

# Managing Worries and Living with Uncertainty

A guide for adults during the  
Covid-19 lockdown

Coronavirus has changed all of our day to day lives, removing much of the certainty and structure we rely on. Without clear answers to many of the questions we have at the moment, we may find ourselves worrying and feeling anxious more often and for longer. This is completely normal in the circumstances.

## What is 'worry' and how can it help us?

As human beings we are amazing at thinking about the future. This means we can plan ahead, think about what problems we may face and find solutions to them. Worrying about problems is often useful, reminding us to do things to help that problem. For example, washing our hands and staying inside to help stop us from spreading the virus. However, worrying about things that we cannot control can leave us feeling hopeless and exhausted.

## What does worrying feel like?

Having heightened levels of anxiety and worry for prolonged periods can affect our physical health as well as our mental health. Physical symptoms of worry and anxiety include:

- Muscle tension or aches and pains.
- Restlessness and an inability to relax.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Difficulty sleeping.
- Feeling easily fatigued

**Remember: be kind to yourself, it is natural to  
worry, this will not last forever**

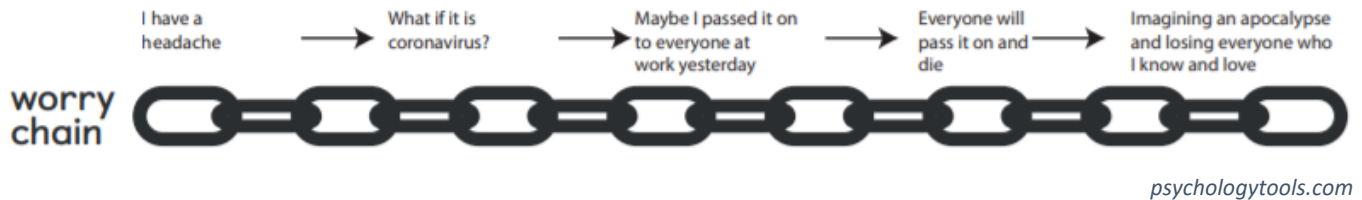


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## Breaking our worry chain

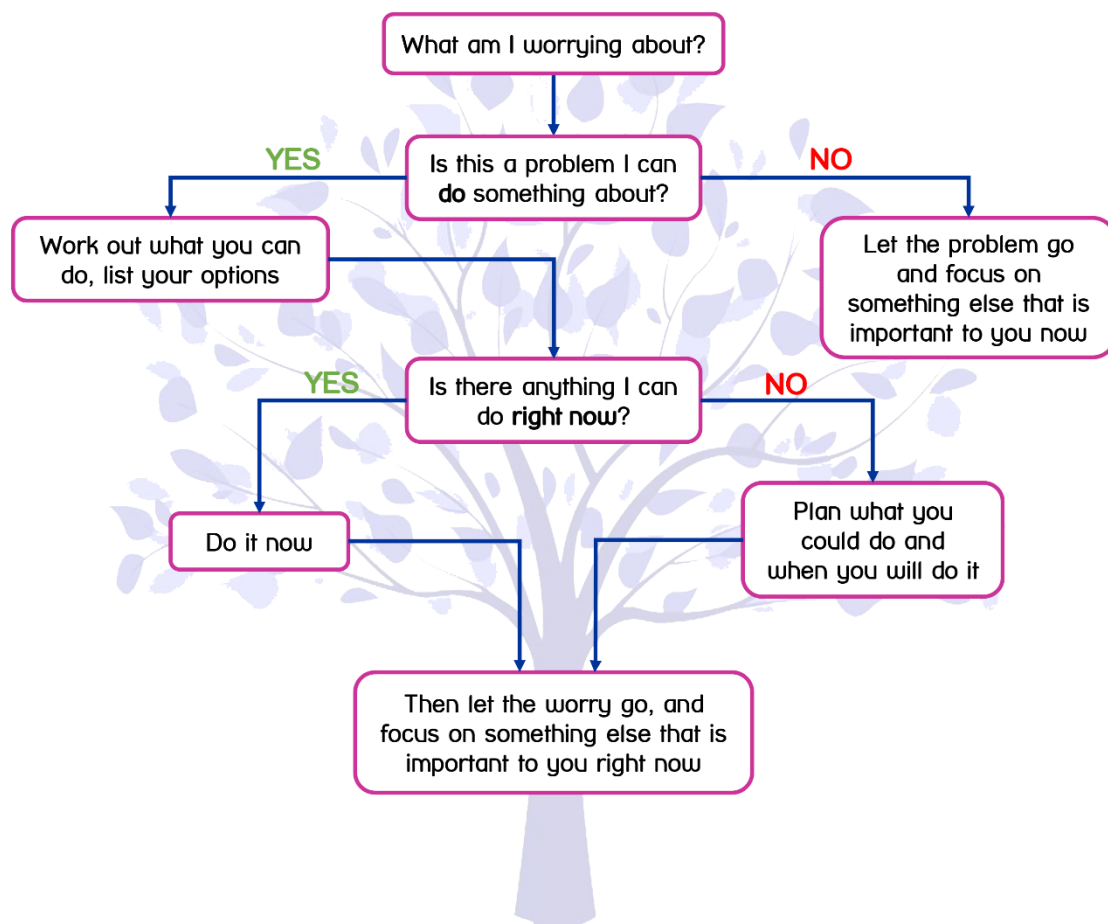
The way worries build up mentally can be thought of as a worry chain. One small worry can quickly lead to us thinking of the worst-case scenario.



In a lot of situations worrying is a useful way to keep ourselves safe. It is wise to worry about crossing a busy road for example. This natural reaction keeps us alert and helps us make decisions (like waiting for the green man). However, in times of uncertainty, we worry about things we cannot control. These are **hypothetical worries**. Hypothetical worries have no practical solution, for example, 'will the world be the same after lockdown?'.

## Real vs Hypothetical worries

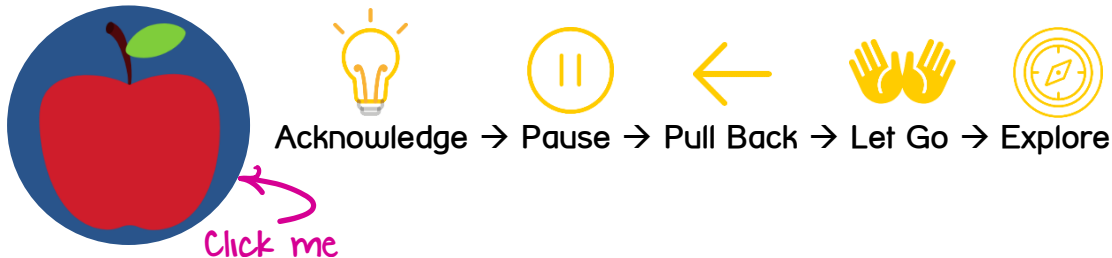
It's important to be able to separate real and hypothetical worries otherwise we can feel overwhelmed and unable to act. To do this we can use a worry tree:



With the worry tree we can identify which worries you can act on and which to let go. But how can we do that? Letting go of our worries is easier said than done for many of us! Here are some techniques to help:

## The APPLE technique

A simple way to manage worries and anxiety. Click the apple for a full infographic.



## Worry Time

Worry time, or postponing worries, can be useful for those of us that are finding it hard to focus on anything else aside from our worries. The idea is that you set a time each day, maybe half an hour to an hour, when you allow yourself to worry. You could do this on your own or with someone else and talk about how you are feeling. Hopefully by doing this you won't feel like you have to address all your worries immediately as they come up, and so allowing yourself to focus on other things throughout the day.



Click or scan to watch a video about worry time

If you decide to practise worry time it is important to try and let go of the worries you can when the time is up, or allow yourself to come back to that worry the next day. It is also important to try and practise self compassion and be kind to ourselves. It is completely natural to worry at the moment. Try and unwind after worry time by doing something relaxing, for inspiration see the De-stress section on the next page!

## Grounding ourselves: the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 technique

When we worry, it is often to do with uncertainty about the future or things that have happened in the past that we cannot change and it can be hard to bring ourselves back to the present and live in the now. If you find yourself worrying, feeling uneasy, with butterflies in your stomach or just general restlessness it could be useful to try the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 grounding technique. This consists of listing 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and one thing you can taste – all to bring you to the here and now.



Click or scan to watch a video about the 5 4 3 2 1 grounding technique

## De-stress

Try doing something that relaxes you or takes your mind off your worries. For inspiration see below or [read our top tips for looking after your wellbeing at home.](#)



Make a bucket list  
Make a 'To Do' list  
Make a shopping list



Go for a run  
Go for a cycle  
Find a workout video online  
Try a new sport  
Try [Yoga online](#)



Learn a new language  
Read a book  
Cook/bake a [new recipe](#)  
Watch a tutorial video  
Make a quiz



Listen to a [podcast](#)  
Play an instrument  
Listen to your favourite music  
Make a [playlist](#) for different moods



Take a Bath  
Trim your nails  
Have a nap  
Put on a facemask  
Soak your feet



Gardening  
Go for a walk amongst nature  
Pick some flowers  
Find a sunny spot to sit in  
Listen to the [birds](#) outside



Make a list of people or things you are grateful for  
Make a gift for someone  
Try a [Random act of kindness](#)  
Make a list of all your good qualities



Make your bed  
Do the washing up  
Clean your shoes  
Do some laundry

## Distractions and the 5 ways to wellbeing

If you would like more information on the role of distractions in relation to worries, anxiety and the 5 ways to wellbeing, click or scan this link to watch a video:



## Unhelpful thinking styles

When worrying about the past, present or future we can often end up thinking in ways that don't help us in that moment. Thinking in these ways can make us feel worse but often we don't realise when we are doing it. To help us understand how we can think in unhelpful ways we have put together a list of some of the most common unhelpful thinking styles below.

If we begin to recognise our unhelpful styles, we can begin to change them.

### All or Nothing Thinking

Sometimes called black and white thinking.

E.g. If I'm not perfect I have failed. Either I do it right or not at all.

### Should/Must/Ought

Using critical words like 'should', 'must' or 'ought' can make us feel guilty or like we have already failed.

E.g. I must do all these things for all these people.

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration.

E.g. He should reply to my message.

### Jumping to Conclusions

There are two types of jumping to conclusions:

1. Mind reading: imagining we know what others are thinking.

E.g. She said that because she thinks I'm stupid.

2. Fortune Telling: predicting the future.

E.g. I'm never going to achieve anything.

### Magnification (catastrophising and minimising)

Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising).

E.g. This is all going wrong and there's nothing I can do to make the situation better.

Inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important (minimising).

E.g. I shouldn't be sad about my situation because it's not as bad as hers.

### Labelling

Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

E.g. I'm a loser. I'm completely useless. They're such an idiot.

### Emotional Reasoning

Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.

E.g. I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot. I feel stressed because it's never going to get any better.

### Over-Generalising

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw.

E.g. Everything is always rubbish. Nothing good ever happens.

### Disqualifying the Positive

Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another.

E.g. That doesn't count. It doesn't matter now anyway.

### Personalisation

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault.

E.g. That wouldn't have happened if I had done this.

Or, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

E.g. I missed the bus because he wouldn't stop talking to me.

Recognising when we are thinking in these ways can help us challenge the unhelpful thoughts we have but remember: it is very easy for all of us to end up thinking in these ways during times of stress. With all that is going on at the moment remember to be kind to yourself, you are not alone, you are only human and you are doing your best.

## Be kind to yourself



## Other resources for you to use:

If you are a parent and/or a staff member and would like more information and activities for young people to help manage worries, have a look at our children and young people's guide to managing worries.

### Local GP

IAPT Services through NHS choices:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/adults/iapt/>

To find a private therapist:

BACP: <http://www.bacp.co.uk/>

UKCP: <https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/find-a-therapist/>

### Free phone lines:

Mind Info Line: 0300 123 3393

Mind Legal Advice Line: 0300 466 5463

NHS Stressline: 0300 123 200

Samaritans: 116 123

Young Minds Parent/Teacher Line: 0800 802 5544

Education Support Partnership: 08000 562 561

Citizens Advice Bureau: 0344 772 020

Equality & Human Rights Commission: 0800 444 205

ACAS (Employee Advice and Information): 0300 123 1100

Use the Clickable links to access more information:



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