



Managing your anxiety

Session Ten

PLEASE REMEMBER

Changes take time, patience and hard work.

The more you put in whilst completing the course, the more you get out of it.

Do you have any questions from last week's session?



Home Practice Review

How did your home practice go? Did you achieve your goals?

What did you learn from your home practice?

Anticipating and Managing Relapse:

As we have emphasised throughout the course, CBT is a skills-based approach to becoming familiar with our anxiety and how we can reduce or manage it. To give ourselves the best chance to reduce our anxiety and reclaim the best possible version of our lives, we need to continue to practice these skills on an ongoing basis.

Despite our best efforts, there may be times in our lives when our anxiety returns strongly and we feel overwhelmed by it. We can relapse for the following reasons:

- We feel a lot better and stop using what we have learnt. Old habits and behaviours gradually creep back without us being aware of it.
- Life becomes difficult because of long-term stress or major changes or losses that erode our capacity to cope as we normally would.
- We just do – we won't always be able to pinpoint why.

It is useful to have a relapse management plan, and that is what we will be focusing on in this session.

Step One: Recognising the early signs of relapse

When we relapse, we may not become aware of it until our symptoms have become quite severe. We may have already dropped back into avoidance and safety behaviours in a fairly entrenched way. We want to avoid this happening, and to do this, we need to know what our early signs of relapse are, not just the signs that show us we have relapsed significantly. If we can identify early signs of relapse, then we can “nip it in the bud”. Our personal signs of relapse are called our *relapse signature*.

What would you notice yourself thinking if you were beginning to relapse?

These might be thoughts that you would dismiss in the hope that things are okay. Alternatively, they may be familiar thoughts, but now you notice that you are beginning to believe them more.

What would you be feeling if you were beginning to relapse?

Physical sensations (tension, nausea etc.):

Emotions (anxiety, apprehension, dread, loss of confidence etc.):

What would you be doing or have stopped doing?

For example, beginning to avoid things, worrying more, carrying out more safety behaviours.

Step Two: Remembering what you have learnt and what you can do

What were your most common and powerful anxious thoughts?

What alternative ways of thinking about things helped to reduce your anxiety?

What actions contributed most to keeping your anxiety going?

What alternative actions reduced your anxiety in the longer-term?

Can you use this knowledge to help get yourself back on track if you start to relapse?

Step 3: Things you can do if you notice that you are starting to relapse

Who could you talk to? What would you need to tell them? What would you need to ask them for?

*Which techniques that you learnt on this course were most useful to you?
Which techniques could you use when you notice that you are starting to relapse?*

Course Review:

What's the most important thing you have learnt on this course?

Did you get what you were hoping for from attending this course?

Where else will you look for ways to help you reduce your anxiety?

Further Resources:

The NHS have a website that provides lots of information and tips on managing our mental wellbeing

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

There are a series of books on self-help for anxiety written by some of the top CBT researchers and practitioners in the UK:

Overcoming Anxiety: A self-help guide using cognitive behavioural techniques (2nd Edition) by Helen Kennerley

Overcoming Panic: A self-help guide using cognitive behavioural techniques (2nd Edition) by Vijaya Manicavasagar and Derrick Silove

Overcoming Social Anxiety and Shyness: A Self-Help Guide Using Cognitive Behavioural Techniques (2nd Edition) by Gillian Butler and Steph Bower

Overcoming Worry and Generalised Anxiety Disorder: A self-help guide using cognitive behavioural techniques (2nd Edition) by Mark Freeston and Kevin Meares

Overcoming Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: A self-help guide using cognitive behavioural techniques by David Veale and Rob Willson

If you found Mindfulness, acceptance and kindness practices helpful, then you might find the following books useful:

Mindfulness: A practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world by Mark Williams and Danny Penman

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook for Anxiety by Bob Stahl, Florence Meleo-Meyer, Lynn Koerbel

A Practical Guide to Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living by Erik van den Brink , Frits Koster

The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook: A Proven Way to Accept Yourself, Build Inner Strength, and Thrive by Kristin Neff and Christopher Germer

Home Practice



In order to get the most from CBT it helps to practice at home.

Summary of Session Ten

In this session we looked at why we may relapse and the importance of catching this as early as possible so that we can “nip it in the bud”.

We identified our personal relapse signature that we need to be on the lookout for so that we can maintain our wellbeing.

We looked at what you can do in the event of a relapse.

Write down one key point that you have learnt today:

Suggested Home Practice for Week Ten:

- You might find it useful to write your relapse signature on one side of a piece of card. On the other side, list the 5 most important things you can do when you notice the signs of relapse. Keep this handy, either in your bag or on display at home so that you don't forget about it.
- You may find it useful to review all of the material taught on this course on a regular basis and to practice it. Focus on what you found most useful. Continue to review what is valuable to you and set values-based goals from time to time.
- You may like to congratulate yourself on completing this course and starting the journey towards reducing and managing your anxiety and reclaiming your life!