

Long Covid



Workbook

Welcome!

This workbook is designed to compliment the skills and techniques you learn in the Long Covid Course.

Some skills will work for you and some will work for others, so we have tried to include different options for some of the skills.

It's up to you to "mix and match" the skill set that works for you.

We welcome feedback and there will be a formal option at the end of the course to provide this.

Please do let us know your experience of the to help you receive as it helps us help others.

Working Together

One of the most valuable things about courses is the support that you can give to each other. To help everyone feel safe and comfortable, it is helpful for the group to agree some guidelines for the sessions. These will discuss and agree these as a group, but below you can find some suggestions:

- Please put mobile phones on silent so they do not interrupt the group
- Try to be on time, but if you are late do come in and join the session
- Respect others people's points of view; they may be different from your own
- Listen when others are talking
- If you are unable to make it to the session, please let Steps to Wellbeing know
- Do not attend the group under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Please keep any personal information shared within the group sessions confidential

Other rules that the group has agreed together:

Steps to Wellbeing Contact Telephone Numbers

West and North Dorset:	0300 790 6828
Poole, Purbeck and East Dorset:	0300 1231 120
Bournemouth and Christchurch:	0300 7900 542
Southampton:	0800 612 7000

www.steps2wellbeing.co.uk



Keeping Safe Between Sessions

Steps to Wellbeing is not a crisis service, and although you are welcome to contact the service between sessions, the course facilitator may not be available to speak to you. If you need some support between sessions, there are a number of places that you can turn to:

- Dorset - Contact Connection 0300 123 5440
- Southampton - <https://www.southernhealth.nhs.uk/locations/thelighthouse/>
- Telephone 111 for medical or mental health advice 24 hours a day
- Go to A&E if you are worried about hurting yourself or someone else
- The Samaritans- you can call 116 123 for someone to talk to
- Think of a friend, partner or family member that you can seek support from
- There may be another professional involved in your care who could help, for example your Health Visitor, Social Worker, Support Worker or GP Practice Nurse.
- Contact your GP surgery and request an urgent appointment

Please make a note of your useful telephone numbers, so that you have them to hand when you need them. You may want to write them in the space below, or save them in your phone so they are ready to use.

E.g. my GP surgery

My Personal Safety Plan

Signs that my mood is deteriorating

--

What steps can I take to manage this? Where can I get support?

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Course Timetable

Session number:

Teaching Topic:

Session 1:

Introductions. What to expect from course. Education on Covid, CBT and depression and anxiety

Session 2:

Sleep and lifestyle factors

Session 3:

Activity and Pacing

Session 4:

Worry

Session 5:

Thoughts

Session 6:

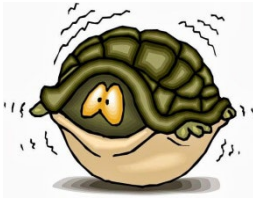
Maintaining Progress. Managing setbacks.

Hopes and Fears

You may have certain expectations, hopes and fears about coming to this course. Please take some time to think about these and write them down in the spaces below. You can choose to share this information with the group or keep it to yourself. We will come back to these at the end of the course.



What do I hope to achieve through completing this course?



What fears do I have about attending this course?



Building Motivation to Change

It is not uncommon to have mixed feelings about making changes and trying something new. For example-attending this group you may have felt hopeful at the thought of feeling better, but nervous at the thought of meeting new people. One way of thinking about change is to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of making some changes as well as the advantages and

disadvantages of not making some changes. Have a go at completing the table below when thinking of the course and see what comes up for you.

<u>Advantages of attending this course</u>	<u>Disadvantages of attending this course</u>
<u>Advantages of not attending the course</u>	<u>Disadvantages of not attending this course</u>

Recovery

Recovery is a journey. During the course you may have times where you feel better, and times where you feel worse. The times where you feel like you've slipped back are NOT disasters. These are often the times when the most learning takes place. Challenges present an opportunity to notice triggers, to try out new techniques and to think about what you could try doing differently next time.

How Cognitive Behavioural Therapy can help

What is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)?

CBT is a type of talking therapy that has been shown to be very effective in helping people with both depression and anxiety. CBT is probably best understood by what it is trying to achieve. The main underpinning of CBT is that difficulties develop as a consequence of learnt ways of thinking (cognition) and behaving, and that learning new ways of thinking and behaving will have a beneficial impact on emotional wellbeing.

Cognition: the C in CBT

The C or cognitive element of CBT refers to thoughts and mental images about yourself (I'm ok, or I'm not), other people (they are ok or they are not) and the world around (the future is bright or it's not).

The more threatening your thoughts (I'm going to be die), the more anxious you will feel. The more strongly you believe things should be different (the world must not be this way!), the more frustrated and angry you will feel.

The way you think is guided by what you pay attention to, the way you interpret what is happening around you, and the experiences you are most likely to remember.

Behaviour: The B in CBT

The B or behavioural element of CBT refers to what you do, what you have the urge to do and what you do not do. Thoughts and behaviours are linked.

When thinking of behaviours, it can be useful to think of these in relation to consequences (in the short and long term). How you respond to an anxiety provoking situation can seem helpful in the very short term. For example, if you were taking a driving test, a response that might seem helpful would be to avoid the test, not go to the test center and not take the test. This might seem helpful as your anxiety will go. However, you have not passed the test, you cannot drive and in the long term, the test might become more anxiety provoking for you.

CBT therefore considers behaviours, the negative consequences of these behaviours, how these might maintain your difficulties and lastly how to change them.

Therapy: the T in CBT

The aim of Cognitive behavioural Therapists is to assist people to better understand why they might have developed particular problems as well as what are maintaining them.

How Can CBT Help?

CBT can help you to break this cycle by identifying unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaviour, which could be maintaining your anxiety, depression or health difficult. During these group sessions you will learn techniques to help you change these patterns, to help you to move towards achieving your goals.

Change can be difficult, and it is normal to think "I can't see this helping me" or "I can't do it", particularly if you are caught in a vicious cycle! Asking for help can be difficult, and it can be hard to find the motivation to change. Any change takes effort, but the rewards can be huge.

Discussion Point: Making Changes

Think about other times in your life when you have made a change e.g. giving up smoking, starting a new job, learning to drive, taking up a new hobby. What can you take from these experiences to help you now?

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Monitoring

Monitoring is a really important part of CBT. It makes you the detective in figuring out what makes you feel better or worse. A simple monitoring tool can be to use a diary or mobile phone to once a day reflect on your mood (rating it from 0 = no anxiety to 10 = extremely anxious). This can help identify patterns. What's different on those days where there is a slight improvement? Alternatively you can start noting times where there is a change in your mood and what was happening when this change started, what was going through your mind and how did you respond. Monitoring provides lots of useful information that can be used in CBT to aid your recovery.

Support

Support is also really important, although this can come in many forms and doesn't just have to be someone who you can share your vulnerabilities with. This can either be from family members, friends or from professionals such as your GP, nurse, therapist or counsellor. The great thing about group therapy is that you have lots of support from others in a similar position.

What is Covid-19?

- Covid-19 is a new coronavirus disease affecting the respiratory symptom much like SARS and MERS
- People differ in the severity in the symptoms but older people, men, BAME and those with underlying health problems appear more at risk of severe symptoms
- Depending on the severity, symptoms are treated at home or in hospital
- Access to testing has varied during the pandemic therefore you maybe attending this course having never been “formally” tested but having had symptoms in line with the illness
- Very little is known about Covid-19. Various medical professionals are researching and using data from SARS and MERS infections to treat people with the virus and with Long Covid

Long Covid is a term for people who experience Covid-19 for longer than expected or experience symptoms following acute illness.

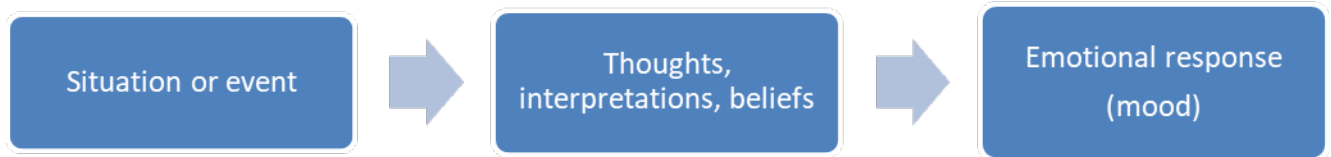
There is A LOT of variation in symptoms but mainly include **fatigue** and **breathlessness**

Other symptoms might include:

- Muscular aches and pains
- Palpitations
- Mental fog
- Gastroenterology symptoms
- Anxiety and depression

- There are many unknowns currently about the symptoms of Long Covid and these can differ from person to person

What is Depression?



Depression is different to feeling sad or blue for a few days which everyone will experience at some point in their lives. Clinical Depression is more intense, lasts longer (symptoms last at least 2 weeks) and it interferes with your ability to do the things you are normally able to do easily.

Even though you might feel alone, depression is actually very common. In fact, 1 in 4 people will experience depression at some point in their life. Often people feel embarrassed about sharing this but it is important to note that it can happen to anyone.



Symptoms of Depression

The symptoms of depression can be divided into the categories below. It is important to become aware which symptoms you experience, as these will act as early warning signs that you are starting to feel low. The earlier you can recognize the signs, the earlier you will be able to act, before your mood become really low.

Physical – what happens in your body

These may include:

- Tiredness and fatigue
- Reduced motivation
- Increased or reduced appetite
- Changes in sleep pattern, such as early waking, trouble getting to sleep, sleeping too much
- Reduced concentration
- Reduced short term memory

Cognitive Symptoms (your thoughts and thinking patterns)

- Negative about yourself (e.g. I'm a burden, people would be better off without me)
- Negative about the future (e.g. this will never change, I'll never get better)
- Negative about the world (e.g. the world is a bad place)
- Only noticing the negatives whilst overlooking the positives
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Repeated thoughts of death, self-harm or suicide
- Feeling depressed or down nearly every day

Emotions – how you feel

- Low
- Sad
- Anger
- Hopelessness
- Guilt
- Frustration
- Numb
- Irritable

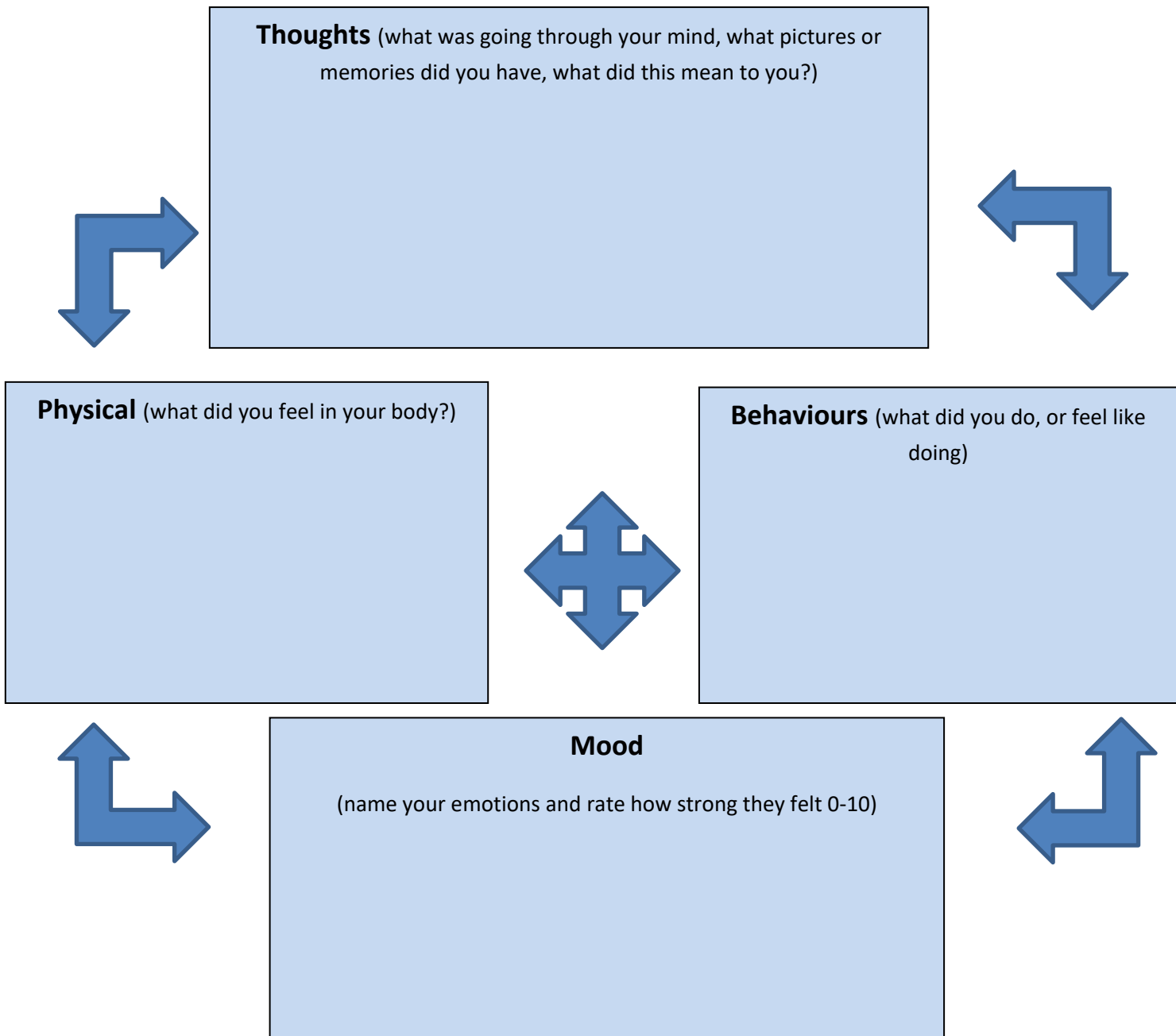
Behavioural - what you do, have the urge to do or don't do

- Over-thinking
- Reduced activity
- Isolation
- Difficulty keeping up with usual household tasks or work
- Reduced self-care
- Loss of interest
- Using alcohol or other substances withdrawing from other people

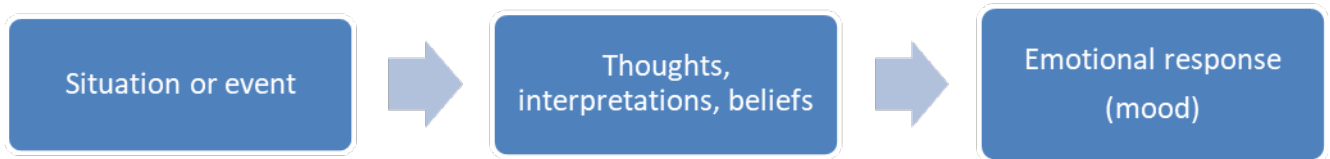
What symptoms and reactions did you notice the last time you were low or are noticing now?

Can you separate your reactions into thoughts, physical, emotion and behaviour using the diagram on the next page?

What does your depression cycle look like?



What is Anxiety?



These negative predictions/thoughts are a survival instinct that can be helpful in real life threatening situations. For example, if you are driving and suddenly see a child run into the road, it is helpful for your brain to recognise the threat and to tell your body to react (apply the brake, steer away from the child, sound your horn). Your body will therefore go through a range of physical changes known as the “fight or flight” response, which helps to prepare your bodies and protect you from danger and take these actions (in the hope to avoid the danger).



However, there are times when you can experience an anxiety response due simply to a perceived threat, thinking or predicting something bad will happen. For example, walking down a dark alley at night and felt tense while worrying that something bad might happen. In this situation something bad may or may not happen, but what is important is that if you believe there is some danger you will usually feel some level of anxiety.

Symptoms of Anxiety

The symptoms of Anxiety can be divided into the categories below. It can be really useful to become aware the symptoms you experience, as these will act as early warning signs that you are starting to feel anxious. The earlier you can recognize the signs, the earlier you will be able to act, before your mood become really anxious.

Physical – what happens in your body

These may include:

- Tiredness and fatigue
- Irritability or snapping
- Fidgety, inability to sit still, restless
- Headaches
- Stomach churning (butterflies in stomach)
- Muscle tension
- Hot and sweaty
- Increased or decreased appetite
- Sleep disturbances, such as early waking, trouble getting to sleep, sleeping too much

Cognitions – what you think

- This must be.....cancer, Covid 19, MS,
- I am going to die
- I am unwell
- What if.....

- Imagining the worse and dwelling on this
- My parent died from this, this must be.....
- The doctors must be wrong, surely they missed this symptom

Emotions – how you feel

- Anxiety
- Panic
- Upset
- Anger

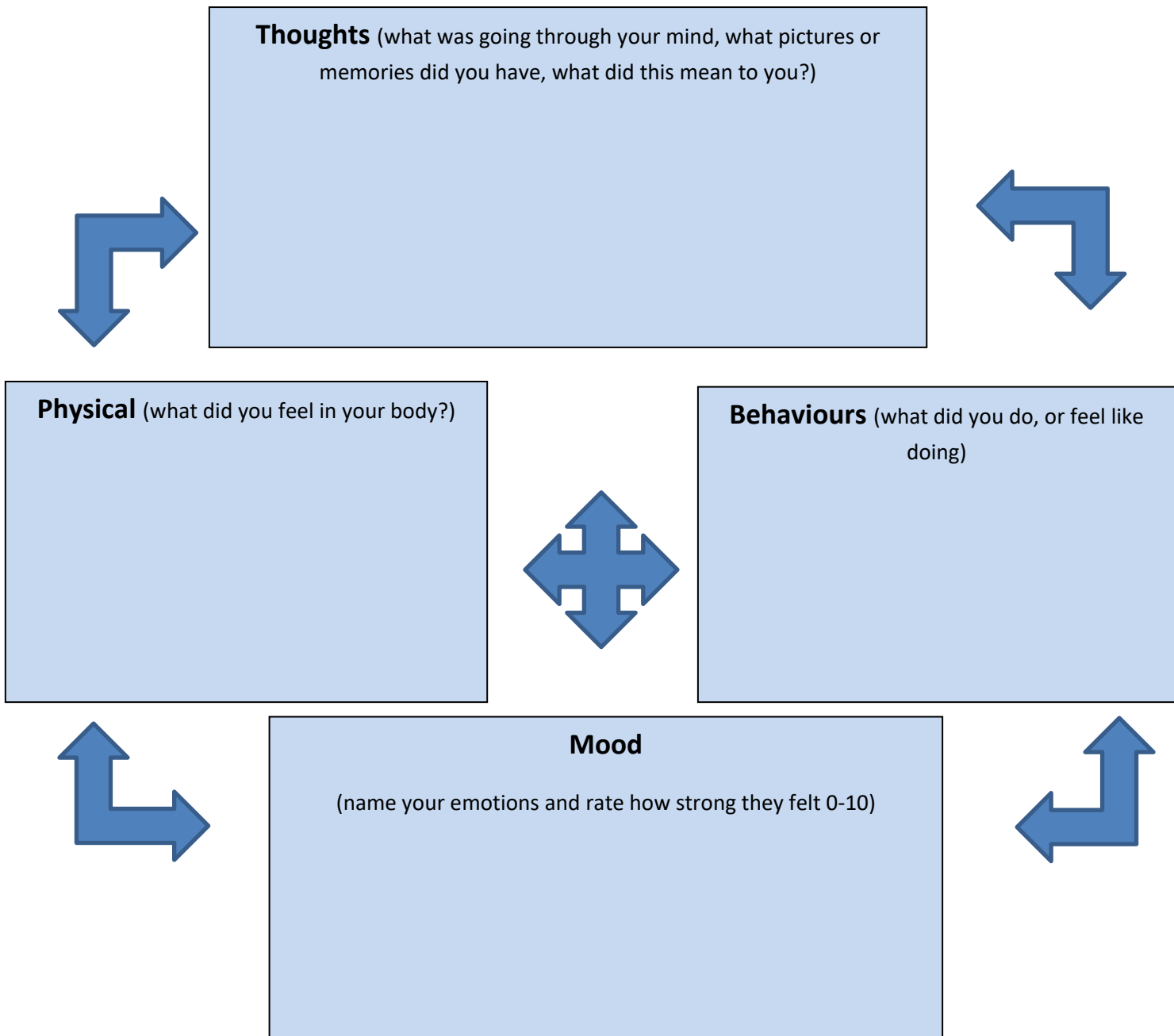
Behavioural - what you do, have the urge to do or don't do

- Seek reassurance – GP, friends, family
- Avoidance
- Go to see your GP frequently or avoid your GP practice
- Behave as though you are unwell (resting, reducing activities)
- Look up symptoms on an internet search
- Focusing on parts of your body that you are concerned with
- Check your body or monitor symptoms

What symptoms and reactions did you notice the last time you were anxious? What was your greatest fear in that situation?

Can you separate your reactions into thoughts, physical, emotion and behaviour using the diagram on the next page?

What does your anxiety cycle look like?



GOAL SETTING:

- Thinking about the impact of the symptoms of Long Covid, what would you most like to change during this course?
- What would you like to achieve in the short term?
- What would you like to aim for in the long term?

Short term GOAL:

.....

.....

Long Term GOAL?

.....

.....

Are they SMART GOALS?

SPECIFIC

MEASURABLE

ACHIEVABLE

RELEVANT

TIME BOUND

Additional support

- NHS recovery:- <https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/>
- British Lung Foundation:- <httpswww.post-covid.org.uk/get-support/>
- The National Institute for Health and Care (NIHR) – Research of Long Covid: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/covid-19/researching-the-long-term-impact.htm>
- Steps to Wellbeing Employment Advice:-

Debt Advice:

- Debt helpline- 0808 808 4000
- www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en
- www.mentalhealthandmoneyadvice.org/
- www.nationaldebtline.org/coronavirus-hub-ew/

Mental Health Websites:

- www.mindfulnet.org
- www.oxfordmindfulness.org
- www.palousemindfulness.com

Mental health national helplines:

- Samaritans- 116 123
- Sane- 0300 304 7000
- Mind- 0300 123 3393

Week One Notes

Between sessions:

- Complete the vicious cycle for depression and anxiety, to help gain a better understanding of the symptoms you are experiencing.
- Identify your personal goals.
- Complete the mindful activity on a regular basis.

Session 2

Sleep



Regularly getting a good night's sleep is important for physical and emotional wellbeing. Most people experience some sort of sleep problem at some point in their lives which can be made worse by stress and can also impact on stress levels.

Not getting enough sleep can make cause tiredness, irritability and lead you to feel less able to cope with life events. You can also start to worry about not getting enough sleep which can make you feel tense and on edge, which can then make it even harder to get off to sleep causing a vicious cycle of sleep.

Tips for Improving Sleep

- **Routine**
- **Establish an “optimal sleep pattern”**
- **Reduce sleep if sleeping too much**
- **Put the day to bed**
- **Time outside**
- **Reduce day time sleeping**

Routine – The aim of establishing a routine is to help establish a regular sleep-wake cycle - regulate your body (circadian) rhythm/internal body clock. It is NOT recommended to begin retiring to bed to sleep at a set time as you may not feel sleepy and therefore will not sleep. Instead try waking at the same time each morning which may lead you to feel sleepy at a certain time in the evening.

Optimal sleep pattern – A optimal sleep pattern is one during which you fall asleep with a short time of going to bed, seldom wake and have good quality sleep. To establish an optimal sleep pattern, it is recommended you reduce the time spent in bed in order to increase the amount of time you are asleep – if that makes sense?. You are likely to feel

increased tiredness initially but the sleep deprivation will in time lead to falling asleep more quickly.

Sleeping for longer than you used to before Long Covid oddly might be a contributing factor to morning exhaustion. If you are sleeping for longer than an hour more than you used to, this exhaustion may lift you were to reduce your sleep. The recommendation is that you reduce this down gradually but do try to be consistent. Keep with it as it might take a few weeks before you notice the benefits.

Often the thing that keeps us awake are our thoughts, going over the days events and thinking ahead to the coming day. Whilst this practice may not be problematic in itself, thinking over the day as you are going off to sleep can be. It is recommended that you put aside 15 minutes in your evening to dedicate to this task instead

It can be helpful to spend time outside (or exposed to natural light) between 14:00-16:00 each day to help maintain your body's day/night clock

Day time sleeping – day time sleeping is sleeping past 09:00 in the morning and retiring to bed before 21:00.

Sleep Hygiene

Sleep hygiene refers to good sleeping habits.

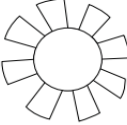

- Napping can stop us sleeping in the evening and often can lead to feelings of exhaustion rather than feeling restful after a nap. If you must have a nap, people generally report 20 minutes being the optimum time to nap and feel rested. It can be useful to distinguish between tiredness (need sleep – yawning and itchy eyes) and fatigue (no energy). Only sleeping if tired.
- 15 minute rule. If you go to bed and you are not asleep after 15 minutes, get up. The thinking behind this is to avoid associating bed with sleeplessness. Useful activities to be doing when you wake are mundane tasks or activities that will not stimulate your brain and wake you up.
- Eating. It is not advisable to go to bed just after eating a large meal (as you may get heartburn if eaten something spicy and you may become bloated and uncomfortable). However, if you are hungry when you go to bed, this might lead to waking during the

night (to eat). Eating something like a banana, handful or almonds or a glass of milk can be useful 30 minutes to an hour before bed. These food items contain tryptophan which can aid muscle relaxation and sleep.

- Nicotine – if you smoke, if you can it is recommended you have your last smoke a couple of hours before bed if possible. Nicotine as I am sure you are aware is a stimulant and therefore is likely to affect your sleep or quality of sleep
- Caffeine again is a stimulant is best avoided 2-3 hour before sleep. Although many people say they can sleep after drinking coffee for example. If you are experiencing difficulties sleeping, this is best avoided.
- Avoid alcohol. Although alcohol may help you to drop off to sleep, it can disrupts sleep as it metabolises. As such is best avoided again at least a couple of hours before bed, it not at all.
- If you want to sleep well, you want your bed to be an inviting place to sleep. Comfortable mattress, clean bedding, and look to your environment – reduce clutter if you can.
- Clock watching - Many people struggling with sleep tend to clock watch. Frequently checking the clock during the night can wake you up and reinforces negative thoughts such as “Oh no, look how late it is, I’ll never get to sleep” or “if I don’t get to sleep soon, I’ll be so tired in the morning”.
- Be patient – none of the advice here is a quick fix to sleep difficulties. Rather they are good practices to give you the best odds of a good nights sleep.
- Another option is to discuss night time sedation with your GP.



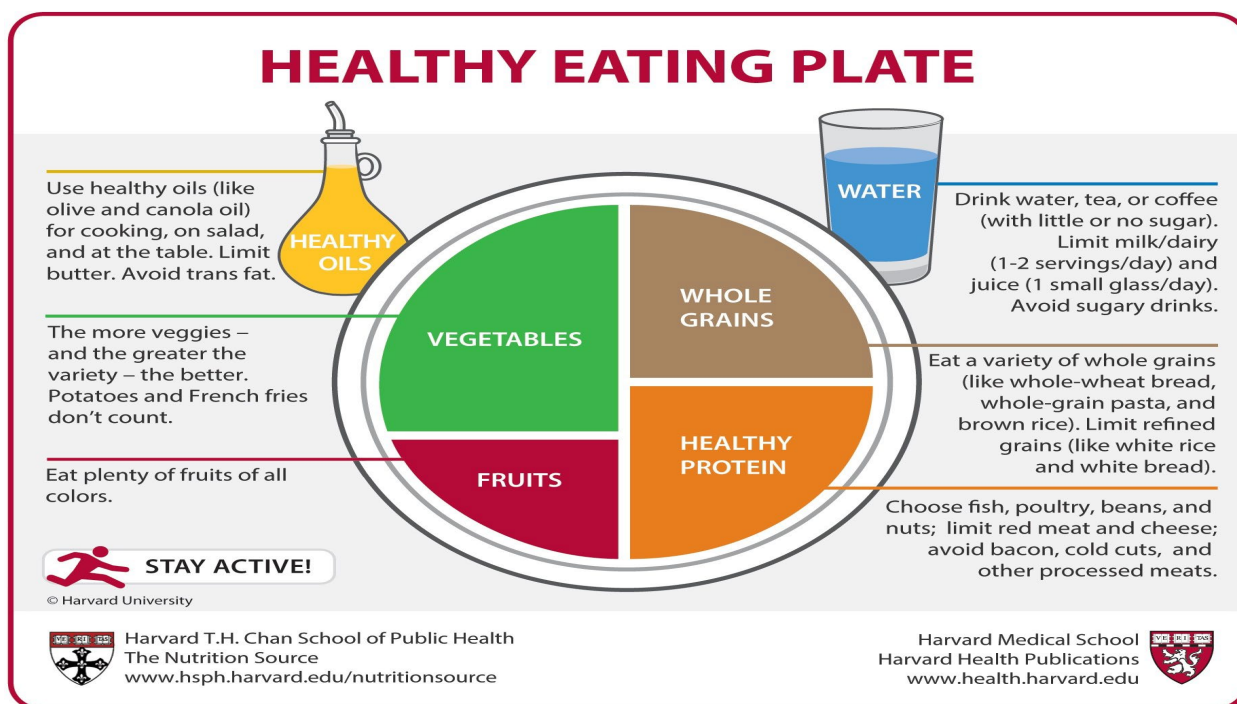
Sleep Diary

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Complete in the MORNING							
							
I went to bed last night at (time)							
I got up this morning at (time)							
I slept for a total of (hours)							
I woke up during the night (# times)							
Complete in the EVENING							
							
Number of caffeinated drinks today							
Time of last caffeinated drink							
Exercise completed today (minutes)							
What I did in the hour before I fell asleep							
Mood today? (0=awful, 10=great)							

Healthy Eating

Ensuring you are eating regular healthy meals can be challenge for many people experiencing Long Covid for mang differing reasons. General healthy eating advise is:-

- Monitor your weight if you have lost weight
- Eat little and often
- Protein rich foods (fish, meat, cheese, lentils, beans, eggs)
- Milk based drinks
- Hydrate regularly
- Multi-vitamins are recommended (if underweight)
- Vitamin D supplement recommended
- Moist, soft food easier to eat if fatigues
- Sweets or icicles if dry mouth
- High fibre if constipated



Additional advise on healthy eating Post Covid can be found on the British Lung Foundation website and at Yourcovidrecovery advise page.

Mindful Activity

Sit as comfortably as you can with your legs uncrossed and your hands in your lap. Close your eyes if this feels comfortable. If you prefer not to close your eyes, focus on a neutral part of the room.

Start by taking a few deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to slow your breathing slightly and take some deeper breaths.

Imagine the air entering through your nose, up into your lungs and then out through your mouth. Imagine that the air you are breathing in is fresh, crisp air entering your body, and the air exiting your body is used and that is all the tension and anxiety leaving your body.

Pause

Breathe in and breathe out. You might notice that the air entering your body through your nostrils feels cooler, and the air leaving your mouth feels warmer.

Pause

Your mind might start to wander and you might notice thoughts popping into your head. That's ok, just acknowledge these thoughts, let them go and re-focus your attention back on your breathing.

Notice your shoulders gently moving up and down as you breathe. Now notice your stomach. As you take some deeper breaths, imagine there is a balloon in your stomach. As you breathe in the balloon inflates, and as you breathe out, it deflates.

Pause

Now start to become aware of the rest of your body. Become aware of how your back feels against the back of the chair, notice the seat under your legs and buttocks. Some of your body might feel warmer and some might feel cooler. Some of your body might feel heavier than others. Become aware of how your clothes feel against your skin, and how your feet feel inside your shoes and socks.

Become aware of the air around your body. What is the temperature like? Can you smell anything? Now listen very closely, for a moment to the sounds around you. You might hear things you do not normally notice.

Pause

And return to your breathing again. Imagine that balloon again in your stomach.

Pause

I am going to count down from 5. begin to re-focus back to the room... 5.....4. now slowly begin to adjust to where you are..... 3.....2..... open your eyes if they are shut..... 1

Additional Support

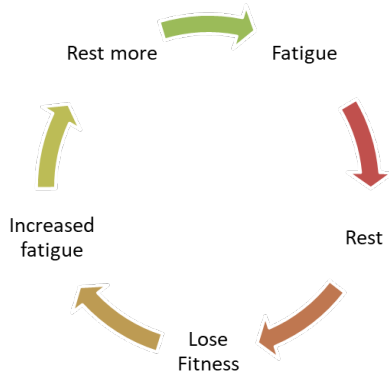
- Your Covid Recovery - Sleeping well:
<https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/i-think-i-have-long-covid/your-road-to-recovery/sleeping-well/>
- Eating advice from British Lung Foundation:-
<https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/eating-well/diet-and-my-symptoms#breathlessness>
- [AbScent: ending smell disorders](https://www.abscent.org/) – smell training to recovery sense of smell: <https://www.abscent.org/>
- [Smell Training - Fifth Sense](http://www.fifthsense.org.uk) – smell testing and training:
www.fifthsense.org.uk
- [The Gut Health Doctor](http://www.theguthealthdoctor.com) – for advice and information on Gut health:
www.theguthealthdoctor.com
- YouTube link for the video on 'How the food you eat affects your brain' by Mia Nacamulli - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyQY8a-ng6g>

Week Two Notes

Between sessions:

- Practice using the mindful activity.
- Having completed a Sleep diary, try to incorporate some of the sleep hygiene techniques into your bedtime routine
- Consider how lifestyle factors (such as sleep and healthy eating) may be impacting your mood and physical health, and see where you might make positive changes in line with the aspects recommended here.

Session 3: - Fatigue



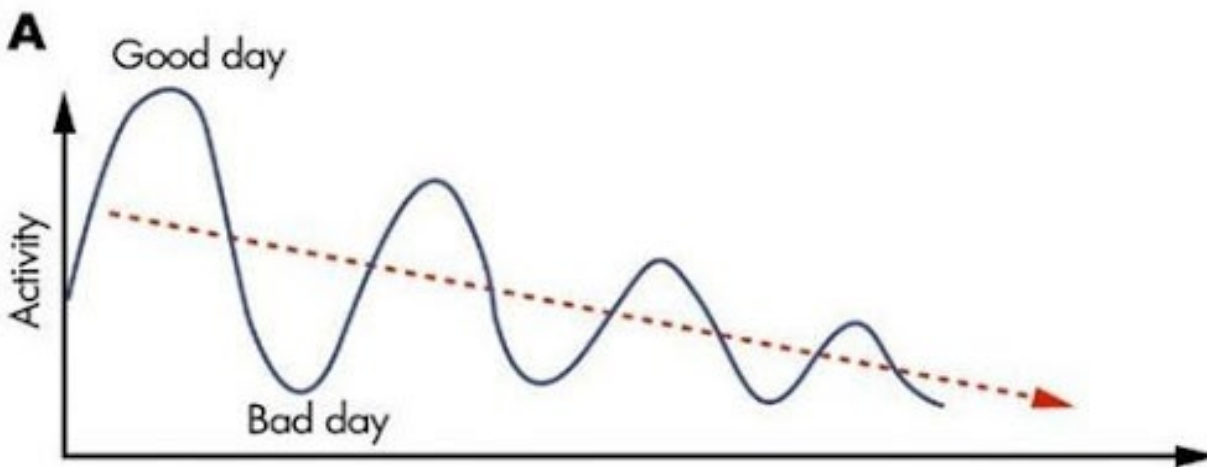
Here we are wanting to spend some time focusing on fatigue. It is known that fatigue is one of the main symptoms of Long Covid, depression and anxiety. Due to this overlap and the unhelpful cycles that often accompany fatigue, we will be spending quite a bit of time on fatigue and how this can be managed.

Fatigue is a normal part of the body's response to fighting a viral infection such as COVID-19. Fatigue as we have seen, is also a common feature of both depression and anxiety!

Some people with fatigue choose to do less, or to spend a lot of time resting. Unfortunately, reducing activity can often lead to boredom and depression, which can make the fatigue worse. In addition, excessive resting reduces fitness levels with the consequence that activity leads to fatigue more quickly, often meaning we do less and so on.

QUESTION – What have you started doing less of or avoiding? _____

Boom and Bust



Some people respond to fatigue by battling through it, attempting pre-Covid, pre-depressive or pre-anxious activity. Whilst it can make sense to attempt to return to activities levels, this can also be counterproductive. This can often lead to what is termed – boom and bust.

Boom and bust is a term for when someone gets into a pattern of doing more when feeling good, often pushing themselves, with the result of needing lots of rest afterwards. When recovered, this pattern occurs again leading to a cycle of booming activity and then busting and needing extending rest periods. Over time, this leads to longer and longer time to resting leading to reduced activity overall.



- ✓ Plan
- ✓ Pace
- ✓ Prioritise

Activity diary

Before starting to think about any changes to your activity and rest, it is useful first to get a baseline, where are you starting from – then you can plan where you want it to get to. After keeping a diary for 2 weeks, you are likely to notice patterns of activity or inactivity. Once you have completed a diary for a couple of weeks, it is then useful to begin devising an activity and rest plan.

Ensure you keep a note not only of what you do but also HOW you feel

Daily Activity Diary

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7am to 9am							
9am to 10am							
10am to 11am							
11am to 12pm							
12 to 1							
1 to 2							
2 to 3							
3 to 4							
4 to 5							
5 to 6							
6 to 7							
7 to 8							
8 to 9							
9 to 10							
10 to 11am							

Planning Activity

Plan your days in advance – what **MUST** be done and consider what can be delegated to other people. Routine can be really helpful here! An activity diary can help with this – mentioned next.

- **Routine! Having a routine to your activity is important. If you are resting in response to being over-active, your body never gets used to a level of activity. This can often lead to you feeling as though you do not benefit from a rest.**
- **Consistency (activity and rest). Plan small chunks of activity at regular intervals rather than long periods of irregular activity. The plan is to **GRADUALLY** increase your activity and reduce the need for rest. When I say gradually, this means keeping a level of activity maintained for 2-3 weeks before increasing **SLIGHTLY**.**
- **Regularity (activity and rest)**
- **Keep your activity stable to begin with (rather than increase), BUT if you are for example doing all your cleaning in 3 hours on one day and then you need to rest the following day, break this cleaning down into 20-30 chunks throughout the week.**
- **Avoid using bed for resting during the day**
- **Plan rest. Plan small rest periods throughout your day.**

Pace - Pacing is an energy management strategy aimed at achieving a balance (that works for you) between rest and activity. This is not a strategy to “cure” fatigue, rather this is strategy to assist you manage your fatigue and hopefully reduce rather than exacerbate your fatigue. Pacing yourself is all about **managing the balance of all the tasks you need to do** and some you want to do without rushing, tiring yourself out or making you feel worse.

Useful Analogy

Spoon theory uses spoons as a visual representation of how much energy someone has throughout their day. We start each day with a limited number of spoons. People with Long Covid will have limited spoons.



Each activity undertaken during the day will cost a certain amount of spoons, the greater the effort required, the more spoons utilised. Once all the spoons are used up for that day, that's it, all energy is used up.

Example - Let's say Gill has 10 spoons of energy for today. Gill will not wake every day with 10 spoons. Gill may have had poor sleep (-1 spoon) or woken in pain (-1 spoon). Gill may have slept badly the night before so may

have only started the day with 8 spoons.

Spoon theory encourages more effective pacing in your daily life by giving weight to the tasks/activities you want to complete. The hope is that Spoon theory will prevent “burn out”.

Spoon theory can also be a way to help friends and family understand Long Covid and your fatigue.

Spoons can be replenish during the day through sufficient sleep and rest.

Prioritise – What activities are most important to you? Do these when you have the most energy. Can others be delegated?

Goals - It can be useful to set goals for yourself as long as they are realistic. Can you chunk the goal into manageable steps? Accept that it is likely as you recover to work on one goal for quite a few weeks before it is achievable. Only when it is comfortably achieved are you then ready to move onto the next step.

Meaning - It is also important to build up activities that have meaning for you. This means deciding which areas in your life are important to you, and in small manageable steps work towards goals in these.

Energy – It is recommended that tasks be broken down into the energy required to complete. Tasks can be broken down into low, medium and high. Plan a mixture of these through the day and week. If too many high-energy tasks are planned and undertaken, you will likely be using too many spoons potentially leading to excessive rest.

TIPS

- Once you have a baseline of activity, the plan is next to plan on increasing (if you are resting too much) or decreasing (if you are doing too much) your activity
- Balance is key! If you are resting too much then the plan here is to build upon, to increase activity.
- If you are the opposite, working late, taking on too much then the aim here is to plan rests, take a lunchbreak, finish work on time and have a balance to activity and rest
- Plan rest periods – these do not need to be for extended periods but can include a 2-5 minute mindful activity

- Write a list of activities you would like to do during the next week
- Specify how long you want to undertake the activity
- Be careful not to over-do activity
- Plan a mixture of activities – fun, chores, with others and alone, daily living activities, etc. Ensure you include relaxation and rest!

Any thoughts on planning, prioritising and pacing your activity? _____

Rest – Body AND Mind

As your body continues to recover from Covid-19, rest is needed to continue healing. The NHS advise is to take short breaks throughout the day, even if you don't think you need them this can be for 2-10 minutes throughout the day, rather than one big rest.

Rest means relaxing the body and mind. Often, when sat at rest our minds can be very active. For example – reading the news on your phone you might feel physically inactive but if you read something about covid-19, this can lead to a stress response/fight and flight.

During rest, stop and do nothing, calm your mind, and try breathing or guided relaxation techniques.

Although you may FEEL as though you need more rest, try to resist as this can disturb your sleep and lead to muscles becoming deconditioned thus more easily fatigued.

Regular – Take regular rest periods during the day

Essential – Rest is a an essential part of recovery and managing fatigue

Structured – rest periods they must be structured into your activity diary

Taken – Taking your rest period like you would with prescribed medication

- Allow yourself between 2 minutes, 5 minutes or 10 minutes to rest. These need to be taken regularly.
- You need to stop what you are doing and minimise contact with the environment around you.
- Rest periods can be structured into your routine using your activity diary.
- It may also help to set reminders on your phone or to have the rest periods at natural breaks in your day such as after or before meal times.
- While we can't fully remove ourselves from our environment it helps to minimise distraction including mobile phones, TV and radio.
- Having said this, rest periods can be taken in busy places if needed. It is the conscious choice to stop what we are doing. It may be helpful to focus on noticing your breath or doing a mindfulness exercise to help you rest.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Before you begin make sure you are comfortable; find a quiet place to sit, then close your eyes and let your body 'go loose'. Take five slow, deep breaths before you begin.



Step One: Tension

The first step is applying muscle tension to a specific part of your body, eg/ right hand. Take a slow deep breath and squeeze the muscles as hard as you can for about 5 seconds. **BE CAREFUL** not to hurt yourself – If you have problems with pulled muscles, broken bones or any other medical conditions that would hinder physical activity **CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR FIRST!**

Step Two: Relaxing the Tense Muscles

This step involves relaxing the tensed muscles. After about 5 seconds of tensing your right hand muscles, let all the tightness flow out of the tensed muscles. Exhale as you do this. You should feel the muscles in your hand become loose and limp as the tension flows out.



Remain in this relaxed state for about 15 seconds, then move on to the next muscle group.

Repeat step one, then step two with each muscle group i.e. the arms, the shoulders, the neck, the mouth, the eyes, the forehead, the chest, the stomach, the buttocks, the legs and the feet.

Tips:

1. If your mind wanders, don't worry, just acknowledge the thought and then bring the focus of your attention back to the muscle you are tensing.
2. It is important to deliberately focus on and notice the difference between the tension and relaxation – this teaches your muscles the difference.

Why bother?

If you've been stressed for a long period of time this exercise will help remind your body what it's like to be relaxed. As our thoughts, feelings and behaviours are linked if we can reduce physical tension it will help reduce the overall feeling of being stressed and may influence our thinking and behaviour in a positive way too!

Mindful senses



VISION



HEARING



SMELL



TASTE



TOUCH



Sight - What can you see? Look around the room – what can you see? Are there details you haven't taken notice of for a while? Look behind you and at the ceiling, what do you notice?

Sound – What sounds can you hear? In the room? A clock? Traffic? People? The sound of yourself breathing? Anything surprise you?

Body – what do you notice in your body? The fabric on your clothing on your skin? What do you notice about the chair you are sitting upon? Can you feel your feet upon the floor? Or your shoes on your feet? What do you notice about this?

Smell – Do you notice any smells? If nothing jumps out for you, smell your drink, your clothing, your skin? What do you notice? Does this smell remind you of anything?

Taste – Again, something may not jump out for you. Having a drink or a snack here can be helpful – just notice the taste, are their different flavours or tones to what you are eating or drinking? Does this smell?

Additional Support

- Royal College of Occupational Therapists: Managing fatigue:- <https://www.rcot.co.uk/how-manage-post-viral-fatigue-after-covid-19-0>
- Pacing:- <https://www.rcot.co.uk/conserving-energy>
- Mental health and exercise: www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-using-exercise
- Exercise:- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/>
- Royal College of Physiotherapist:- <https://www.csp.org.uk/public-patient/covid-19-road-recovery>

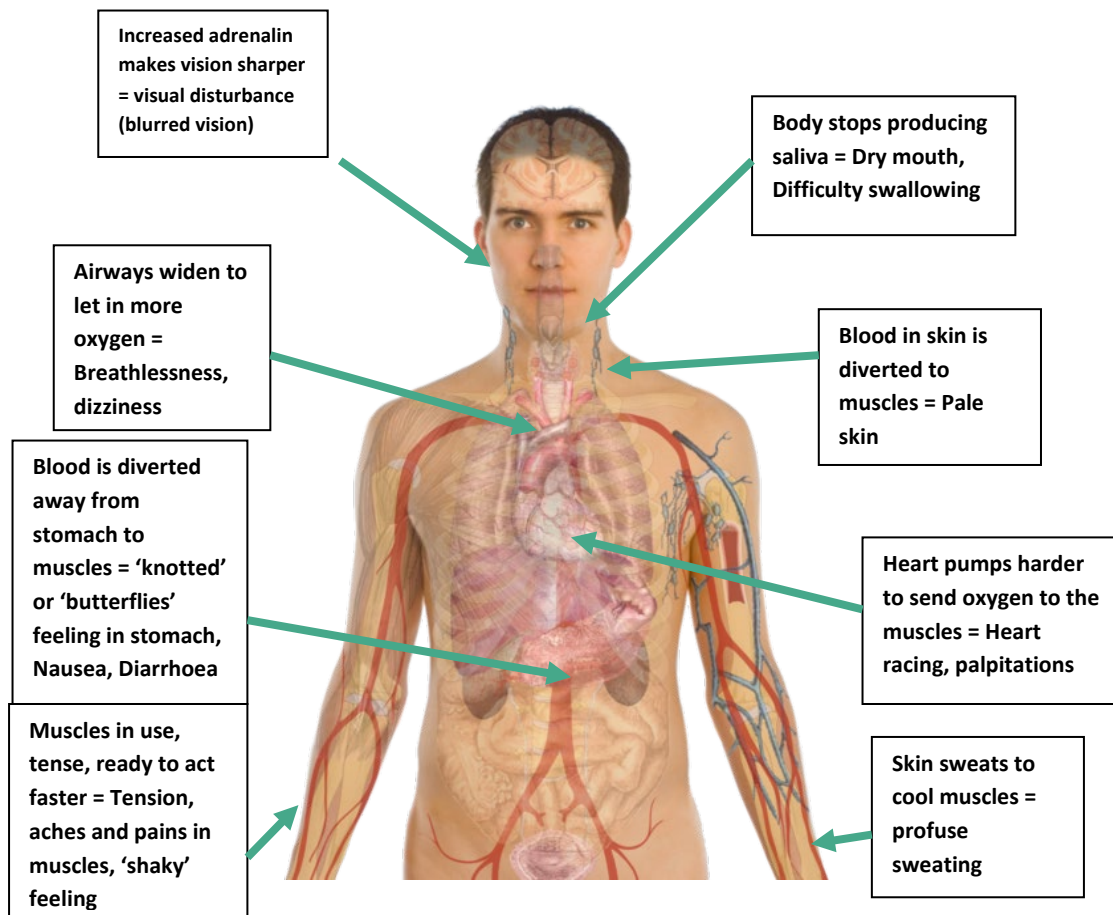
Week Three Notes

Between sessions:

- Practice using the relaxations techniques – either progressive muscle relaxation, mindful senses or both (both in your book)
- Take some action to begin reviewing your levels of activity, considering the 3P's for pacing and information on rest for both body and mind.

Session 4

THE PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY



As discussed within session 1, anxiety can be a symptom of Long Covid. It is unknown at the time of writing this if this anxiety is psychological, neurological or both. Regardless, it will be the focus of the discussion for the next section of the course, along side strategies to manage anxiety.

Anxiety occurs in response to a perceived danger. The fight, flight or freeze response is an instinctive reaction that aims to keep you safe and prepare your body to either run away from a threat, fight against it to protect yourself, or inhibit you if fighting or fleeing is too dangerous. It is a survival reaction over which we have limited control.

The Fight or Flight response is the body's way of responding to being in danger. Adrenaline is rushed into our bloodstream to enable us to run away or fight. This happens if the danger is real, or if we *perceive* the danger is real. It is the body's alarm and survival mechanism. Primitive man wouldn't have survived for long without this life-saving response; it is there to keep us alive. It works so well that it often kicks in when it's not needed; when the danger is in our heads. We think we're in danger, so that's enough to trigger the system! When we're stressed for a period of time we can become hypervigilant - constantly on the lookout for danger, hyper-alert to any of the signals, this makes it more likely that the fight/ flight alarm system will be triggered.

We can experience strong symptoms of anxiety because of hyperventilation. We may interpret these symptoms as dangerous which can lead to a Panic. Panic attacks feel very uncomfortable, but are not dangerous to our health.

Understanding Worry



What is worry?

Worry is often described as a self-talk activity, an activity in which you 'talk to yourself' repetitively about possible future negative events that are fear inducing. Often this thinking includes thoughts about what would happen should the event occur.

Worrying can therefore be seen as a type of vigilance for threat, and an 'attempt' at mentally solving problems that haven't happened yet and might never happen. The word 'attempt' is used here because often a solution doesn't arise leaving people thinking they will not be able to cope should their worst fears materialise.

Often worries start with what if.....Can you identify any 'what if' worries you have? __

Is worrying normal?

Yes, it is true that everyone can worry from time to time. This is understandable particularly if you are waiting for test results into health investigations for example. Worry can become problematic due to the amount of time spent worrying as well as the difficulty disengaging from worry. Do you believe your health worries as a problem?

Attention on worry

One of the dilemmas of overcoming our anxieties, is the belief that it is reasonable to worry to some extent. Could there be a middle ground? Could you have some concern for yourself but not excessively worry? If not, why do think this is not possible? _____

Is worry helpful to you?

- Do you achieve what you hope to achieve from worrying?
- Does it help you to problem solve?
- Do you feel prepared?
- When the worst has happened, has it been helpful to worry beforehand?

Understand your worry

To understand your worry, it can be useful to consider the function of worry for you, what do you hope to achieve from your worry? For example it is common for people to believe that worrying helps prepare them for the worst, that they worry because they care or that it helps problem solving. What is the function of worry for you? _____

Now you have an idea of what you hope to achieve from worrying, I wonder if you achieve what you hope to achieve from worrying? Do you feel prepared? When the worst has happened, has it been helpful to worry beforehand? _____

The chances are you have identified a couple of times when worry has helped but lots of times when you have worried with no positive or useful outcome. It may seem odd that you keep worrying when there are far more times when worry has not been helpful or productive. The process maintaining this is the same that keeps people playing on fruit machines, i.e. "I might win this next time – the worry might help me this time". This causes the brain to focus on the times when the worry has been helpful and dismiss all the times it hasn't which creates an unhelpful habit. In other words it gives the illusion of helping but actually it's a short term gain for a long term cost. Does this sound familiar to you??

If the opposite is true, that worrying has been unhelpful, has not achieved what you hoped it would or instead this has led to inactivity, seeking reassurance or any other unhelpful behavior, then learning to reduce your worry maybe useful.

The Worry Tree



If we can't do anything about our worry it is **'hypothetical'** - something that may or may not happen! If we can do something about it is a **'practical'** worry - something we can do something about. Making this distinction will help you manage your worries.

Adapted from Butler & Hope 2007
 Made with love by CarrieLeighSandoval.com

Managing our worry

If you have made the decision to work on reducing time spent worrying, there are several ways you can achieve this:

Worry periods

Allocating yourself time to worry can seem like an odd idea, give it a go and see what you make of it. The process of worry time is outlined here:

- 1) Choose a time in your day, each day, to worry. It can be useful to identify a time when you will not be disturbed. Go to a quiet place where you will not be interrupted. Length of worry time is 15 minutes. Try to ensure the location you worry comfortable, and free from distractions.
- 2) During your day (until your worry time) make a note of any worries you have as soon as you notice them. You can write this on a piece of paper or on your mobile phone. You can remind yourself that you will worry about this worry during your worry time there is no need to spend time on this worry now. You will be in a better position to manage your worry during your worry period. Turn your attention to the present moment and the activities of the day to help let go of the worry until the worry period has arrived.
- 3) During your worry time take some time to reflect on the worries you had written down from the day. Only worry about the things you have noted if you feel you must. You may find it helpful to write your thoughts on paper rather than worrying in your head. If all or some of the worries you jotted down are no longer bothering you or no longer seem relevant, then no further action is required.

Problem Solving

Step One: Problem Identification

Write down the problem you want to solve

Step Two: Solution Identification

Write down all solutions that come to mind

Step Three: Strengths vs Weaknesses

Step 4: Which solution will you select?

Step 4: Plan

When:

Where:

Who:

Anything to do before

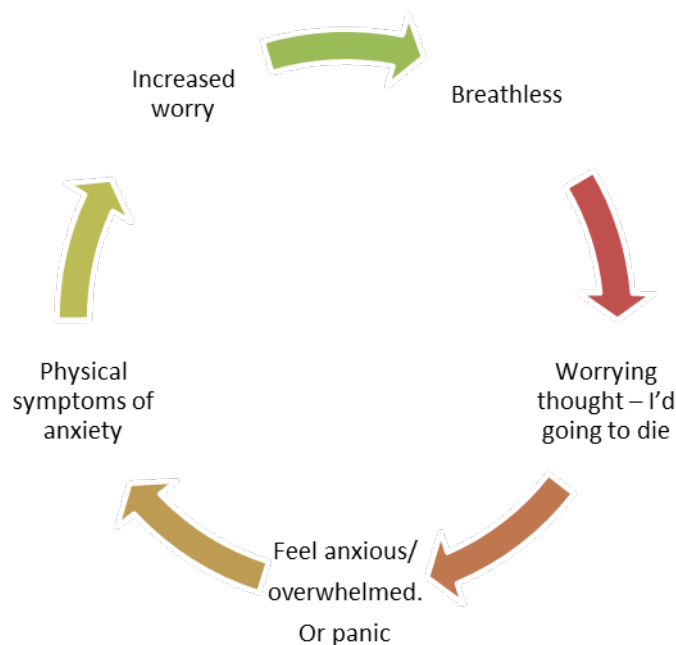
Step 6: Implement the plan

Step 7: Review it

Problem Solving: Solution Analysis

Weaknesses									
Strengths									
Solution									

Breathlessness



This diagram illustrates the cycle of breathing difficulties (trigger), how these can lead to worrying/catastrophising, leading to feelings of anxiety or panic which worsen the physical symptoms, including breathlessness.

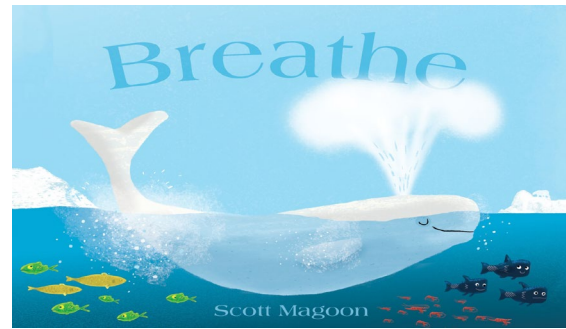
As you can see, feeling anxious makes you feel MORE out of breath. Becoming more out of breath can then make you feel MORE anxious. Is this cycle familiar to you?

Managing Breathlessness

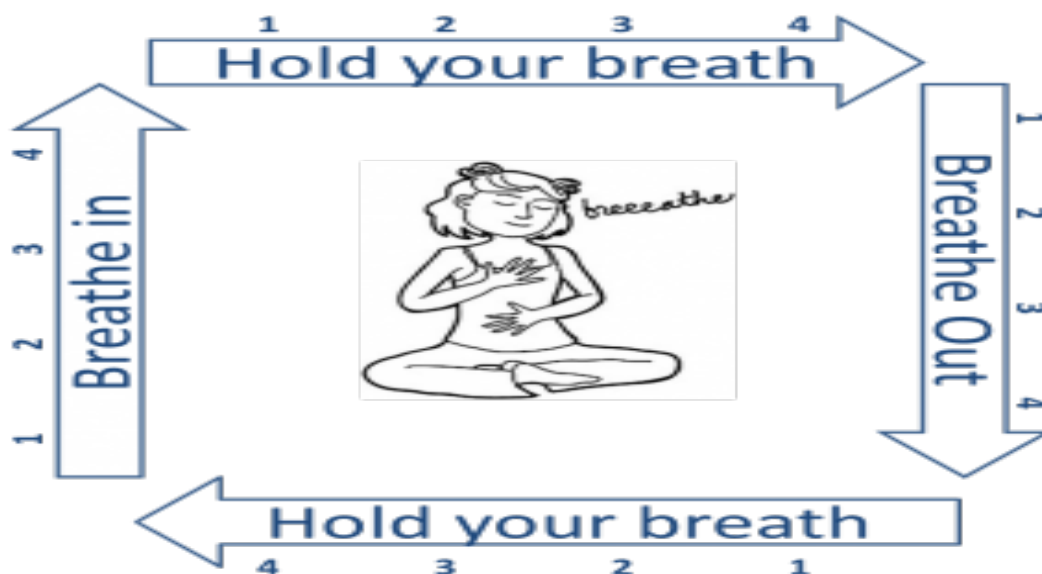
When anxious/threatened our breathing speeds up to prepare us to respond to the threat/danger. Relaxed breathing (abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing) is *slower* and *deeper* than normal breathing, and it happens lower in the body (the belly rather than the chest). This signals to the body that it can relax and does not need to respond to any threat.

Relaxed Breathing Exercise

- Sit or lying comfortably
- Close your eyes (if this feels comfortable)
- Breathe through your nose (rather than your mouth) – this warms the air which helps to soothe. We are also less likely to gulp the air
- Deliberately slow your breathing down - Breathe in to a count of 4, pause, breathe out to a count of 4
- Make sure that your breaths are *smooth, steady, and continuous*
- Pay particular attention to your out-breath - make sure it is smooth and steady




Square Breathing Exercise



Additional Support

Breathlessness

- Pace and plan activities
 - Chunk activities
 - Build up exercise
 - Regular rests
 - Take your time with tasks
- 
- Additional advise on breathlessness techniques can be found on the BLF website:- <https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/breathlessness/how-to-manage-breathlessness>
 - Progressive relaxation:- www.anxietybc.com/adults/how-do-progressive-muscle-relaxation
 - Anxiety support- www.thiswayup.org.au and www.cci.health.wa.gov.au

Week Four Notes

Between sessions:

- Review your worries
- Complete worry time
- Use problem solving technique for practical worries
- Practice attention training
- Regularly use breathing exercises

Session 5

The way you think can have an effect on your mood and your behaviour. When you feel low or anxious, the way that you think can become quite distorted.

Take a moment to ask yourself - when feeling good, what sorts of thoughts do you notice? Now think about when you are feeling anxious, what sorts of thoughts do you notice?

Becoming more aware of your thoughts, allows you to consider how helpful they are and if necessary, change them. Learning to replace unhelpful thinking with more helpful, balanced thinking, can in turn, helps us to feel better, and to behave differently.

The way you think in a situation, and how you make sense of it in your mind, is shaped by previous experiences, personality, and underlying beliefs about yourself, other people and the world.

It might be useful here to explore a situation and how different people might think, feel and behave differently to the same stimulus, the same event.

Example: Notice heart racing

<u>Thought</u>	<u>Emotional</u>	<u>Physical Sensations</u>	<u>Behaviours</u>
I am having a heart attack Images of being in a hospital bed Image of funeral	Fear	Butterflies in stomach, sweating, difficulties catching breath	Present in A&E. Monitor symptoms.
I just had a strong coffee	Neutral	No change	Drink some water
I am excited about the weekend and going to see my favourite band	Excited	Butterflies in stomach, sweaty hands	Watch video of band, imagine what are going to wear

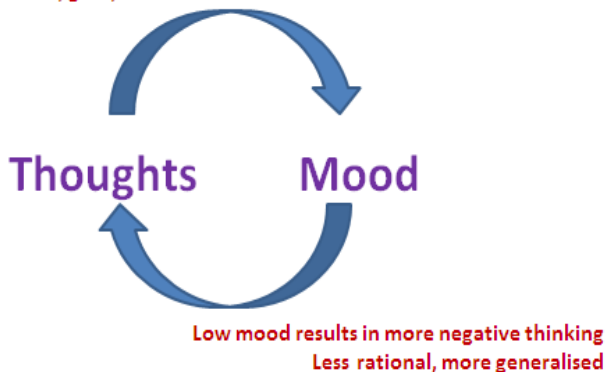
As you can see from this example, how you think is important in determining how you feel and how you behave. Is this a surprise to you?

Situation	What am I thinking?	What my thinking style?

Thought vs. Facts

When we have a thought, we tend to just accept it as true without considering how realistic or helpful it is. But sometimes we can “jump to conclusions”, or form a judgement about a situation without having all the facts. Sometimes we can form an opinion based on things that have happened to us in the past, which may not be relevant to the present. We all do this at times. When we are feeling ok our mind can consider alternative thoughts such as ‘perhaps they didn’t hear me, or they were thinking about something else and didn’t realise I was speaking to them’. If we’re not feeling good, our mind assumes that there are no alternatives. We tend to go for the negative thought, or get stuck in habitual patterns of thinking. This affects our mood, which in turn makes it harder to think of alternatives, leading us back to our vicious cycle.

Negative or self-critical thoughts
lead to low mood, guilt, shame



The good news is that by becoming more aware of our negative thoughts, we can take steps to change them. We can learn to replace unhelpful thinking with more helpful, balanced thinking, which in turn helps us to feel better, and to behave differently.

What happens to your thoughts when you feel fatigued? Feel anxious? Feel low? Feel breathless?











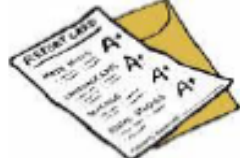

- Are they positive?
- Are they realistic?
- Are they rational?
- Are they true?

Thought Challenges

- “Are there other ways of interpreting this situation?”
- “Am I jumping to conclusions?”
- “Am I only focusing on the negative and ignoring any positives?”
- “Am I over generalising?”
- “If I was more relaxed & not feeling down, might I think differently?”
- “Might somebody else have a different view?”
- “Is what I am thinking entirely true?”
- What is the evidence for or against this thought?

Unhelpful Thinking Habits

Over the years, we tend to get into unhelpful thinking habits such as those described below. We might favour some over others, and there might be some that seem far too familiar. Once you can identify your unhelpful thinking styles, you can start to notice them – they very often occur just before and during distressing situations. Once you can notice them, then that can help you to challenge or distance yourself from those thoughts, and see the situation in a different and more helpful way. *Blue text (italics) helps us find alternative, more realistic thoughts.*

 <p>Mental Filter - When we notice only what the filter allows or wants us to notice, and we dismiss anything that doesn't 'fit'. Like looking through dark blinkers or 'gloomy specs', or only catching the negative stuff in our 'kitchen strainers' whilst anything more positive or realistic is dismissed. <i>Am I only noticing the bad stuff? Am I filtering out the positives? Am I wearing those 'gloomy specs'? What would be more realistic?</i></p>	 <p>Judgements - Making evaluations or judgements about events, ourselves, others, or the world, rather than describing what we actually see and have evidence for. <i>I'm making an evaluation about the situation or person. It's how I make sense of the world, but that doesn't mean my judgements are always right or helpful. Is there another perspective?</i></p>
<p>Prediction - Believing we know what's going to happen in the future. <i>Am I thinking that I can predict the future? How likely is it that that might really happen?</i></p> 	<p>Emotional Reasoning - I feel bad so it must be bad! I feel anxious, so I must be in danger. <i>Just because it feels bad, doesn't necessary mean it is bad. My feelings are just a reaction to my thoughts – and thoughts are just automatic brain reflexes</i></p> 
<p>Mind-Reading - Assuming we know what others are thinking (usually about us). <i>Am I assuming I know what others are thinking? What's the evidence? Those are my own thoughts, not theirs. Is there another, more balanced way of looking at it?</i></p> 	<p>Mountains and Molehills Exaggerating the risk of danger, or the negatives. Minimising the odds of how things are most likely to turn out, or minimising positives <i>Am I exaggerating the bad stuff? How would someone else see it? What's the bigger picture?</i></p> 
<p>Compare and despair Seeing only the good and positive aspects in others, and getting upset when comparing ourselves negatively against them. <i>Am I doing that 'compare and despair' thing? What would be a more balanced and helpful way of looking at it?</i></p> 	<p>Catastrophising - Imagining and believing that the worst possible thing will happen <i>OK, thinking that the worst possible thing will definitely happen isn't really helpful right now. What's most likely to happen?</i></p> 
<p>Critical self Putting ourselves down, self-criticism, blaming ourselves for events or situations that are not (totally) our responsibility <i>There I go, that internal bully's at it again. Would most people who really know me say that about me? Is this something that I am totally responsible for?</i></p> 	<p>Black and white thinking - Believing that something or someone can be only good or bad, right or wrong, rather than anything in-between or 'shades of grey'. <i>Things aren't either totally white or totally black – there are shades of grey. Where is this on the spectrum?</i></p> 
<p>Shoulds and musts - Thinking or saying 'I should' (or shouldn't) and 'I must' puts pressure on ourselves, and sets up unrealistic expectations. <i>Am I putting more pressure on myself, setting up expectations of myself that are almost impossible? What would be more realistic?</i></p> 	<p>Memories - Current situations and events can trigger upsetting memories, leading us to believe that the danger is here and now, rather than in the past, causing us distress right now. <i>This is just a reminder of the past. That was then, and this is now. Even though this memory makes me feel upset, it's not <u>actually</u> happening again right now.</i></p> 

Rumination

Rumination is:

- Repeatedly thinking about events from the past
- Dwelling on difficult things you find distressing
- A strategy often used in an attempt to problem solve or learn from past events

Is rumination problematic?

Much like when worrying, there is usually a function it is hoped would be achieved from ruminating. Sometimes for example thinking about an event will help to problem solve or learn. Therefore, much like worry, rumination can be unhelpful if:

- It is not solution focused
- You only focus on what has gone wrong
- Excessive rumination can lead to depression
- Can lead to avoidance and inactivity

What can I do?

5 minute rule

To use the 5 minute rule, follow the following guidance:

- 1) Notice that you are ruminating
- 2) Continue ruminating for 5 minutes
- 3) After 5 minutes, ask yourself
 - Do I feel better in my mood
 - Has any anxiety reduced?
 - Have I problem solved?
- 4) If the answer to the above questions is no, refocus on you environment – what can you see, hear, smell, taste, feel in your body



<u>Situation</u> What Was I Doing?	<u>Ruminations</u> What was I ruminating about?	<u>Consequence</u> On my emotions, what I did, physical symptoms	<u>Is It Helping Me?</u> Yes/No If no, then do something else instead.	<u>Action</u> What did I do/can I do instead? (solve a problem, an activity, hobby, music, chores)
Driving at the weekend	An error I made on a piece of work I did yesterday, and how rubbish an employee that must make me	I felt sad, frustrated with myself, I felt like quitting	No, I just kept thinking about something I can't change at this point, and felt rubbish	I will correct my work first thing Monday, I have added a reminder on my calendar. If I think about it on the drive to work tomorrow, I'll turn on the radio and focus on that

Leaves on a stream

- (1) Sit in a comfortable position and either close your eyes or rest them gently on a fixed spot in the room.
- (2) Visualize yourself sitting beside a gently flowing stream with leaves floating along the surface of the water.
- (3) For the next few minutes, take each thought that enters your mind and place it on a leaf... let it float by. Do this with each thought – pleasurable, painful, or neutral. Even if you have joyous or enthusiastic thoughts, place them on a leaf and let them float by.
- (4) If your thoughts momentarily stop, continue to watch the stream. Sooner or later, your thoughts will start up again.
- (5) Allow the stream to flow at its own pace. Don't try to speed it up and rush your thoughts along. You're not trying to rush the leaves along or lose sight of them. You are allowing them to come and go at their own pace.
- (6) If your mind says "This is silly," "I'm bored," or "this can't be right" place *those thoughts* on leaves, too, and let them pass.
- (7) If a leaf gets stuck, allow it to hang around until it's ready to float by. If the thought comes up again, watch it float by another time.
- (8) If a difficult or painful feeling arises, simply acknowledge it. Say to yourself, "I notice myself having a feeling of boredom/impatience/frustration." Place those thoughts on leaves and allow them float along.
- (9) From time to time, your thoughts may hook you and distract you from being fully present in this exercise. This is *normal*. As soon as you realize that you have become sidetracked, gently bring your attention back to the visualization exercise.



Additional Support

- Mental health support:-
- Centre for Clinical Interventions: www.cci.health.wa.gov.au
- Get Self Help: <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/>

Week Five Notes

Between sessions:

- Continue relaxations/breathing techniques
- Problem solving – try it out
- Try thought challenging or the just worry approach... Or both!
- Practice the 5 minute rule for Rumination

Week Six

What is perfectionism?

- Worry about new things fearing will not excel
- Being overly self critical
- Attempting to complete a task in one go
- Focusing on things you haven't achieved
- Struggling to relax as you "should" be doing something
- Frustration with achieving less than you used to
- Doubting your own judgement



What can help?

- Writing down 3 achievements from each day
- Include fun activities within your days activities rather than just tasks
- Try a new hobby (start small)
- Start to reduce checking and list making (start with something easy and build upon)
- Chunking goals

Reflections

It can be useful at this point to review the hopes and fears identified at the beginning of the course.

Take a moment to personally reflect upon the following questions.....

What happened to your fears? What happened to your hopes? Did what you expected to happen, happen for you? _____



Knowing what has been helpful can provide clues to what might be useful for us to continue doing or not doing. Likewise, if there have been barriers, it can be useful to consider here, how might these barriers be overcome in future when trying to implement strategies discussed?

Gains



As mentioned above, considering what has aided you to make changes can be KEY to maintaining these gains...if you know what is helpful, keep doing it!! With this in mind, let's take a moment to consider your gains. Consider the following two questions:-

What has been the most helpful thing you have learnt?

Setbacks

Although setbacks can be disappointing, it is important to remember that setbacks are a normal part of recovery! The one step forwards, two steps back can be a common experience.

It is useful here to distinguish between a setback and a relapse. A relapse essentially means a return to the beginning, where you were before embarking on this course whereas a setback is a slip back on your recovery journey. Never are impossible situations BUT catching a setback early can prevent a relapse.

With this in mind, it can be useful to make a plan to minimise the chances of a setback (by considering how to build upon your strength and manage any challenges).

What are the early warning signs that tell me I might be heading for a set-back and need to do something? (e.g. certain thoughts, behaviours - checking or avoidance, things others say to me, certain anxiety symptoms)
What situations are potential problems for me? (e.g. times of increased stress, medical check-ups, receiving a diagnosis)

Now thinking about how you can response if you have had a setback, how can you help yourself? It is useful to consider if you can learn from your gains here but also consider:

Are there some helpful statements or phrases that I can use to help myself when I am feeling anxious or worried, or have had a set back? _____

What strategies/techniques have I learned that I could apply when I notice some early warning signs? _____

Another reason setbacks can be an important part of recovery is the learning they offer – instead of beating yourself up over any setbacks you experience, LEARN from them!!



I can understand I had a setback because.....

What I have learnt from this setback is.....

--

In hindsight, what would I do differently?

--

Therefore my plan in future is.....

--

Goal Review

My goal at the start of the course was

.....

<u>Met</u>	<u>Not Met</u>

If you didn't meet your first goal this could be a good chance to revise it – don't worry or feel bad if the goal wasn't met, this is how we learn.

My new goal to work towards is

.....

.....

Additional Support

- Royal College of Occupational Therapists: www.rcot.co.uk
- Your Covid Recovery: www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/
- The British Lung Foundation: www.blf.org.uk
- Retrain Pain Foundation: www.retrainpain.org/
- Sleepio: www.sleepio.com

Week Six Notes

Between sessions:

- What have you gained from the course?
- Complete setback exercise
- Consider any Perfectionist tendencies you may have and act accordingly
- Complete learning exercise
- Complete the group feedback



Well done! You have made it to the end of the course!! We hope that by the time you come to read this section of the booklet that you have started to feel differently and are building the life that you want to live. We wish you all the best for the future.



Feedback – we would also be very interested to hear your feedback on the Long Covid course you have attended. We are constantly reviewing and amending courses we run, with this in mind, we very much value your thoughts of what we could alter or add for the benefit of future attendees – thank you ☺

Need Further Support?

If you are concerned about your safety or you do not feel able to keep yourself safe, please contact one of the following for support:

- GP
- NHS 111
- Samaritans
Freephone: 116 123
Email: jo@samaritans.org
- In an emergency, urgently attend your Accident and Emergency Department at your local hospital or dial 999