



# Managing your anxiety

## Session Nine

### **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?

We have now covered the main techniques used in CBT to treat and manage anxiety. For the remainder of the course we will focus on consolidating and continuing to build on what we have learnt so far. We will also look at how to reduce the chance of relapsing and how to cope with relapse should it start to occur.

### **Adding Heart goals to SMART goals:**

In session one, we introduced the idea of SMART goals and you have been invited to make SMART goals throughout the course. Now we are going to look at how to make values-based SMART goals. We will invite you to make goals for the medium and long-term so that you can work towards having the best possible version of your life, rather than the version that is restricted or ruled by anxiety.

Think about everyday activities, such as doing exercise or talking to friends. Why do you do these activities? Why are they important?

### **Eliciting Core Values:**

One way of finding out why we are motivated to do anything is to ask ourselves the following questions in relation to any action:

“What will that give me?” “What will that allow me to have?”

For example:

*Why do you go to work?*

To earn money

*What will that give you?*

I can pay my bills and my rent

*What will that give you?*

Security

*What does security allow you to have?*

Peace of mind

In this case, the core value is peace of mind.

For a different person, a different core value might drive going to work, for example:

*Why do you go to work?*

To earn money

*What will that give you?*

The opportunity to do what I really want to do

*What will that give you?*

Freedom

*What will freedom allow you to have?*

Freedom - that feels like the most important thing, there's nothing deeper

In this case, the core value is freedom.

**Exercise:**

Take the action, "cleaning my teeth". Let's elicit the core value that goes with that for you:

*What does cleaning your teeth give you?*

*What does that give you? / What does that allow you to have?*

*What does that give you? / What does that allow you to have?*

*What does that give you? / What does that allow you to have?*

*What does that give you? / What does that allow you to have?*

Keep asking the same questions until you reach the core value. You will know when you get there as it will loop back around to the same answer.

Values tend to be quite abstract and general, including notions such as connection, peace of mind, freedom, safety, joy, fulfilment, love and community. Once we can work out what is really important to us, then we can find a range of flexible ways to live our lives in line with our core values.

***To elicit core values we move from action to values.***

***To work out what we need to do to live the best version of our lives, we move from values to actions.***

For example, if someone has a core value, *peace of mind*, actions that align with this for them might include walking in nature, cultivating and maintaining close relationships, paying off the mortgage and keeping life simple.

Can you see how each one of these seemingly unconnected actions is an expression of the same value?

### **Value Domains:**

Some theories of core values suggest that certain domains are more important to us than others in terms of living according to our core values. These could include: intimate/romantic relationships, parenting, family, friendship, work, education and self-development, recreation, spirituality, citizenship and physical self-care.

### **Creating Heart goals:**

Heart goals combine core values and SMART goals. Sometimes we set goals based on what we are expected to do, or what we think we should do, rather than based on what will make our hearts sing and feel truly alive.

#### ***Step one:***

Take any action that seems important to you. Ask yourself the questions, “*Why do I do that?*” followed by, “*What does that give me?*” and “*What does that allow me to have?*” until you are reasonably clear about what your core values are.

*Step two:*

Pick a values domain and ask yourself what actions you could take in that domain so that you are living in alignment with your core values.

*Step three:*

Make SMART goals linked to the actions you identified in step two. You are much more likely to succeed in acting in alignment with your core values if you do this.

*Here's an example:*

Gerry works out that one of his core values is *connection*.

Gerry picks the values domain *friendship*.

Gerry is socially anxious and so he doesn't always nurture his friendships as much as he could.

Gerry sets the SMART goal:

**Specific:** I will contact Alex and suggest that we meet regularly, perhaps once a week or every second week for a drink and a chat. If Alex agrees, I'll suggest a date for our first meeting.

**Measurable:** I'll be able to measure whether this is successful because I'll meet with Alex every week or two most of the time.

**Achievable:** Alex and I are good friends and we often say we should get together more often. We are both big procrastinators, which is the main reason why we don't see one another as much as I think we'd like. If I make a concerted effort to bring us together on a regular basis, there is a good chance that it will happen.

**Relevant:** The goal is in full alignment with my values and what I want from life.

**Timed:** I'm going to message Alex now and follow up if I don't hear back within 36 hours.

## How does Anxiety get in the way of what I value?

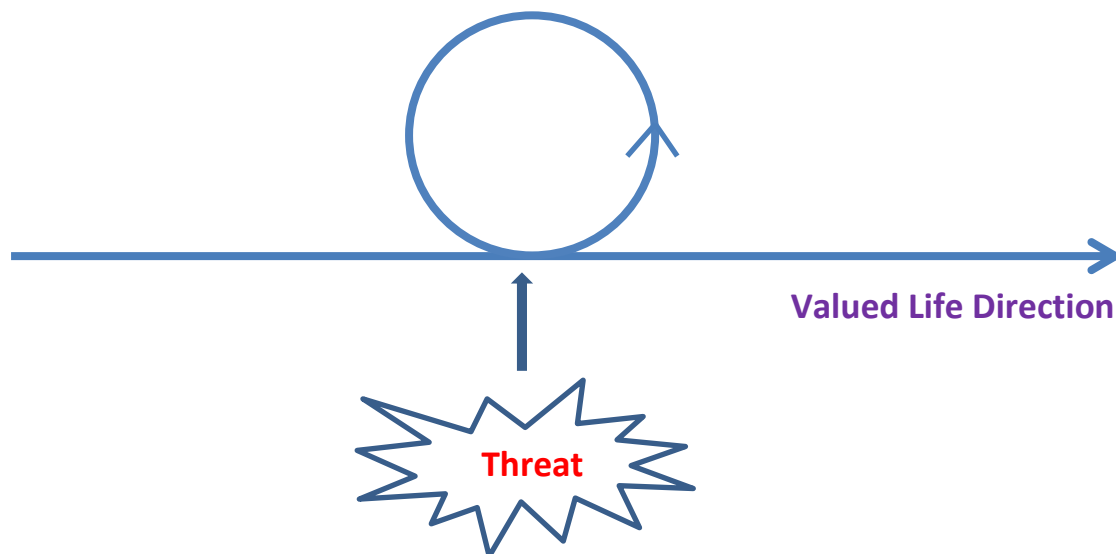
As we've seen, anxiety and the other threat-focused emotions are powerful motivators to return to safety and avoid danger. In session one, we looked at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and how anxiety can keep us at the bottom of the hierarchy and demotivate us from moving up the hierarchy.

In addition, overcoming anxiety is often difficult and pushes us out of our comfort zones.

It's no wonder that people's lives can be different from what they would wish for because of anxiety.

Becoming aware of what we truly value can be a powerful motivator for getting to grips with anxiety and doing what we can to overcome it, despite the not inconsiderable challenges involved.

### The Safety Loop:



The safety loop demonstrates the way in which we may identify what we value and make clear goals to move in that direction. However, when we perceive threat and feel anxious, rather than continue to move towards our goals, we revert to actions designed to return to a sense of safety as soon as possible. This can keep us trapped, going around and around in narrow circles in our

lives. Rather than being an eagle soaring in the sky, we become a caged bird looking out at the sky with a sense of longing.

**Motivating ourselves to overcome anxiety:**

*List five ways your life will be better when you overcome your anxiety and live your life in alignment with your values:*

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

*List the main emotions that will demotivate you in moving in your valued life direction:*

*What is most likely to trigger them?*



*What do you need to remember and tell yourself when you are tempted to enter the safety loop? What do you need to hear from your inner helper?*

**Planning Ahead:**

How would you like to be different in 3 months? What would you like to be able to do with less anxiety or despite feeling anxious? If you had a fairy godmother that could wave a magic wand and you woke up tomorrow living this life, what would it look like?



## What steps will you need to take to get there?

- Do you need to set a series of SMART goals and follow them through?
- Do you need to carry out graded behavioural experiments to prove to yourself that you don't need to use avoidance and safety-seeking behaviours? If so, what will those experiments be?
- Do you need to develop your ability to change your thoughts from threat-focused interpretations to thoughts that help you feel safer about the same situation?
- Do you need to develop mindfulness, acceptance and kindness practices so that you are less resistant to having aversive emotions and better able to cope with them?
- Do you need to pay less attention to potential threats?
- Do you need to develop your inner helper so that you can reduce self-criticism, embrace all aspects of your unique and wonderful self and become more open to the world?
- Do you need to break cycles of worry by recognising that worrying doesn't resolve anxiety and that our "what if..." thoughts don't tend to come true?

**Who can support you in moving towards your goals? How? What do you need to ask them?**

**What would support you in moving towards your goals? What resources would help? What conditions would help and hinder you? How can you create the best conditions?**

## Home Practice



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

## Summary of Session Nine

In this session we looked at core values and how they can be combined with SMART goals to create goals that are really worth pursuing as they will maximise our chances of living the life we want to have.

We looked at how we can get stuck in the safety loop and return to old patterns that aim to make us feel safe, but which diminish the quality of our life. We looked at what we need to remember to motivate ourselves to avoid entering the safety loop.

We started to think ahead and plan for what we can do to give ourselves the best chance of moving from a life ruled by anxiety to one aligned with our heart goals.

Write down one key point that you have learnt today:

## **Suggested Home Practice for Week Nine:**

- Spend some time thinking about why you do some of the significant things in your life – use the questions included in this session to work out what your core values are.
- Think about and notice how and when you enter the safety loop and stop moving in your valued life direction:
  - What emotions stop you?
  - What thoughts and anxious assumptions stop you?
- Work out which techniques and approaches covered in this course will best help you to feel less threatened when you stop moving in your valued direction - then use them.
- Set multiple heart goals for the next few days, weeks and months. Modify and adapt them based on what you learn when you work towards achieving them.
- Enlist the support of anyone who may be willing to support you (but not help you avoid things, or carry out safety behaviours!)
- Think about and list any other resources or skills that you could acquire that might help you move in your valued direction.