

What happened?

What did you learn?

What changes have you made?

Discuss with your coach whether any other technique(s) may now be useful to try out.

If it has been useful, keep going with what you have been doing.

Take away



Worry involves thinking over and over about things we anticipate will happen in the future and about which the outcome is uncertain.

Too much worry can lead to doubts about our own ability to cope, deal with change, and problem solve.

There are two general types of worries: Likely worries relate to a current situation and have a clear solution. Unlikely worries relate to future events or situations that you have little control over the outcome, and planning for these often makes things worse.



*I have heard there are troubles of more than one kind.
Some come from ahead and some come from behind.
But I've bought a big bat. I'm all ready you see.
Now my troubles are going to have troubles with me!*

Dr Seuss

IMPLEMENTATION



Making change



Now that you have identified sources of **I**nspiration to complete this program, and have learnt valuable **I**nformation about worry, it is time to **I**mplement some strategies to manage your worry.

This section is made up of a range of strategies that you can use to manage your worry. Together with your coach you will decide which strategies suit you best:

- (1) Catastrophising stocktake
- (2) Worry spiral
- (3) Put worry in it's place
- (4) Attentional focus technique
- (5) 6 steps to problem solving

First, you will see how James completed some of these activities during his program. With the guidance of your coach, you will then have the opportunity to start implementing them yourself!



James' catastrophising stocktake



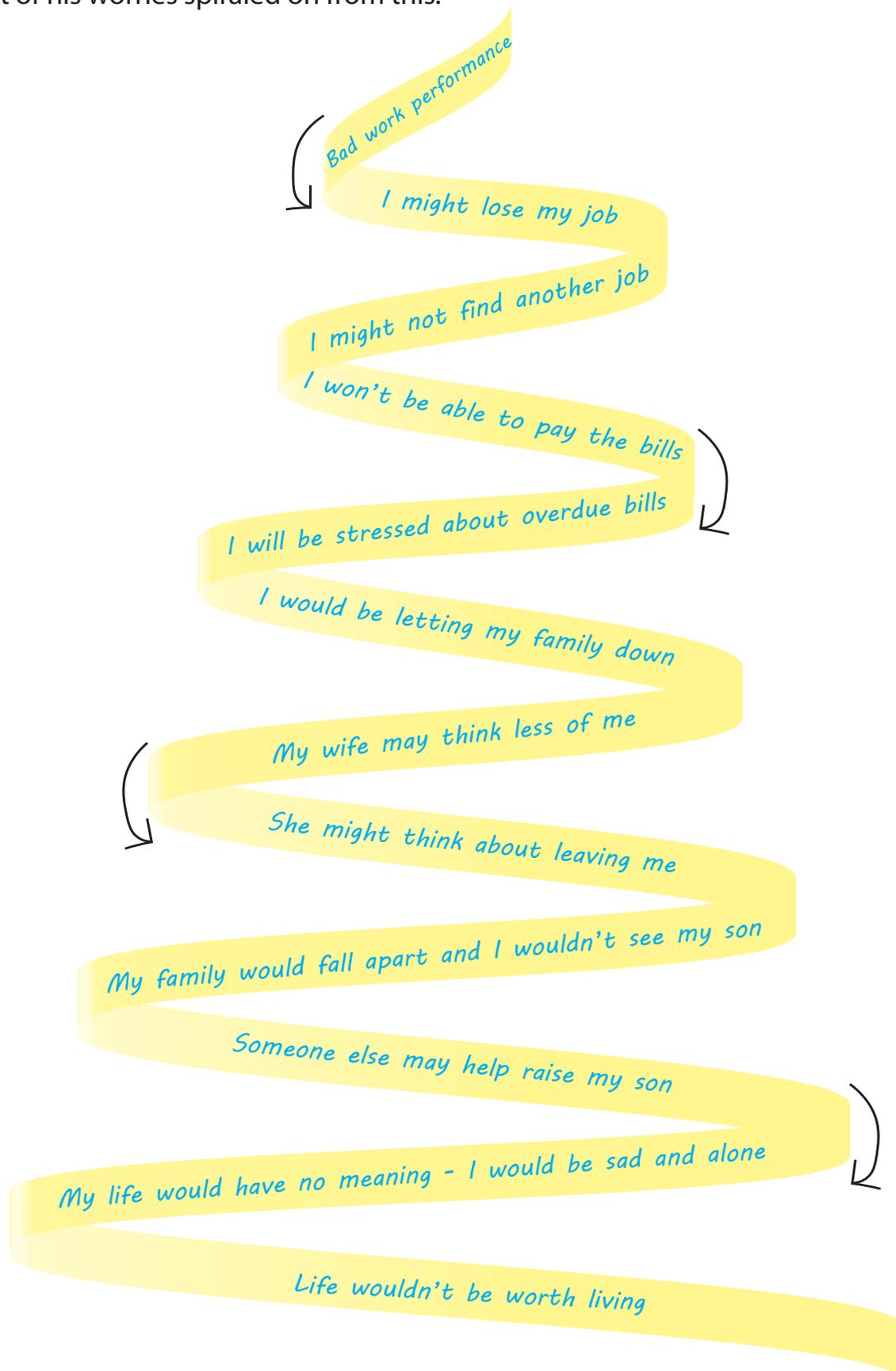
After setting your goals, complete the catastrophising stocktake worksheet. First, list your worries in the first column. Next, classify them as likely worries (current problems with a possible solution) or unlikely worries (situations that are about the future, tend to be exaggerated, and you have no control over). Finally, write down the number of days you had this worry during the week, the number of times each day, and the level of distress this worry creates.

Worry	Likely / Unlikely (L / U)	Number of days this occurred (1 - 7)	Number of times each day	Level of distress worry creates (0 - 6)
<i>Performing poorly at work</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Completing my jobs on time at work</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>My performance at work and the expectations that come with my promotion</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Making mistakes or not being able to do my job well enough</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Saying something stupid in senior management meetings</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>My life will fall apart because I will lose my job</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Spending more and more time away from my family</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Not being able to support my family</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>My wife will take our son and leave</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>My health getting worse due to the stress</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>I'll lose the house and be declared bankrupt</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>I will have no-one to support me</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>

James' worry spiral



At the top of the Worry Spiral, James wrote down the worry that has been on his mind the most and has caused him the most distress, from his stocktake list. He could then see how the rest of his worries spiraled on from this.



Catastrophising stocktake



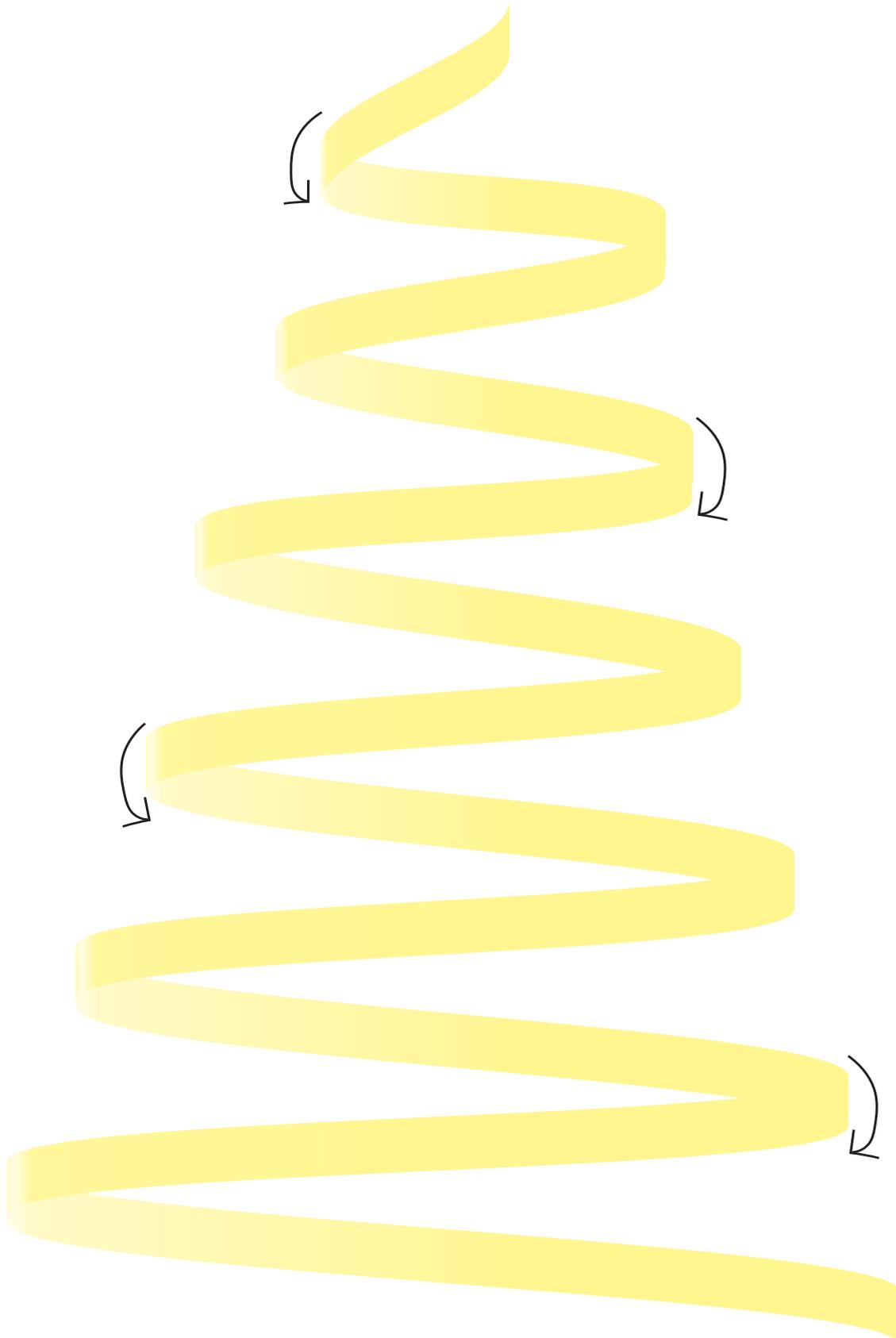
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Worry spiral



At the top of the Worry Spiral, write down the worry that has been on your mind the most and has caused you the most distress, from your Stocktake List. On the following sections of the spiral you should go on to describe what it is about this that worries you. This will help you to see how your worries are connected, and can spiral from a smaller worry, into something quite big.



Catastrophising stocktake



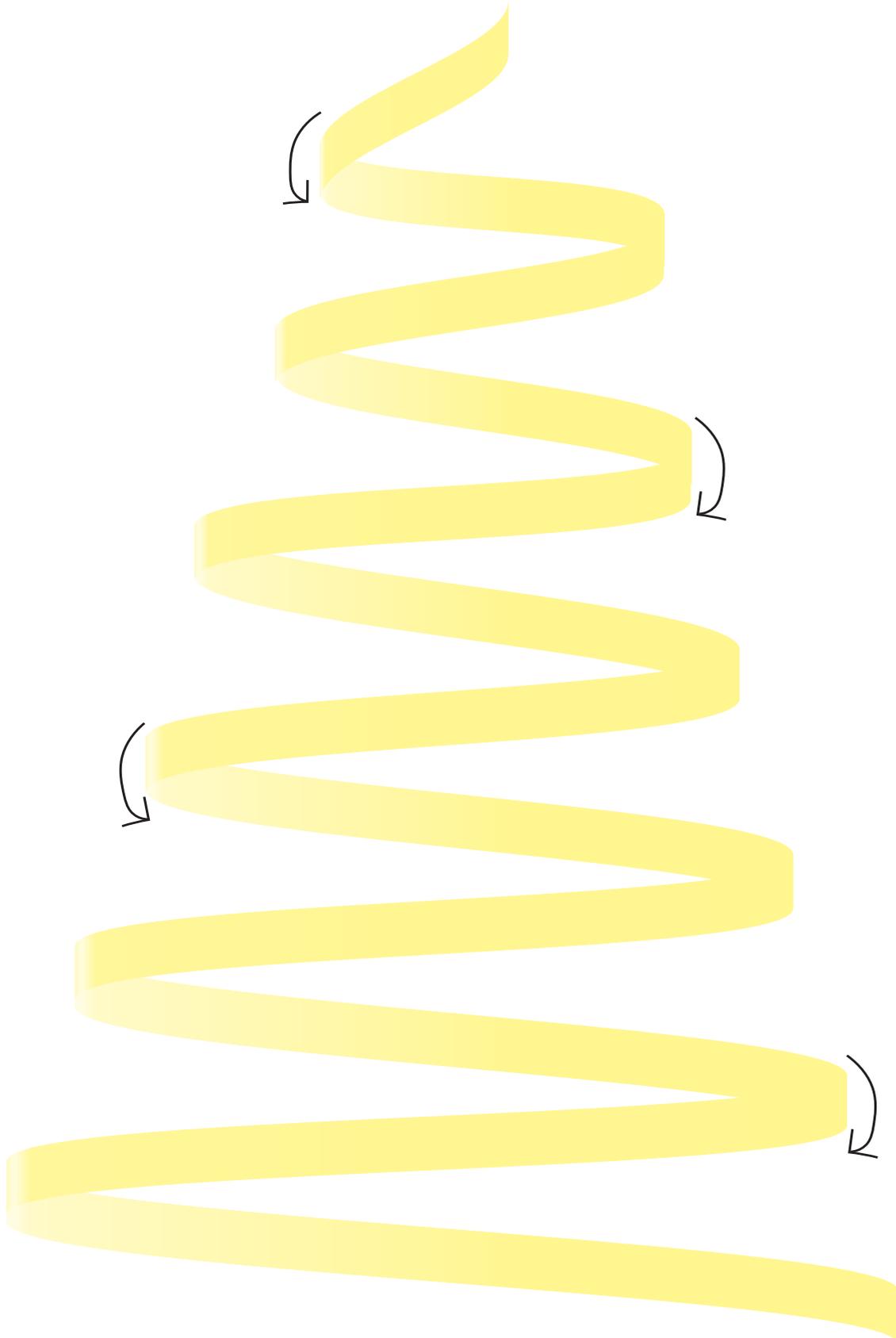
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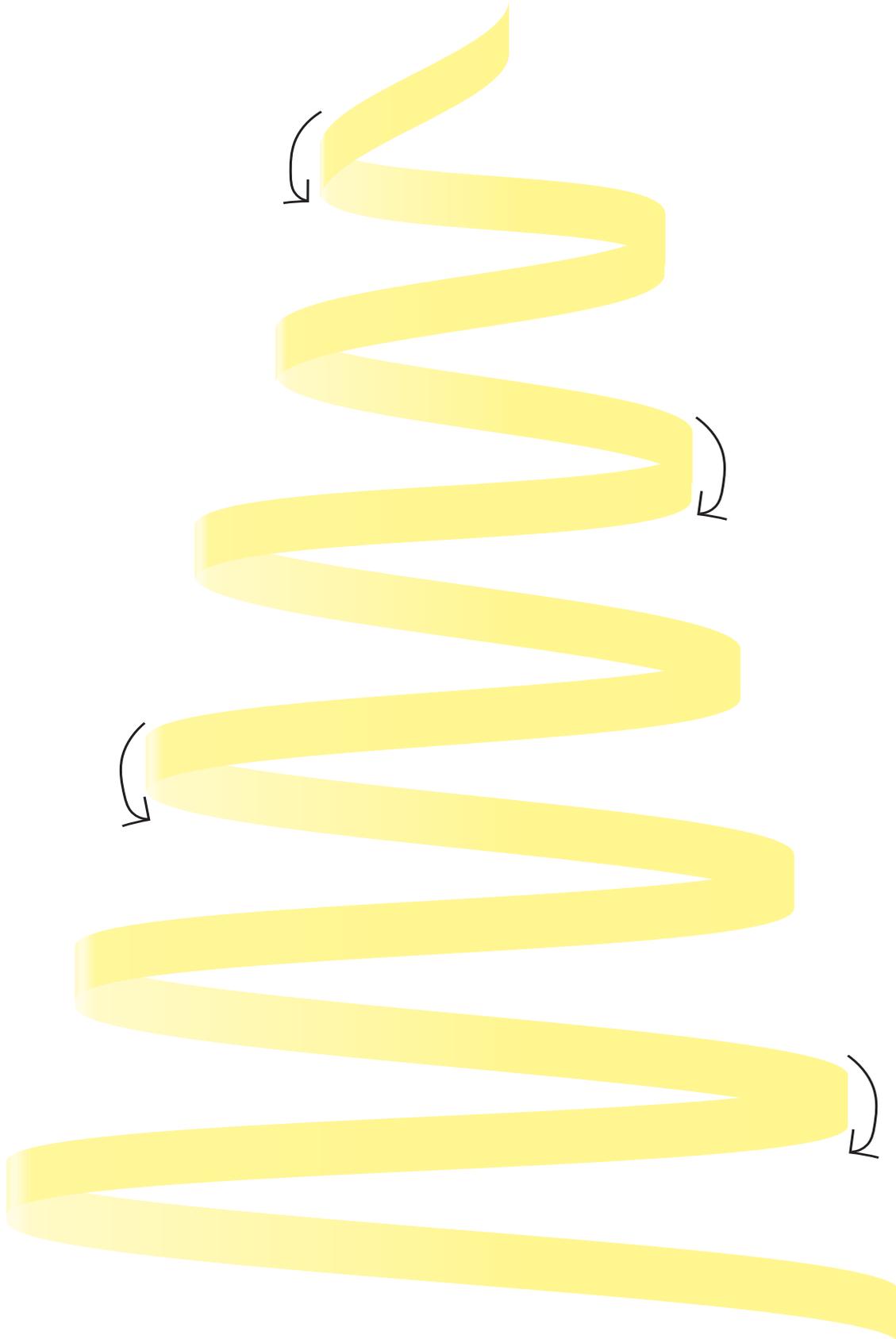
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Put worry in its place



Learning to act “as if” you are tolerant to uncertainty is a good place to start. Complete the 5-step *put worry in its place* activity below, with the guidance of your coach. In order to cope, sometimes people over plan, prepare, or avoid things, as a way of reducing uncertainty. This doesn’t always cause problems, but it can lead to time-consuming behaviours and create a lot of stress. It feels like it helps in the short-term, but usually becomes a problem in the long-term. While it is impossible to get rid of all anxiety, you can learn to be more tolerant. The best way to start being more tolerant is to start acting as if you are. Changing the way you respond to uncertainty will lead to changes in what you do, feel and think.

Step 1: Make a list of unhelpful behaviours

Write down all of the things you do to try and reduce feeling uncertain. For example, do you double-check things often? Do you avoid situations? Do you prepare and plan a lot before doing a task?

-
-
-
-
-

Step 2: Make a list of behaviours to put worry in its place

While learning to act “as if” you are tolerant to uncertainty, start with small behaviours before trying something more difficult. Below, list some behaviours you might try to change to help increase your tolerance to uncertainty. For example, you may try going out with your partner and letting them plan the evening, you may go to the shops without a planned list, or you may send an email without checking it over. Rate how anxious you think these changes will be for you.

Behaviour to put worry in its place	Level of anxiety (0 - 6)

Put worry in its place



Step 3: Practice putting worry in its place

Now that you have your list of behaviours that will help you to learn to tolerate uncertainty, it is time to start practising. Start by choosing smaller behaviours that will cause you the least anxiety. Try to practice 3 behaviours a week.

Step 4: Keep a record

Each time you act “as if” you are tolerating uncertainty, write down the following about the experience:

What did you do?

How did you feel while you were doing it?

What happened?

If things did not go as planned, what did you do to manage?

What did you learn about your ability to cope with negative outcomes in the future?

Step 5: Keep it up!

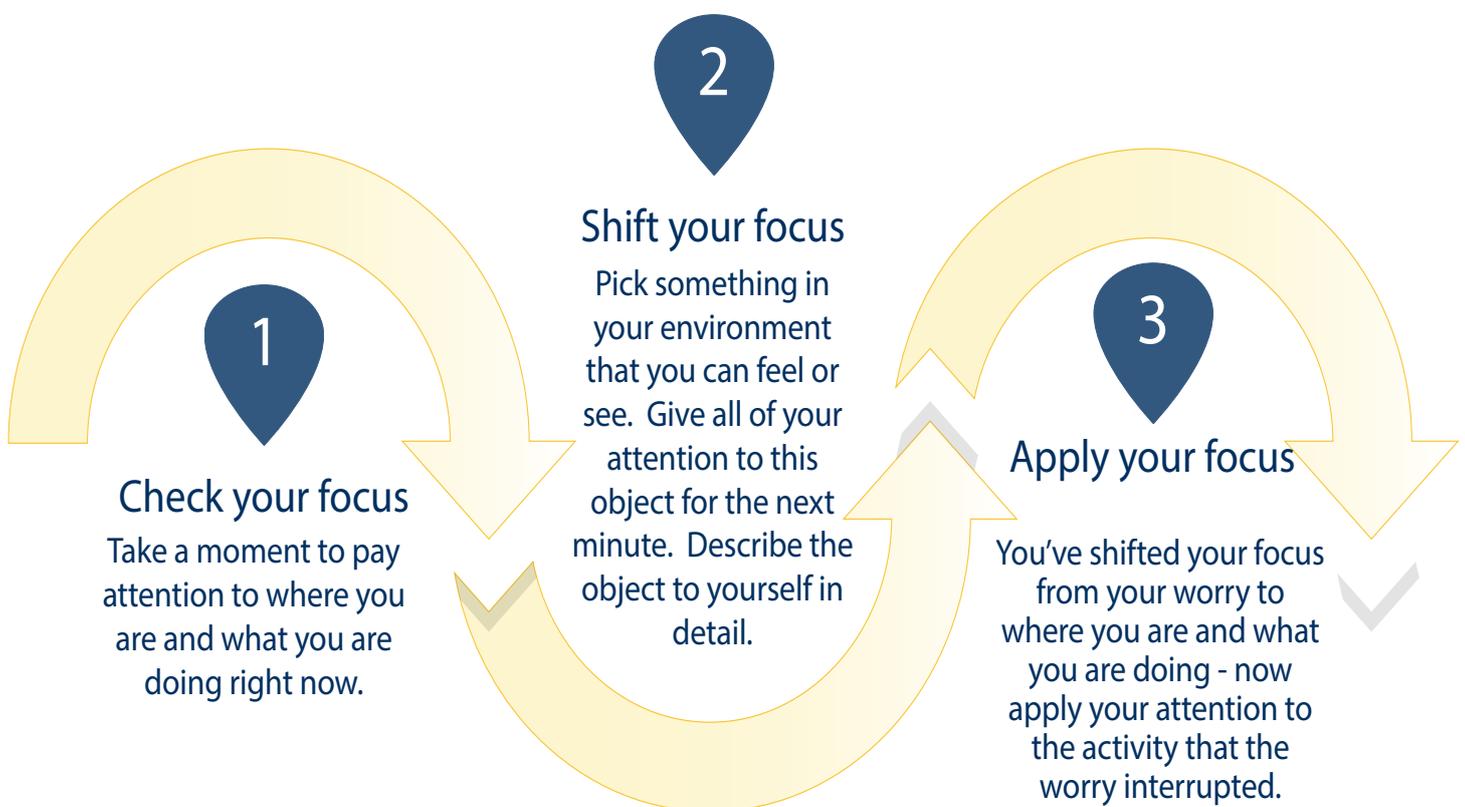
Look for opportunities to tolerate uncertainty in your day-to-day life. The more you act “as if” you’re comfortable with uncertainty, the easier it will become.

(Adapted from Dugas’ *Basic Intolerance of Uncertainty Model*)

Attentional Focus Technique



When you are caught up in your worries, your attention and focus is on past or future worries, not on the here and now. Being able to bring your attention back to the here and now can be an effective way for managing worries. One of the ways you can do this is by learning and practicing the 3 steps of Attentional Focus, which can help you to attend to what you are doing and what's going on around you, despite your worries.



Using Attentional Focus to disengage from your worries is a simple concept, but it takes practice. At first, you'll probably find that your mind is drawn back to your worries. Each time you bring your focus back to the here and now, you reinforce a new way to stop the worry.

6 Steps to Problem Solving



Step 1

Define your problem

Write down the problem to be solved:

--

Step 2 Generate possible solutions	Step 3 Advantages, disadvantages and resources for each possible solution		
	Advantages	Disadvantages	Resources

6 Steps to Problem Solving



Step 4

Based on the solution you have chosen, decide on a Plan

My plan:
When?

How?

Where?

With whom?

Potential barriers to completing my plan may be:

Possible options for dealing with these barriers:

Step 5

Implement your plan

Remember, planning is important, but doing is better! Make sure you carry out your plan.

Step 6

Evaluate the outcome

What happened? Write down what you did and what you noticed:

What have you learnt from using problem solving steps and implementing your chosen solution?

Based on what happened when you carried out your plan, what other solutions would you now implement?

Alternatively, which other problem would you like to solve?

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INTO THE FUTURE



Relapse prevention

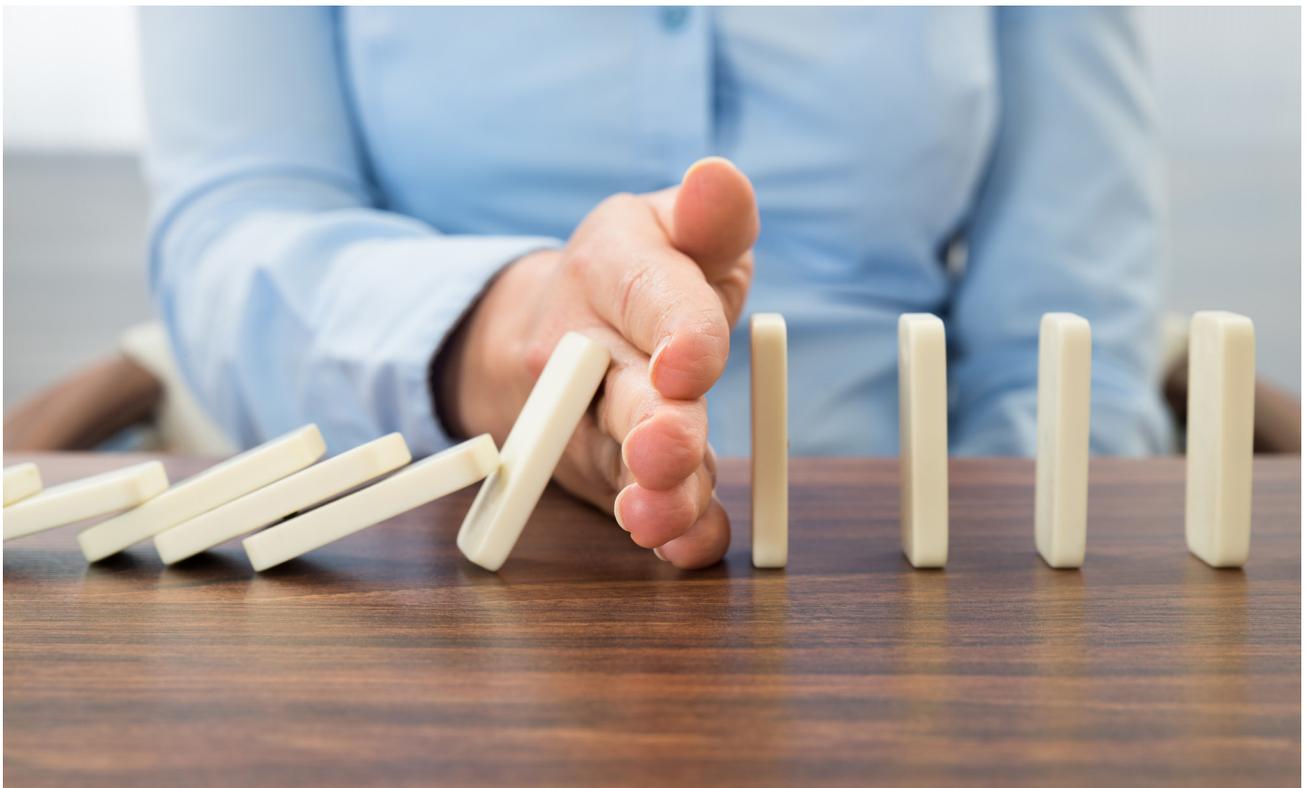


Throughout this program you have been provided with information and an opportunity to apply skills. You have been encouraged to learn more about yourself, and in particular, how the interactions between what you do, feel and think, impacts on you. At this point, we hope you have made some important changes to your life.

Having experienced anxiety or depression can increase the likelihood of experiencing them again in the future. If you notice changes to what you are doing, how you are feeling, and what you are thinking, that last anywhere from a few days to a week, you may be experiencing a *setback* – this is common. A setback is when unhelpful behaviours, feelings or thoughts become more frequent. Responding to a setback by using the techniques you have learnt throughout this program can get you back on track.

If your mental health declines for longer than that, then you may be experiencing a *relapse*. Relapse is when you return to the previous behaviours, feelings and thoughts which caused the anxiety or depression in the first place, and are causing significant disruption to your life.

Relapse is not inevitable and does not happen without warning signs. The techniques you have learnt throughout this program can help you avoid or reduce the severity of relapse. Your confidence will grow as you continue to apply the techniques that you have put into practice. Supported by NETTS and your Relapse Prevention Plan (see next pages) you will have a clear plan to respond to any setback and get back on track.



NETTS:

New skills and knowledge, Exploring opportunities, Traps and Triggers, Solutions



New knowledge and skills you have learnt



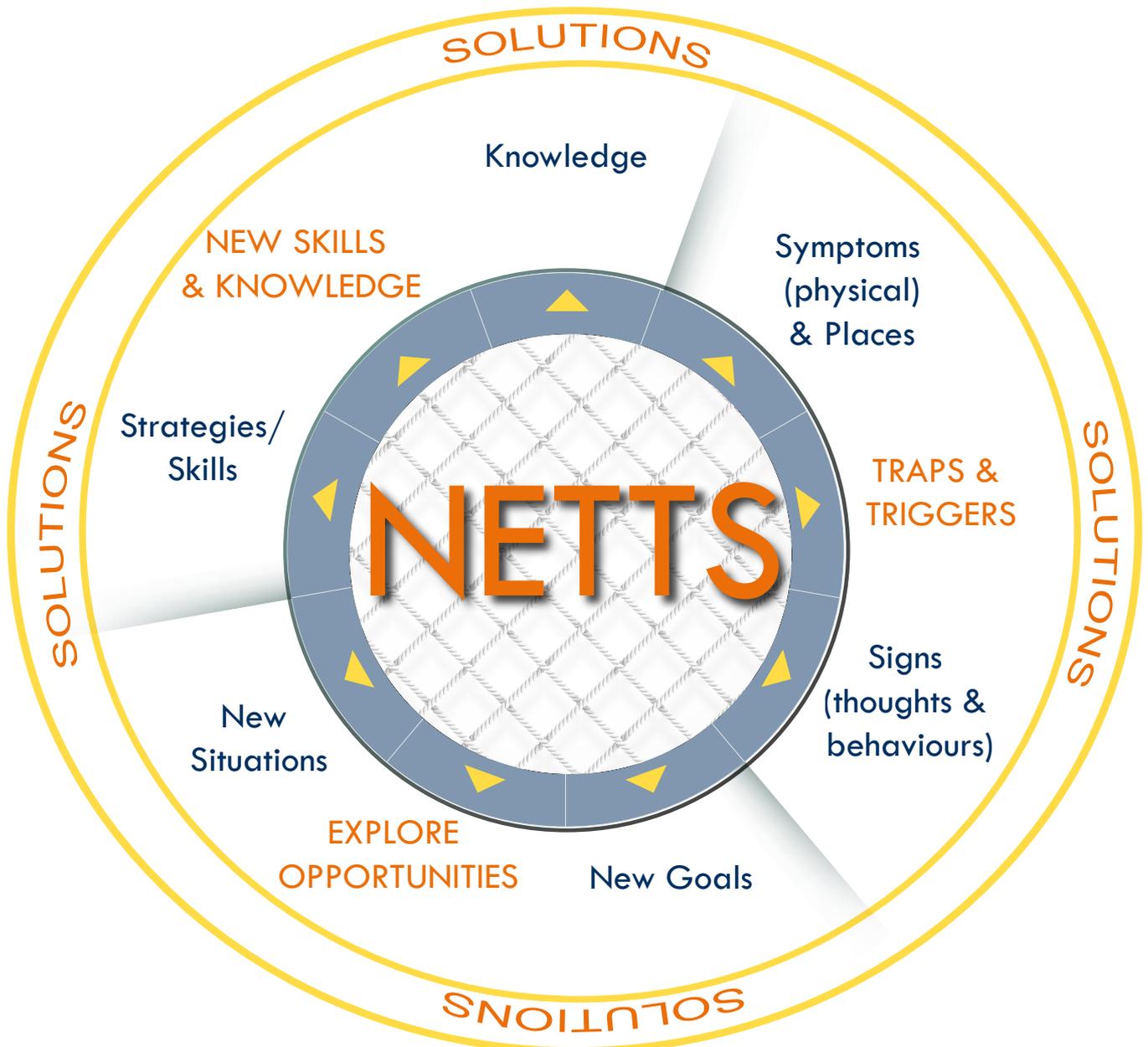
Exploring how these skills and knowledge can be applied to other areas/situations in your life



Traps and Triggers that can disrupt your recovery



Solutions for when you feel you may be experiencing a setback or relapse



Relapse prevention plan



Refer to the worksheet below to develop your RPP with the help of NETTS

New knowledge and skills I have learnt

What I have learnt about the problem:

What I have learnt about what works:

Exploring opportunities

How can I use this further in other parts of my life:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Traps and Triggers

What early warning signs, thoughts, and feelings I need to be aware of:

People and places that can disrupt my recovery:

Solutions

What's next?

People and/or services I will contact if I need some additional support:

When will I schedule my routine 'Wellbeing Check-in' day and time?

- Developing your RPP is something that you will do together with your coach as part of this program.
- We recommend that you keep this resource and refer to it as you need.
- It may also be helpful for you to choose a routine 'Wellbeing Check-in' day and time every few weeks to review your progress (e.g., by re-rating your initial problem statement and goals you recorded in the INSPIRATION section of this workbook and adding in and rating any new goals that you have developed).





This guided self-help workbook is designed as an essential resource in the delivery of Low Intensity Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (LICBT).