

# Managing stress

## A self-help guide

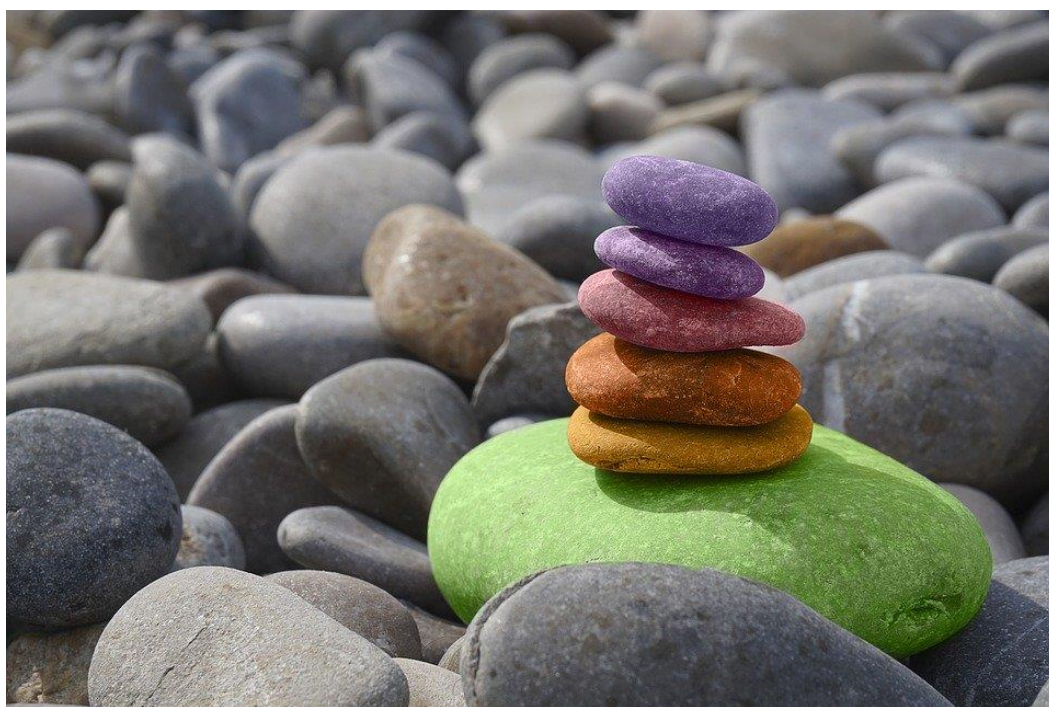


Figure 1: [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com)

# Managing stress

## A self-help guide

### Contents

#### Part One:

- Keeping yourself safe
- Understanding stress
  - What is stress?
  - Causes of stress
  - Common symptoms of stress
  - What maintains stress?
  - The fight or flight response
  - What is CBA and how can it help?

#### Part Two:

- Ways to manage stress
  - Managing physical symptoms
  - Managing thoughts
  - Managing behaviours
  - Medication
- Staying well plan

#### Appendix:

- Vicious cycle worksheet
- Self-care activities

For more information visit [www.covwarkpt.nhs.uk/IAPT](http://www.covwarkpt.nhs.uk/IAPT)  
or call **024 7667 1090** to make an appointment.

## Part One

### Keeping yourself safe

If you are having thoughts of ending your life, if your mental health declines or if you experience thoughts of harming yourself, you can make an emergency appointment with your GP.

You could also contact one of the helplines below:

- If you live in Coventry and Warwickshire, you can call the Mental Health Matters Helpline (open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week):
  - Landline: **0800 616 171**;
  - Mobile: **0300 330 5487**.
- If you live in Solihull, you can call the Samaritans on **116 123**.

Contacting a helpline can give you a feeling of relief, wellbeing and peace of mind. You won't be judged and the services are confidential.

### Understanding stress

#### What is stress?

Stress is an umbrella term that encompasses feelings of low mood and anxiety. Stress is a perfectly normal response that we all experience and is an emotional response to demands that are made of us by ourselves, others and the world around us. Some common situations that cause high levels of stress include major life events, difficult situations, feeling over-whelmed and feeling over-burdened at work. Some people find that stress can start to intrude into other areas of everyday life and can create difficulties within relationships.

If you feel that this is the case for you, this self-help guide can help you to:

- Understand why we experience stress;
- Recognise the symptoms of stress;
- Learn tools and techniques to manage your symptoms.

Increasing your understanding and learning techniques to manage stress may help you to feel more in control.

#### Causes of stress

##### Stressful events

You may experience a stressful event such as needing to pay a large bill, meeting an important deadline at work or starting a new job. How you perceive or view the event can impact on how much stress you experience. If you perceive the event to be out of your control or overwhelming, you will experience high stress levels. Not all stressful events are

negative; some positive events can also be potentially stressful such as getting married, moving house, having a baby and retirement.

## Several small difficulties

You may experience several small challenges or events which add up to create high levels of stress. Examples of this kind of stress include commuting to and from work, concerns about family members and relationship difficulties.

## Common symptoms of stress

We are all unique and each of us will experience stress in a different way. However, most people will notice changes in their body, the way that they think, how they feel and how they behave. You may be able to relate to some of the symptoms listed below, which are common to people experiencing stress. Tick those which you feel apply to you:

### Physical feelings/bodily symptoms:

- ☐ Feeling tense;
- ☐ Headaches;
- ☐ Sweating;
- ☐ Tiredness;
- ☐ Altered appetite and sleep;
- ☐ Feeling on edge;
- ☐ Breathing faster;
- ☐ Heart racing.

### Actions/behavioural symptoms (what we do or avoid doing):

- ☐ Eating more or less;
- ☐ Procrastination;
- ☐ Withdrawing from others;
- ☐ Smoking or drinking more;
- ☐ Irritability;
- ☐ Forgetfulness;
- ☐ Rushing around and restlessness;
- ☐ Crying;
- ☐ Sleep disturbances.

### Changes in thinking:

- ☐ *'I can't cope';*
- ☐ *'I can't be bothered';*
- ☐ *'Will this ever end?';*
- ☐ *'It's not fair';*
- ☐ *'I can't escape; there is nothing I can do.'*

### Emotions:

- ☐ Worry;
- ☐ Low mood/depression;
- ☐ Anger/irritability;
- ☐ Anxiety.

Please list any other symptoms you may experience not listed above:

---

---

---

---

---

### What maintains stress?

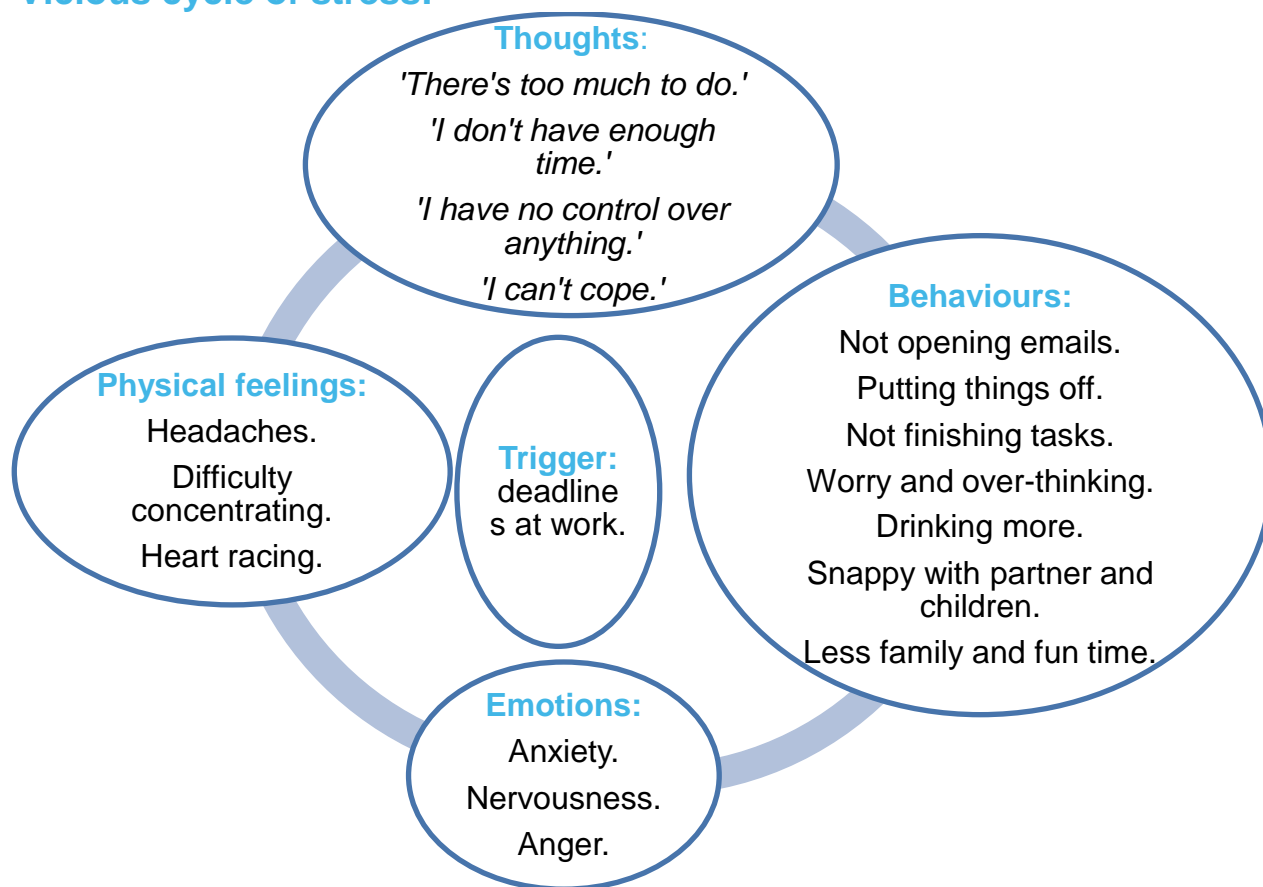
You may notice that stress remains a problem even after the event which set it off has passed. This is because of the way in which we start to think and behave following an event or trigger. These changes in our thinking and behaviour can keep the stress going.

Let's look at an example:

**Michael has yet another deadline to meet at work and is spending increasing amount of time outside work caring for his mother who is experiencing early signs of dementia.**

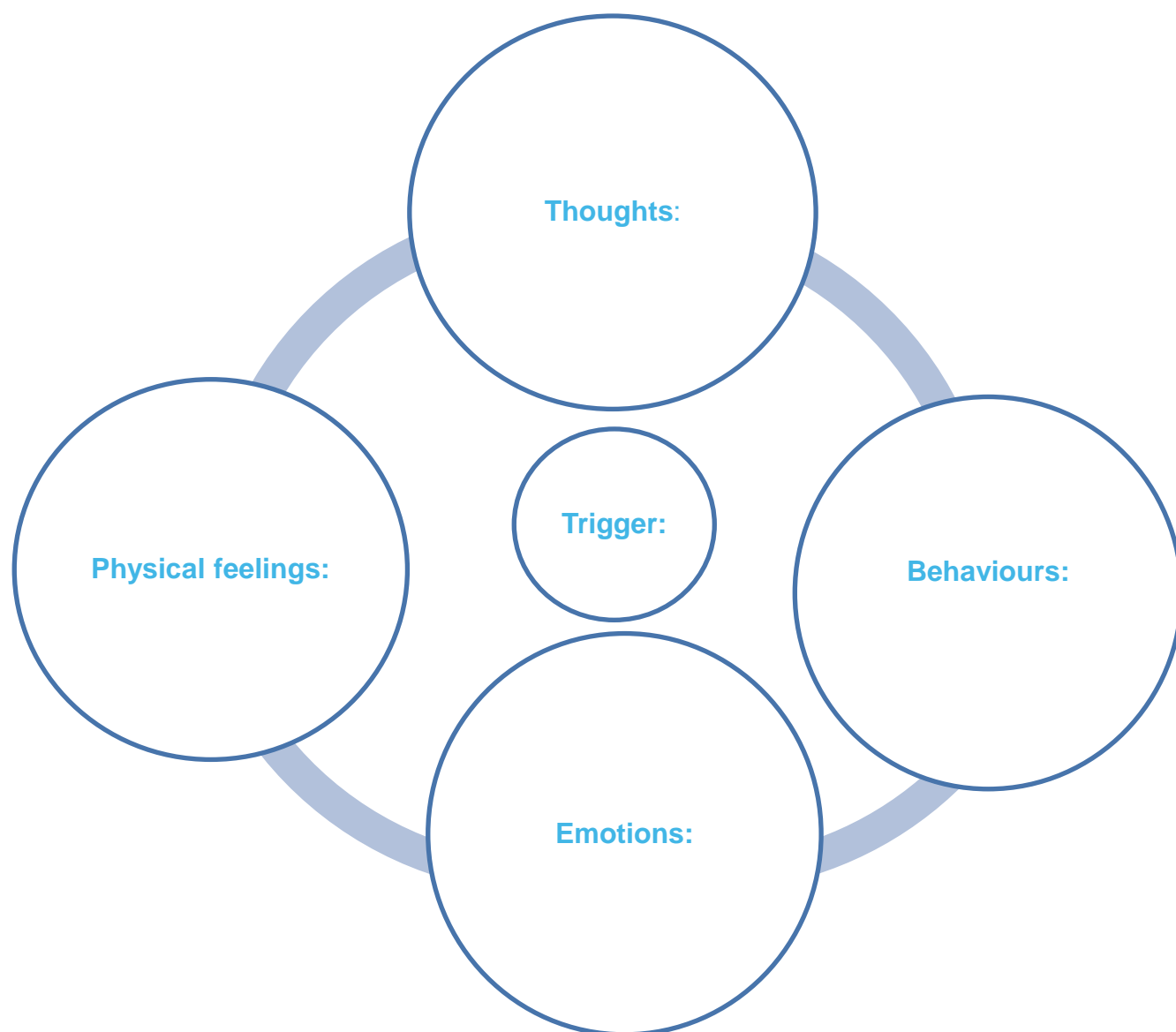
The diagram on the next page illustrates how a relationship between Michael's thoughts, physical symptoms, emotions and behaviour are keeping a vicious cycle of stress going.

## Vicious cycle of stress:



To help understand what may be maintaining your stress, try and think about a recent situation in which you noticed yourself feeling particularly stressed and draw out your own vicious cycle on the next page. You can find a blank vicious cycle in the appendix at the back of this book.

## Vicious cycle of stress:





## The fight or flight response

When we are faced with danger, our bodies respond automatically in order to deal with the danger and to protect us. This response is called the fight or flight response and links back to our ancestors who were faced with physical threats such as wild boar. The way our bodies respond is this ancient survival mechanism in action and means that our bodies are ready to either fight the danger or to run away from it. The fight or flight response protects us and helps us to survive.

The fight or flight response kicks into action whether the danger is real (such as stepping out into the road and suddenly hearing a car horn beep) or by worrying about things that we think might happen. When we struggle with anxiety, we can tend to become hyper-alert and be on the lookout for danger. This makes it more likely that the fight or flight will be activated.

We may become fearful of this response and this can impact on our thoughts and behaviours which will keep us feeling anxious. For example, having thoughts that we are in danger and that something catastrophic is going to happen such as we're having a heart attack or losing control. We may also think that we are unable to cope. As a consequence, we may avoid situations for fear of the fight or flight response being activated. Our behaviour can be affected in other ways too:

- Going to certain places at certain times, e.g. shopping at smaller shops, at less busy times;
- Only going if accompanied by another person;
- We may leave if the anxiety feels too much.

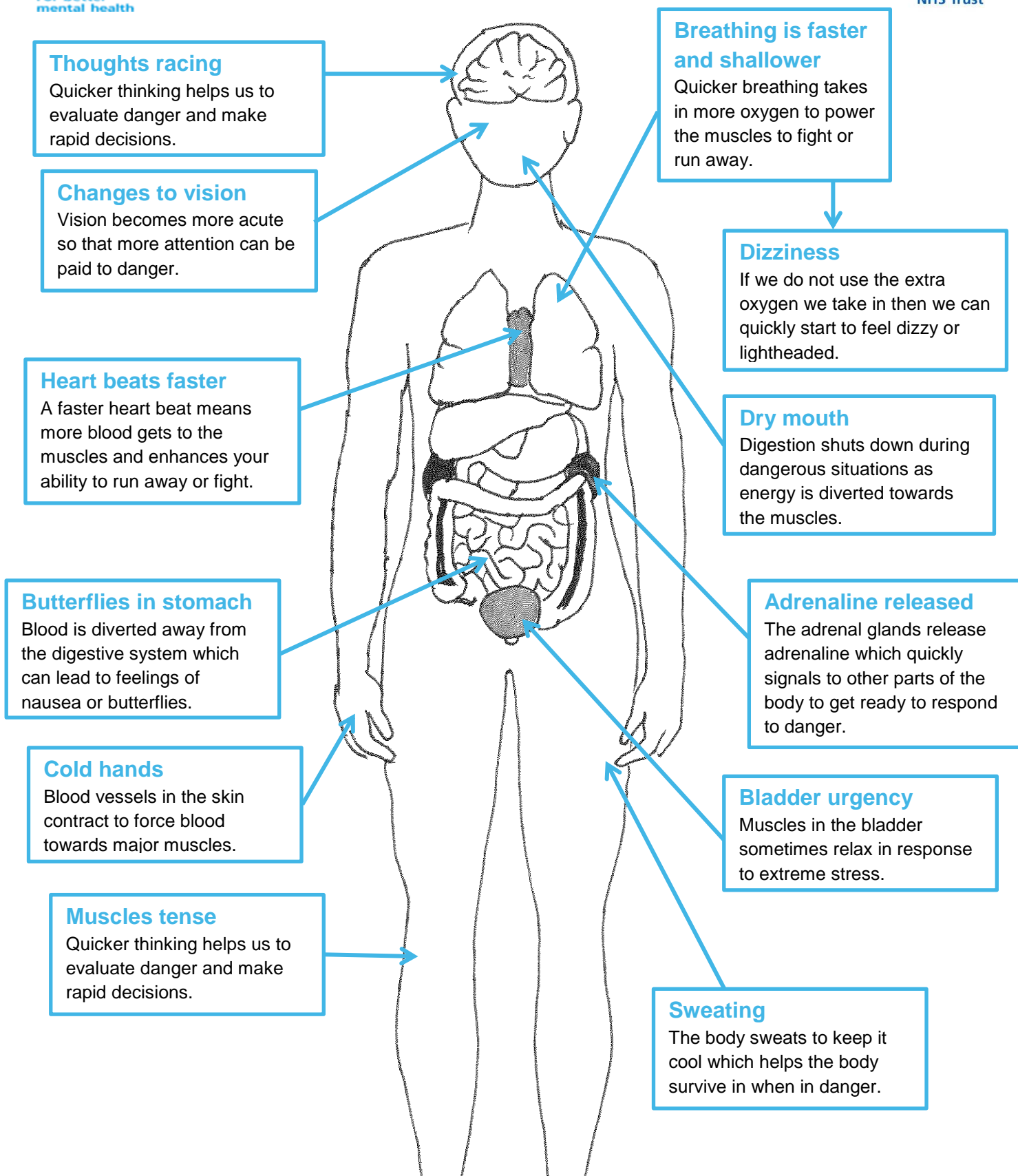
We may also go into the feared situation, but use coping behaviours to get us through, such as:

- Holding a drink;
- Smoking or drinking alcohol more;
- Avoiding eye contact with others;
- Having an escape plan.

Coping behaviours can also keep us feeling anxious because we don't get to find out that without them, the anxiety would reduce and go away on its own or that we can cope.

On the following page are some of the physical symptoms of this response.





## What is CBA and how can it help?

In this workbook, we use an approach called **Cognitive Behaviour Approaches (CBA)** to help you learn ways to manage your symptoms of anxiety. CBA helps you to change how you think (Cognitions) and what you do (Behaviour) when you become anxious.

The techniques you will learn are like a toolkit of resources that you can use at times of increased stress to help you feel better and learn new ways of coping. Unlike some of the other talking therapies, CBA focuses on problems in the “here and now”, rather than talking about the past. CBA aims to look for ways to improve your state of mind now.

CBA can help you to understand overwhelming feelings of anxiety by breaking them down into smaller parts. This makes it easier to see how they are linked and how they affect you.

Stress is usually triggered by a problem, event or difficult situation.

From this trigger can follow:

- **Thoughts** that are unhelpful;
- **Emotions** that are unpleasant;
- **Physical** feelings that are uncomfortable;
- **Actions / behaviours** that make the problem worse or keep it going.

## How does stress affect you?

Think back over the past year. What have been the most stressful events in your life? Please note a few of these in the table on the next page then decide whether they were major causes of stress, smaller difficulties that added to your stress levels, or a positive event that you found stressful.

Stressful event	What type of stressful event was this?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
What other factors do you think could have also added to your overall stress levels?	

## Part Two

### Ways to manage stress

#### Managing physical symptoms

Although the flight or fight response is automatic, there are things that we can do to help manage the physical symptoms associated with this. Some of these techniques or changes may appear relatively simple but they can have a huge impact on the symptoms of anxiety.

#### Lifestyle changes

##### Caffeine

Caffeine is a stimulant which means that it can increase the symptoms of anxiety, as well as affecting our sleep. Caffeine can be found in tea, coffee, energy drinks, some soft drinks, chocolate and some cold and flu remedies. If your caffeine intake is high or if you feel that it may be impacting on your symptoms, you may like to consider cutting down. Try substituting for decaffeinated drinks, squash or water. It is recommended that you cut down gradually as stopping suddenly may give you some withdrawal symptoms such as headaches. It's always worth checking the labels on drinks to check their caffeine content.

##### Exercise

Evidence shows that there is a link between physical exercise and mental wellbeing. Exercise causes chemical changes in the brain that can impact on our mood. It can also increase our self-esteem and sense of achievement. Increasing our physical activity can benefit us in a number of ways including:

- Lessening tension and stress;
- Boosting energy;
- Helping to get a better night's sleep;
- Giving us a sense of achievement;
- Increasing motivation;
- Lessening anger or frustration.

##### Alcohol and drugs

Alcohol is a sedative; it can help us feel calmer and more at ease. This can help us feel more confident in social situations or help us to forget our worries. However, these benefits are short-lived and these effects wear off fast and the pleasant feelings fade. If you rely on alcohol to mask your anxiety problems, you may find you become reliant on it to relax. You may also find that you require more and more alcohol to get the same feeling. Alcohol has a detrimental effect on our sleep.

Although it can help us to drop off to sleep, it significantly impacts on the quality of our sleep. The following morning we can find that we feel more anxious or agitated and low in mood. The persistence of the anxiety symptoms may result in us feeling the need to use alcohol again to deal with the symptoms and a vicious circle can begin. Alcohol can make people lose their inhibitions and behave impulsively, so it can lead to actions they might not otherwise have taken – including self-harm and suicide.

Illicit drugs can have a detrimental impact on our mental health. Cocaine can induce panic attacks in some people and withdrawal from it includes severe anxiety. Ecstasy can also induce anxiety, a depersonalized feeling and panic when taken in large doses. The feelings we may be seeking by using ecstasy may not happen if you are already struggling with emotional problems. Here the drug might simply make the problem seem worse. This can also be the case for cannabis. There is some evidence that indicates cannabis can also induce panic-type symptoms and increase a sense of being out of control. People with anxiety can find this particularly unpleasant.

If you think you have a serious drinking or drug problem you should consult your doctor or another professional to seek help with reducing or stopping altogether. Giving up may not be easy but the following tips and techniques can make it that little bit easier:

- Let others know and seek their support;
- Avoid temptation – not having alcohol around at home for example or avoiding situations where you find it difficult not to have a drink or use drugs;
- Begin by cutting down;
- Reward your progress;
- Get help from your local drug and alcohol service.

## Getting a good night's sleep

We all go through times when we struggle with our sleep and missing the odd night's sleep won't harm us. We may struggle to get to sleep, wake up during the night, wake up too early or struggle to get out of bed in the morning. The average sleep duration for adults is around seven hours per night. However, people differ in terms of how much sleep they need with some managing on just four hours, while others require nine or 10 hours.

The amount of sleep we need can depend on our age and our level of physical activity. As we get older, we tend to need less sleep and, if we are less active during the day, we will also require less sleep.

Whatever your individual needs, chronic lack of sleep or poor quality sleep can have detrimental effects including:

- ☐ Poor attention, concentration and memory;
- ☐ Irritability;
- ☐ Fluctuations in mood;
- ☐ Impaired judgement and reaction time;
- ☐ Poor physical co-ordination and struggling to stay awake ('micro sleeps').

How do you know if you are getting a good night's sleep? A sign we're getting enough sleep is waking up feeling refreshed. We tend to fall asleep within 30 mins of going to bed and it's normal to wake up once or twice during the night. Even the best sleepers will have the occasional night when they struggle to get off to sleep or return to sleep once they wake up.

### Sleep hygiene:

Sleep hygiene is the term used to describe good sleep habits. Below is a set of guidelines and tips which are designed to help you get a better night's sleep. Research shows that these strategies can help with many sleep problems such as insomnia.

**Develop a routine.** One of the best ways to train your body to sleep well is to go to bed and get up at more or less the same time every day, even on weekends and days off. This regular rhythm will make you feel better and help create positive associations with sleep.

**Go to bed when you are sleepy.** Only try to sleep when you actually feel tired or sleepy, rather than spending too much time awake in bed.

**Get up if you can't sleep.** If you haven't been able to get to sleep after about 20 minutes or more, get up and do something calming or boring until you feel sleepy, then return to bed and try again. Avoid doing anything that is too stimulating or interesting, as this will wake you up even more.

**Avoid caffeine and nicotine.** It is best to avoid consuming any caffeine or nicotine (cigarettes) for at least four to six hours before going to bed. These substances act as stimulants and interfere with the ability to fall asleep.

**Avoid alcohol.** It is also best to avoid alcohol for at least four to six hours before going to bed. Many people believe that alcohol is relaxing and helps them to get to sleep at first, but it actually interrupts the quality of sleep.

**Bed is for sleeping.** Try not to use your bed for anything other than sleeping and sex, so that your body comes to associate bed with sleep. If you use bed as a place to watch TV, eat, read, work on your laptop, pay bills, and other things, your body will not learn this connection.

## Breathing

Anxiety affects our breathing. We tend to 'over-breathe' when we are anxious and our breathing can become shallow and fast. This is due to the fight or flight response that was described earlier preparing the body for physical exertion. When we over-breathe we may notice the following side-effects:

- Light-headedness;
- Feeling faint;
- Dizziness;
- Tingling sensations in the hands or feet;
- Visual changes.

Learning to change the way we breathe can be a very effective way of managing these side-effects and our anxiety generally. Below is technique that you may want to try. Like any new skill, it can take practice so don't be disheartened if you don't get hang of it straight away or if you don't feel it is having a positive effect. Stick with it and try and practise it daily.

1. Sit comfortably in a chair and place one hand on your chest and the other on your tummy with shoulders relaxed;
2. As you breathe in, notice which hand moves the most. Begin to practise so that your lower hand on your tummy moves as you breathe rather than the hand on your chest. As you take a breath in, your tummy should expand. This is called relaxed breathing.

If you notice that you are feeling tense, try breathing out a little more slowly and deeply and take short pause before breathing in. You may find it helpful to count slowly or to use a word such as 'relax' or 'peace' to help extend the out-breath a little.

## Progressive muscle relaxation

This exercise can help reduce stress and anxiety in the body by slowly tensing and relaxing your muscles in turn.

You may notice that you feel calmer and more relaxed immediately. It is recommended that you practise as often as you can and, with time, you will be able to recognise when your body is tense and have the skills to relax.

Before beginning, make sure that you have set aside a few minutes for yourself when you will not be disturbed. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. If you become aware of external sounds during the exercise, simply notice them and re-focus your attention back to the relaxation.

Begin by taking a slow, deep breath. Release slowly and imagine the tension leaving your body. Close your eyes if you are comfortable doing so. Move your attention to your feet. Tense your feet and squeeze your muscles by curling your toes. Hold the tension and



notice how it feels. Slowly release the tension in your foot and notice the new sensation of relaxation. Repeat this tensing and relaxing technique moving slowly up your body, focusing on the legs, stomach, shoulders, arms, hands, jaw and face.

You can find audio files for relaxation on our website ([www.covwarkpt.nhs.uk/relaxation](http://www.covwarkpt.nhs.uk/relaxation)).

## Managing thoughts

Some people find they can relax their bodies but keep thinking about upsetting things.

When stressed, we often engage in a lot of unhelpful thinking, predicting that something bad will happen or that we will not be able to cope. Negative thinking is often **unbalanced** and **unrealistic**.

**It is important to remember that events do not cause feelings – we feel or act according to how we interpret events.**

These thoughts are:

- **Negative** – they make you feel worse about yourself, other people and life in general;
- **Automatic** – they pop into your mind automatically;
- **Believable** – they feel like facts;
- **Biased** – they are unfairly biased in the direction of your negative or unhelpful beliefs you hold about yourself.

Once you have learnt to recognise the thoughts you are ready to begin managing them.

It can be helpful to take a step back and assess how accurate and helpful your thoughts are. The following questions can be useful:

- **Are there other situations which prove this thought is not completely true?**
- **Is there any factual evidence to support your thought?**
- **If I was not feeling anxious, would I view this situation differently and, if so, how?**
- **Have I had any experiences which tell me that this thought is not accurate?**
- **Am I assuming I know what others think?**
- **What might a friend say about this?**
- **Are there any strengths or positives in me or the situation that I am ignoring?**
- **Am I predicting the future?**
- **Will this matter in a week's, month's or a year's time?**
- **Am I jumping to conclusions?**
- **What are the chances of that happening?**

## Managing behaviours

### Problem solving

Some of the worries and problems we have will have solutions. However, when we are feeling stressed, we can find it hard to think clearly and find solutions. Some problems can appear huge and overwhelming.

This seven-step guide to problem solving can help you:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Identify solutions – as many as you can and don't worry if they sound ridiculous; it's important to keep an open mind.
3. Identify the advantages and disadvantages of each solution.
4. Select one of the options – which one seems most appropriate or most likely to work?
5. Plan the solution – be specific. What are the necessary steps? When, where and with whom? What are the steps you will need to take? What resources will you need?
6. Try it out.
7. Review – what went well? What could you have done differently? Do you need to change the plan slightly and try again, or do you need to select a completely different solution?

Use the sheet overleaf to help you complete your seven-step problem solving guide:

<b>What is the problem?</b>		
<b>Solution 1:</b>	<b>Advantages:</b>	<b>Disadvantages:</b>
<b>Solution 2:</b>	<b>Advantages:</b>	<b>Disadvantages:</b>
<b>Solution 3:</b>	<b>Advantages:</b>	<b>Disadvantages:</b>
<b>My chosen solution is:</b>		
<b>My plan of action is:</b>		
<b>Review – how did it go?</b>		

## Time management

Effective time management can be used as an opportunity to get more done, but also as a chance to allow yourself time to relax and do things that you enjoy. It can help us to have a clear idea of how long we have to spend on each task.

Tips:

- Make lists;
- Prioritise;
- Get up early/on time;
- Set yourself achievable goals;
- Break a big job down into manageable chunks;
- Build in breaks;
- Keep a diary;
- Don't be afraid to delegate;
- Plan ahead (daily, weekly, monthly);
- Be organised.

You may find the table below useful to review how you use your time:

Day/date		
What did you do?	How long did it take?	Priority (low, medium, high)
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Now go through the table and ask yourself if this was the best use of your time at that moment. You could consider if you were able to delegate any of these tasks or if you could have used your time doing other things.

Were there lots of items that were made a **high priority** because you have avoided doing them until the last possible moment?

Items that were at crisis point:

---

---

---

Are you spending time doing more **medium and low priority tasks** and not finishing what is high priority?

Jobs I could have postponed to finish high priority tasks:

---

---

---

What could you have delegated?

---

---

---

What stopped you from doing this?

---

---

---

Were any of these tasks a waste of your time?

---

---

---

Use these lists to plan your time in daily or weekly timetables. Try to consider when you are at your best and when are you most likely to be productive. When are you likely to need a break and time to relax?

The timetable on the following page can help you to plan your week.

Day/ date							
6am- 8am							
8am- 10am							
10am- 12pm							
12pm- 2pm							
2pm- 4pm							
4pm- 6pm							
6pm- 8pm							
8pm- 10pm							
10pm- 12pm							

## Self-care

Looking after ourselves emotionally and physically is called self-care and it is good for our physical and mental health. Self-care helps us to feel like a worthy and valuable person. Self-worth is strongly linked to stress so those things that can help boost our self-worth are definitely worth doing.

### Tips for enhancing self-care

1. Identify what activities help you to feel at your best – seeing friends or family, spending time alone, exercise, cuddles, etc. If you are struggling to think of things that you could do, you may find the list of activities in the back of this book helpful;
2. Schedule it in your calendar. Make time for yourself and stick to it. Plan ahead – book trips, tickets, events. If you have little free time, plan brief slots to begin with, even if it's just for five minutes;
3. Practise where you can. Even during a busy day, you can take a few minutes to do some deep breathing, stretch or do some mindful walking, or listen to calming music in the car;
4. Know when to say no – sometimes it's ok to put your well-being and health first;
5. Check-in with yourself – listen to your needs;
6. Have a digital detox – have break from social media;
7. Consider your work/life balance.

## Work/life balance

- Take proper breaks at work, making sure you take at least half an hour lunch, getting away from your desk or out of the workplace if you can;
- Recognise the importance of using support such as friendships, exercise and leisure activities. Try to spend time on these and ensure that they are not sacrificed;
- Aim to work 'smart', not long. This involves time management and prioritisation. Allow yourself a set time per task; try not to get caught up with less productive activities;
- Take responsibility for your work-life balance. Speak up when demands and expectations are too much. It is important that employers are aware of the pressures for them to address them;
- Ensure you draw a line between work and leisure. If work does need to be brought home, only work in a certain area of your home – that way you can close the door on it to keep it separate.

## Being assertive

Setting clear boundaries with other people makes it less likely that unreasonable demands will be asked of you. This means:

- Being open and concerned with the rights of others;



- At the same time, establishing your own rights;
- Standing up for your own rights;
- Expressing your own needs, wants, feelings and opinions.

Being assertive can help build a clear understanding of what you can expect from a person which can help you to avoid stressful situations.

### How to be assertive:

1. Decide what you want;
2. Say what you want clearly and specifically;
3. Support what you say by the way you say it;
4. Don't be manipulated or side-tracked;
5. Listen to the other person;
6. Aim for a 'win-win' compromise.

Think of the last time you wanted somebody to do something for you but were unsure / unable to ask them:

---



---

Write a clear statement / question below that you could have used in the situation:

---



---

## Social support networks

We need friends the most when we are going through times of stress or change, such as moving house, starting a new job, having a baby, breaking up from a relationship.

### Improving your social network:

It can be hard to find time for friends when we are busy, but one way to tackle this is to arrange to meet and do something else at the same time such as exercise or go to a class together, share a lift or join an interest group.

Aim to have regular contact by arranging meetings such as weekly exercise classes or lunch monthly.

Aim to talk to a new person; don't always wait for others to introduce themselves first. Mingle at events; have few things prepared that you could talk about.

Ask the other person questions – often people who do this are felt to be the best conversationalists.

## Medication

At IAPT, we do not prescribe medication and we do not insist that you take or stop medication. We can provide you with information to help you make an informed choice.

### Commonly-prescribed medications

It is not uncommon for people to experience both symptoms of anxiety and depression. Some antidepressants can be prescribed to help with symptoms of anxiety, depression and sleep. The most widely-used antidepressants are called **Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)** and **Selective Noradrenalin Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs)**. Some drugs from these categories include Citalopram, Sertraline and Venlafaxine.

#### Benzodiazepines:

Benzodiazepines are a category of drugs that can be prescribed to help with anxiety and sleep problems. A common drug from this category is Diazepam. These medications aim to have a calming effect.

Another category of drugs which may be prescribed are Beta Blockers such as Propranolol; these help to reduce the physical symptoms of anxiety and panic.

#### How does antidepressant medication work?

Research shows that there is a relationship between anxiety and a reduction in the amount of chemical messengers in the brain. These chemicals called neurotransmitters transmit messages between nerve cells in the brain in order to regulate our mood and emotions. Serotonin and Noradrenalin are two of the most common neurotransmitters. Research suggests that a reduction in the level of these chemicals may result in symptoms of anxiety. Antidepressants are used to increase the levels of these chemicals.

#### When will I notice an improvement?

Antidepressant medication does not start to work straight away. It can take up to six weeks to notice the full benefit of taking your medication. Please be aware that for medication to be effective, it is important that it is taken as prescribed.

#### How long will I have to take them for?

When starting to feel better, it can be tempting to stop taking medication. It is recommended that you keep taking them for six months after you feel better. Stopping sooner can increase the chances of a relapse.

## What might put people off taking medication?

People might stop taking antidepressants completely or take less than prescribed because they have concerns about taking them. Some people may be worried that they are addictive, ineffective or unsafe. Some people may also be concerned about side-effects or the views of others about taking antidepressant/anti-anxiety medication.

Like all medications some might suit one person more than another. It may take a few tries to get the medication and the dose right for you.

## Side-effects:

Like other types of medications, you may experience some side effects from antidepressants. However, these usually subside within seven to 10 days of taking the medication.

Although antidepressants are not addictive, it is not advised to stop taking your medication suddenly as you may experience discontinuation effects such as anxiety, dizziness and poor sleep. If you decide that you no longer want to take your medication, discuss this with your GP who can support you to come off medication gradually. **Please talk to your GP if you have any concerns about the medication.**

## Staying well plan

The aim of this booklet is to help you to understand more about stress and to teach you strategies to help manage it. Going forward, it is really important to be your own therapist, making time to reflect on how you are feeling and addressing any issues that arise.

Developing a staying well plan can help you to:

- Look out for your early warning signs related to stress;
- Consider what may have maintained stress;
- Ensure that you know which techniques helped you manage well and feel better so you can put them into action;
- Know where to get further help and support if you feel you need it.

The first step in thinking about the future and dealing with any setbacks is to think about the symptoms that you began to feel when you began to feel unwell. These are things that you may notice if you have a setback. Once you are aware of them, you can then take action and tackle things early on.

Take a look back over your treatment and fill in the table on the next page.

### Additional help:

- **Anxiety UK** (open Monday to Friday, 9:30am – 5:30pm): **call 0344 4775 774** or **text 07537 416905**;
- **Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust's IAPT service** (Monday to Friday, 9am – 4:30pm): **02476 67 1090**;
- **GP's number:** \_\_\_\_\_;
- **Mental Health Matters Helpline** (for residents in Coventry and Warwickshire, 24 hours a day, seven days a week): **landline – 0800 616 171** or **mobile – 0300 330 5487**;
- **No Panic** (a confidential helpline open every day from 10am – 10pm): **0844 967 48 48**;
- **Samaritans** (for everyone): **116 123**.

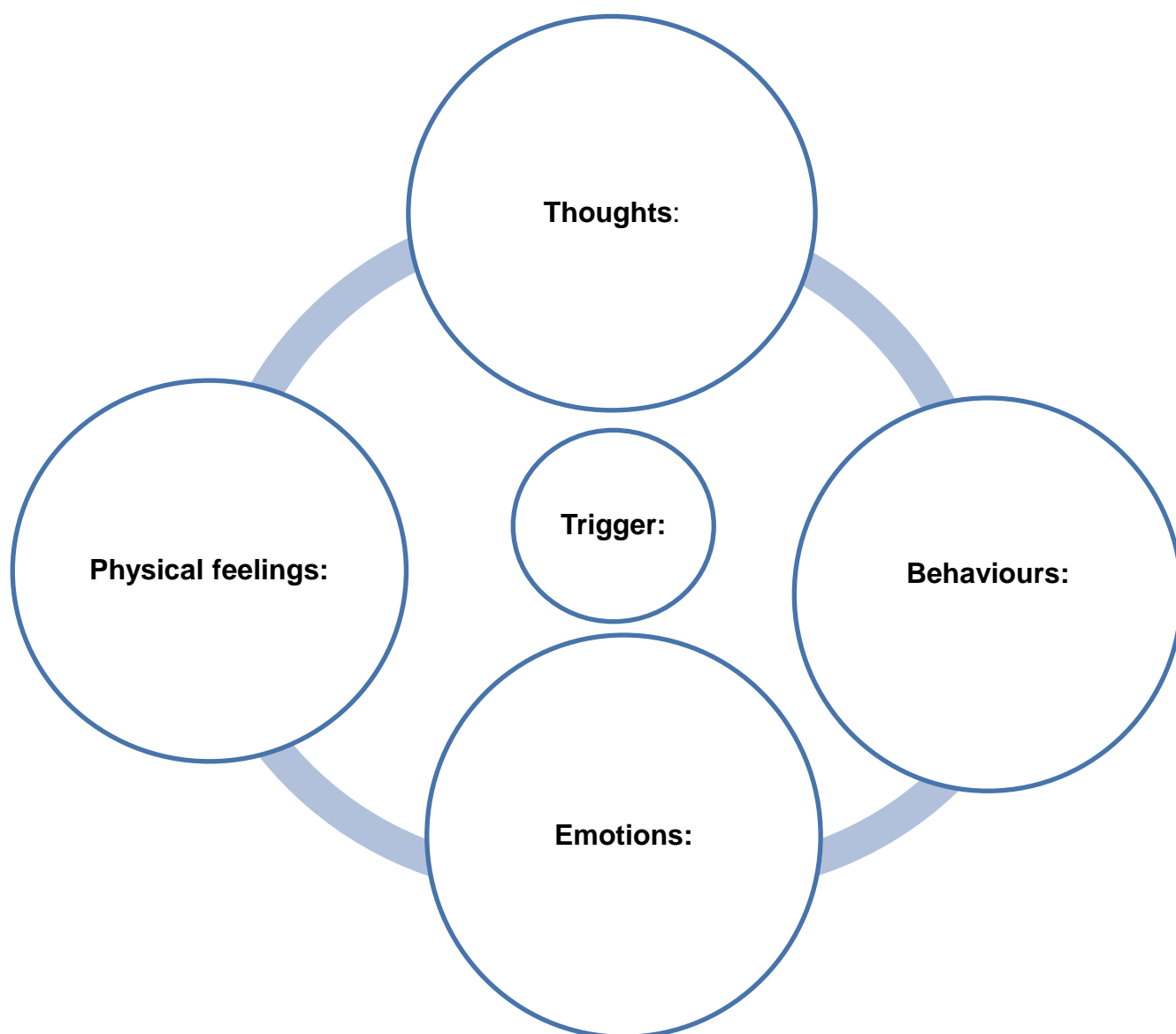

**At the start of treatment, my main difficulties were:**

(It may be helpful to remind yourself by taking a look at the vicious cycle you completed at the beginning of this workbook).

**Difficult situations:**
**Unhelpful thoughts:**
**Unhelpful behaviours:**
**Physical changes:**
**Emotions:**
**What are my high risk situations of having a setback? (Events, situations, triggers, etc.)**
**What are the signs of a setback?**
**What can I do to get back on track? (Things that keep me well, techniques I have learnt)**
**Signs that I need to get additional help:**

## Appendix

### Vicious cycle worksheet



## Self-care activities

Have a look at the activities below, which can help you to look after yourself:

Take a bath	Go to a farmer's market
Light a candle	Create your own coffee break
Listen to music	Forgive someone
Learn something new	Let go of something
Listen to guided relaxation	Put on some music and dance
Take deep belly breaths	Give thanks
Read a book	Engage in small acts of kindness
Rest your legs up on a wall	Read or watch something funny
Write in a journal	View some art
Notice your body	Find a relaxing scent
Meditate	Buy some flowers
Walk outside	Meander around town
Go for a run	Call a friend
Eat a meal in silence	Move twice as slowly
Examine an everyday object with fresh eyes	Sit in nature
Colour with crayons	Write a letter
Do some gentle stretches	Watch the clouds
Turn off all electronics	Watch the stars
Drive somewhere new	Fly a kite
Make some music	Let out a sigh
Paint on a surface other than paper	Go to a body of water
Write a quick poem	Take a nap
Take a bike ride	Read poetry
Go to a park	Pet a furry creature
Climb a tree	