

WORRY

A self-help resource to support you on your journey

What's inside?

Complete self-help resource

- ▶ *What is worry?*
- ▶ *How can we support worry?*
- ▶ *Personalised guide*

YMCA

Recommended for 12-18 year olds or to be used alongside a parent or caregiver for 6+
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YMCA Exeter



WELCOME TO YOUR VERY OWN RESOURCE

In this pack, we will look what what worry is, how to support worry and how to personalise support to your own lifestyle and needs.

This pack can be used on your own, or with the help of a parent or adult you trust (like a teacher). It's totally up to you and how you prefer to use it.

It might be more helpful to break this into steps rather than reading it all in one go, so we've broken it down for you to make it easier. It's up to you how to use it, but it might be helpful to complete one step per week to give yourself chance to do the activities.

So, find yourself a comfortable spot, grab a snack and let's get to it...



What is Worry / Anxiety?

Anxiety and worry is a normal and healthy emotion we all have, just like any other emotion. All emotions have a purpose - and the purpose of anxiety is to keep us safe. We need this to tell us when we're in danger, almost like a smoke alarm that goes off when it thinks there might be a fire.

This stems back from when we were cave-people and would need to hunt for food, we needed a sensitive smoke alarm that would keep us safe from danger! The more sensitive it was, the safer we were and could protect our families.

But we aren't cave people anymore, are we!

Modern living is very different, and although our brains are wonderful and complex, they don't always know the difference between a bear trying to eat us, or public speaking.

Our smoke alarms can feel pretty intense at times when we aren't necessarily in danger. Just like the smoke alarm in your house that goes off when you're making some toast, ours can go off when we don't need it to.



Step 1: Signs of Worry

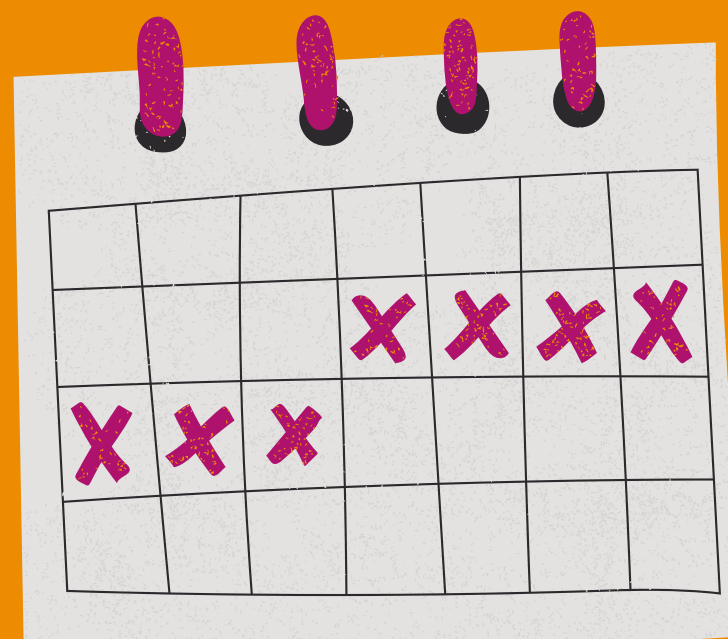
When our smoke alarm goes off, this activates a response called "fight, flight or freeze". This is so we can fight the danger, run away, or hide (freeze). Although this can be helpful if we're running away from a bear, we hopefully aren't doing that! As a result, it can make us feel a bit funny. Let's take a look at what's happening in our bodies at the time

Sweaty

When people feel worried, they might get sweaty. This is the body's way of helping us keep cool, in case we needed to spend time running away from something dangerous

Fear of being judged

People might be avoiding seeing friends or leaving the house. They might be worried about being judged or meeting new people



Shaky

People's arms, legs and hands might shake and this can make them feel a bit wobbly. This is caused by adrenaline running through our bodies to help them respond to danger

Heart beat

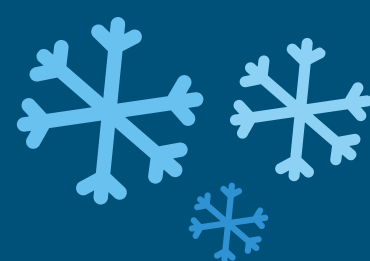
People might notice their heart beating faster or feeling like its thumping in their chest.

This is the body pumping lots of blood around to make sure we can respond to danger.



Feeling frozen

People might feel like they can't talk or like they're frozen or stuck. This might be a sign of the "freeze" response



Sleep

People might feel extra tired or drained - this is because anxiety can be draining on our bodies! Or they might struggle to sleep at night because they are worrying



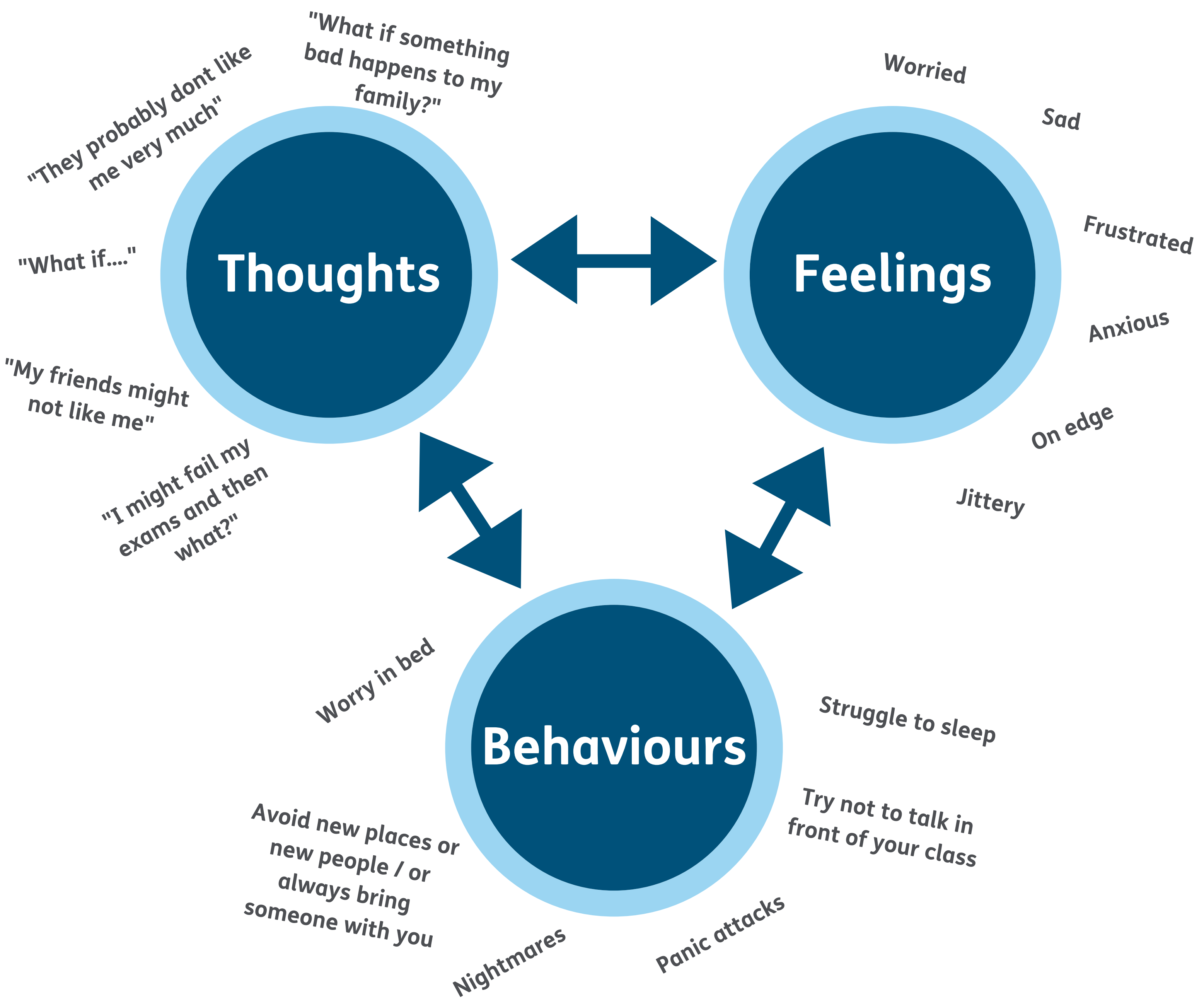
Butterflies and aches

People might get butterflies in their tummy, have a tummy ache, head ache or we might feel sick.

All these feelings might make people feel worse, but they are all a normal response to feeling worried. Are there any other symptoms you can think of?

Worry can impact our thoughts, feelings and behaviours

Just like any emotion, anxiety can impact us in different ways. When something like worry impacts thoughts, feelings and behaviours, it can become a vicious cycle that can be hard to get out of at times



Does any of this feel similar for you? How do you think worry impacts your own thoughts, feeling and behaviours? Write yours around the circles too.

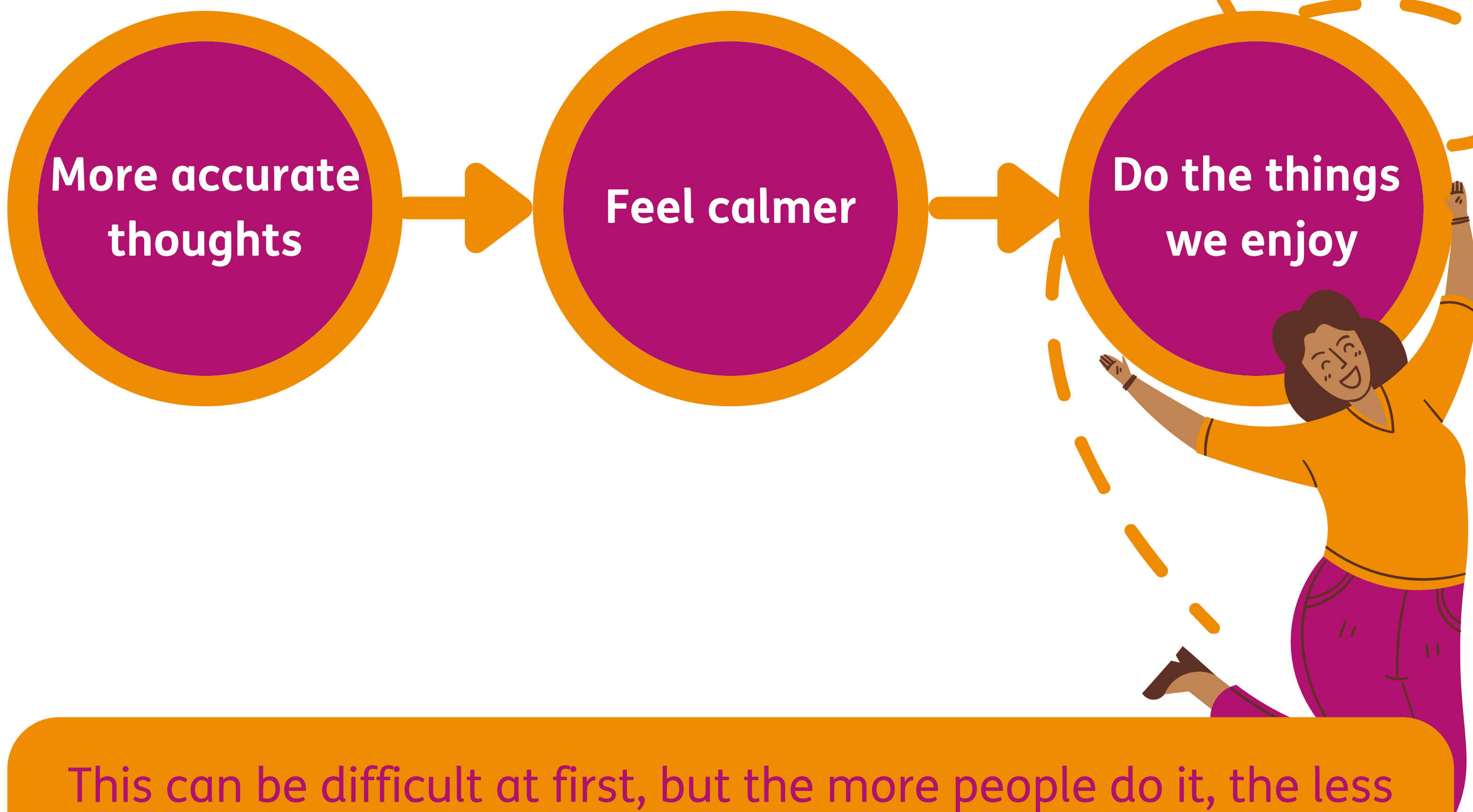
Managing Worry

So, how can we support it?

It's really normal to spend lots of time worrying when we feel worried.

This might help in the short term, as we think it's helping us in some way. But in the long term, this can make us feel worse and distract us from doing other things.

We can support this by finding ways to decrease the amount of time we spend worrying



This can be difficult at first, but the more people do it, the less worried they will feel.

Let's try making this more personal so we can tackle what's going on for you - we can start with some goals on the next page.

Goals

Let's think about three goals that you would like to achieve over the next few weeks. It can be tricky to start thinking of goals, so here's some questions to help you.

How would you know you're starting to feel better? What would you be doing more of?

If we had a magic wand that would make this feeling go away, what would be different for you?

Can we measure this goal?

Step 2: Collecting worries

The second step is to start collecting worries.

It can be helpful to start writing each worry you have in a day down. This can feel tricky for some people, as they may have worries when they're out and about and they can't stop to write them down. So, let's start thinking of ways we can do this that feels right for you - everyone's different, so you can try a few ways to see what feels best.

Let's look at some ideas below!

Using an app called "Worry Tree" where you can log all of your worries on your phone. This can be password protected too! Or, use the "notepad" function on your phone for ease



Worry Monster - you could turn a sock puppet into a monster, or create your own! When you write your worries down on some paper, you can put them into your monster to eat throughout the day.

Worry Jar - you could write all of your worries onto some paper and put them into a Jar. You could decorate the jar with pictures, glitter or drawings.



Worry Box - you could write all of your worries onto some paper and put them into a small Box. Get creative and decorate this however you like! Maybe you could give the box a name?



Activity: You might have some other great ideas too! Find a way that works for you and give it a go. Start by trying to record your worries for a few days, then come back and flip over to the next page!

Step 3: Organising worries

Hopefully you have managed to collect a few days of worries by now, the next step is to separate them! It's normal to have lots of different worries in a day and it can be helpful to sort them into groups.

There are two groups we will sort them into, see the information below:

Group 1 - Worries that CAN be solved

"I might forget my lunch money tomorrow" - I'll put it in my bag when I get home.

"I might not have time to do my homework" - I'll speak to the teacher and see if they can help me at all.

Group 2 - Worries that CAN'T be solved

"What if Emily doesn't like me?"

"What if no one talks to me at the party?"

"What if something bad happens?"

"My heart is beating fast, what if I get poorly?"

Sorting worries can be tricky at first and it's normal to find this hard. There are some clues you may have noticed that can help.

Usually "What if..." worries are worries that CAN'T be solved.

Sometimes there might be worries where it's not clear which group they fit into - if this happens, they are usually worries that CAN'T be solved.

You might have worries that hop between groups - that is totally ok too!

Have a go below - write down some of your worries into the two groups. Try doing this over the next few days

Group 1

Group 2

Step 4 - Worry time

Now we've had a go at separating our worries, what do we do with them? We're going to create a space to look at our worries that CAN'T be solved. This will be called "Worry Time" and we will look at this more on the next page.

Before we do it, lets review what we've done so far

Collect our worries and put them into an app, monster, box or other! Write them down and then let them go for now

Seperate the worries into two groups of CAN be solved and CAN'T be solved

Worries that CAN be solved

Solve the worry and let the worry go.

Have a go at a breathing technique to help you "let go" of the worry!

Worries that CAN'T be solved

Bring to "Worry Time"!
Is it still a worry? If not, let it go!
Is it something we need to think about?
Can you do anything to make this worry smaller?
If there's something we can do, this can be moved to group 1!

This might be a good page to come back to if you ever feel confused with it. Let's turn over the page to our last step where we will look at Worry Time.

Step 4: Worry Time

Worry Time will be a small part of your day that you can spend looking at your worries. It can be helpful to start practicing this every day, but as we go along you might not feel you need it everyday - it's important to find something that works for you!

It's important that worry time is time you can have alone or with a helper in a quiet space. Let's look at some pointers below to help us create a helpful Worry Time.

Worry time needs to be long enough but not too long! Aim for 10 - 15 minutes each day



Try to have worry time in the same space everyday. Pick a quiet room where you won't be disturbed, such as your bedroom or a spare room

Make sure you don't have worry time in a place you like to relax, like your bed or a comfy sofa. You could pick a different spot in your room, or a chair you don't often sit on!

Make sure Worry Time isn't just before bed time, try and find a time in your day that's not too late!

Try and do something nice after worry time that can take your mind away from your worries

What time will I have Worry Time?....

Where will I do this?....

How will I remember to have Worry Time?....

What nice things can I do afterwards?....

Have a go at worry time for a few days this week and see how you get on!

Optional step: Review

Hopefully you have found that by using Worry Time, you have worried less during the day. However, it's really normal for there to be bumps in the road and if you haven't found it helpful yet, you're not alone! Let's take a look at some bumps that others might find in the road too.

I keep forgetting to have worry time!

This is totally normal, it's a new thing and can take practice. How can you remind yourself? An alarm? Could a carer or helper remind you? Could you do it before or after dinner everyday so it becomes more routine?

I struggle to "let the worry go" when I write it down

Worries can feel pretty powerful at times meaning it's hard to let them go. Try not to struggle against it, let the worry come back and write it down again. You could try a relaxation technique once you've written it down! Give the following one a go...

Find 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you're proud of that day

I keep worrying after worry time

This could be for lots of reasons, are you having worry time in a place you would normally relax? If so, where else could you do it?

What else could you do after worry time to take your mind away from worries?

Do you need someone's help to think of places / activities?

Are you having worry time just before bed? If so, could you move it?

Here are some further questions we can ask to help if you are having difficulty!

Is there someone I can ask for help with any of the problems I have?

Do I need to plan worry time into my week? How can I do this?

Do I need to find other ways of writing down all of my worries?

After answering these, jump back into the book and try again - You've got this!

If you've made it this far, a big well done to you!
It's not easy working on anxiety, and you might feel your journey
doesn't end here.

You might want to continue a thought challenging for a few more
weeks, or you might feel you need further support.

We have another resource that's a great fit for once you've
completed this one. It's called "Lifestyle Management". You can
find this on our website and work through it like you did with this
one.

If you feel you need further support, you can email us on
wellbeing@ymcaexeter.org.uk, or you can visit our website if you
want to speak with a member of the team.

Other useful numbers and resources for the future

Childline - 0800 1111

Samaritans - 166 123

Young Minds - Text YM to 85258

www.ymcaexeter.org/cwpwellbeing