

FROM PROBLEMS TO SOLUTIONS





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Welcome!

Well done for getting this far to try and get on top of your low mood or depression. Seeking help is often one of the most difficult steps to make!

The *From Problems to Solutions* workbook is based on an evidence based psychological treatment known as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). This workbook will guide you through a specific CBT technique called Problem Solving that has been shown to help many people with low mood or depression.

The *From Problems to Solutions* programme is designed to be supported by a mental health professional trained to help people get the most out of it. This will commonly be a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner, or PWP working within the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme in England. However, given the success of this way of working, similar roles to PWP working are becoming increasingly available in other countries.

The speed you want to go using the workbook is down to you! You are also in control of how you put the techniques you'll learn into practice.

So what is Problem Solving?

When we are low or depressed, we may struggle to find solutions to our problems or may even think that there are no solutions. This makes the problems seem overwhelming, distressing and difficult to manage, having a further negative impact on our mood. This can maintain what we call a *vicious cycle of low mood or depression*.

The techniques presented in this workbook are based on an evidence-based approach for the treatment of low mood or depression called Problem Solving, and this can help break into that vicious cycle. A lot of research has found it to be effective, especially for people experiencing difficult life events and other problems.

Problem Solving helps you deal with the practical problems you experience in life more effectively. Helping you to distance yourself from your problems can enable you think about different practical solutions that may exist and will put you back in control.

Before getting started, it's important to find out a little bit more about Problem Solving and how you will be supported. This will help you decide whether it's the best approach for you, and identify if there's anything that may be in the way of you getting the most out of the approach and think about anything you may find helpful when working through the workbook.

To find out more about Problem Solving, we will hear a little about Tom's story and how he used From Problems to Solutions: Finding Your Way Forward to overcome his low mood and depression. ►

Tom's story



I am 42 years old and started feeling down after being made redundant from my job a year ago. Feeling depressed gradually crept up on me. When looking for new jobs on the internet I found myself jumping from website to website. I didn't really know where to start and soon became lost and increasingly powerless. I felt like a failure and blamed myself for not being better at my job in the first place.

As the months slipped by I found myself doing less and less. I wasn't applying for jobs, I stayed in bed for hours and even when I dragged myself out of bed I would spend the day staring at the TV. My wife started to lose patience with me. She was working full time and looking after our two kids, whilst I couldn't even manage the school run! We rowed a lot about money and keeping up with the mortgage was a real struggle. Our difficulties seemed never ending and I saw no real way out!

I wanted to get on top of my low mood but I had no idea where to start! I went to speak to my GP about how I was feeling and he recommended I saw a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner. At first I was really unsure, I just couldn't see how speaking with someone could help with all my problems. However, about a month later I had an appointment with my Psychological

Wellbeing Practitioner, Charlotte. She asked me a lot of questions about the things going through my head, how I felt in my body, what things I was doing more or less of and how I was feeling. At first all these questions seemed a bit odd.

However, when Charlotte explained the *vicious cycle of depression* and related it to my difficulties, it started to make sense that *what I did, what I was thinking and how I felt physically and emotionally* all impacted on one another and made things even worse. We also spent time talking about when we experience difficult life events, such as losing my job, we may also begin to experience lots of other difficulties. If these begin to affect our mood, it can make them feel impossible to tackle as we struggle to find solutions. All this can be made far worse if our low mood drops even further and we begin to feel tired and have little energy or motivation to try to sort the problems out, all symptoms of depression.

This made lots of sense to me and we discussed the range of techniques that might be helpful. I was particularly drawn to something called Problem Solving. I liked that it seemed like a practical way forward and I could identify with having a lot of problems I felt I couldn't solve.

Charlotte explained how she worked with a supported self-help approach. This meant I would work through the *From Problems to Solutions: Finding Your Way Forward Problem Solving* workbook in my own time, but she would support me every week to keep me on track and help me overcome any difficulties if I ran into them.

Each support session would last about half-an-hour and given the tiredness I was experiencing sounded just about manageable, even more-so when she also offered me support over the telephone or face-to-face.

Over the coming weeks, Charlotte helped me work through the Problem Solving workbook. When I started to *write down all the problems I was experiencing* I realised just how many problems there were and it all seemed a bit much. However, Charlotte explained a good first step was to think about my problems in terms of those that were: *not important, important and can be solved* and those that were *important but cannot be solved*. This immediately made my problems feel a little more manageable. Charlotte discussed how it was important to identify problems with practical solutions so

we could start to work on those difficulties first. She also explained how sometimes the problems we experience aren't actually that important to us and we should try not to worry about these difficulties and focus on the most important. We also spoke about problems that were *important but couldn't be solved*. Sometimes these were life events that couldn't be changed but I needed to try to come to terms with, however difficult that would be! Finally, she described how people sometimes worry about *hypothetical problems*, for example things that might happen in the future but that we have no control over. I recognised I had worries like this, such as "What if I can't find another job?". Charlotte said that if I found myself having difficulties letting go of these worries we could use a different approach called *Worry Time*.

It was quite a relief to realise most of my problems were *important and can be solved*.

One of my big problems was I had no idea how to write a CV, so I decided to work on that problem first. I knew this was a good starting point as if I could find a job it would help me solve some of my other problems.

I wrote down all the solutions I could think of to help solve this problem. I found this difficult but Charlotte told me it was

important to *think about all solutions*, even if they seemed silly. I managed to come up with a few potential solutions and moved onto thinking about the *strengths and weaknesses* for each solution and wrote these down. Looking through the strengths and weaknesses it was clear two solutions looked particularly good: *“Find an organisation that can help me write my CV and book an appointment with them”* and *“Speak to a friend who works in my area to get some ideas about how to write a CV”*. I decided to look for an organisation that might be able to help first of all. I wrote down the solution and decided to try it out.

Next I thought about the *steps I would need to follow, to try out the solution*. Charlotte explained I should try to be specific about my plan and the steps I would need to follow. I realised I would need some time to search for an organisation on the internet and I would need to call them. I was a bit worried about asking the wrong questions. So I decided to write down everything I thought they would want to know and also decided asking my wife to help me would be good too. *Breaking down the solution into these different steps* was really helpful and calling to book an appointment with a company to help with my CV no longer seemed so overwhelming.

I put my plan into action and managed to find some information from the ‘National Careers Service’. They had lots of helpful tips online and I booked an interview with them over the phone. It really helped having my wife with me as she saw I was trying to make steps towards finding a job.

Over time things really started to improve for me. I managed to get a CV together and got some great advice about applying for work and joined up with various recruitment agencies. I have a couple of interviews lined up and am feeling much more confident about things. I’ve even managed to get out of the house, taking my kids Mark and Sarah to see our local football team with an old friend from work and his kids. Unfortunately however my team have not got much better, they lost 4-2. Although not all my problems are solved at present, they do feel a lot less overwhelming now and I have learnt a new way to approach solving them in the future.

What is Depression or low mood?

Depression or low mood is common. During their lifetime, around 1 in 5 people will experience Depression or low mood that has a significant impact upon their lives. People with Depression may find themselves giving up activities they used to do, feeling down or flat and having difficulties coping.

Although there are lots of theories about what causes Depression, experts are still uncertain as to any specific cause, but here are some possibilities:

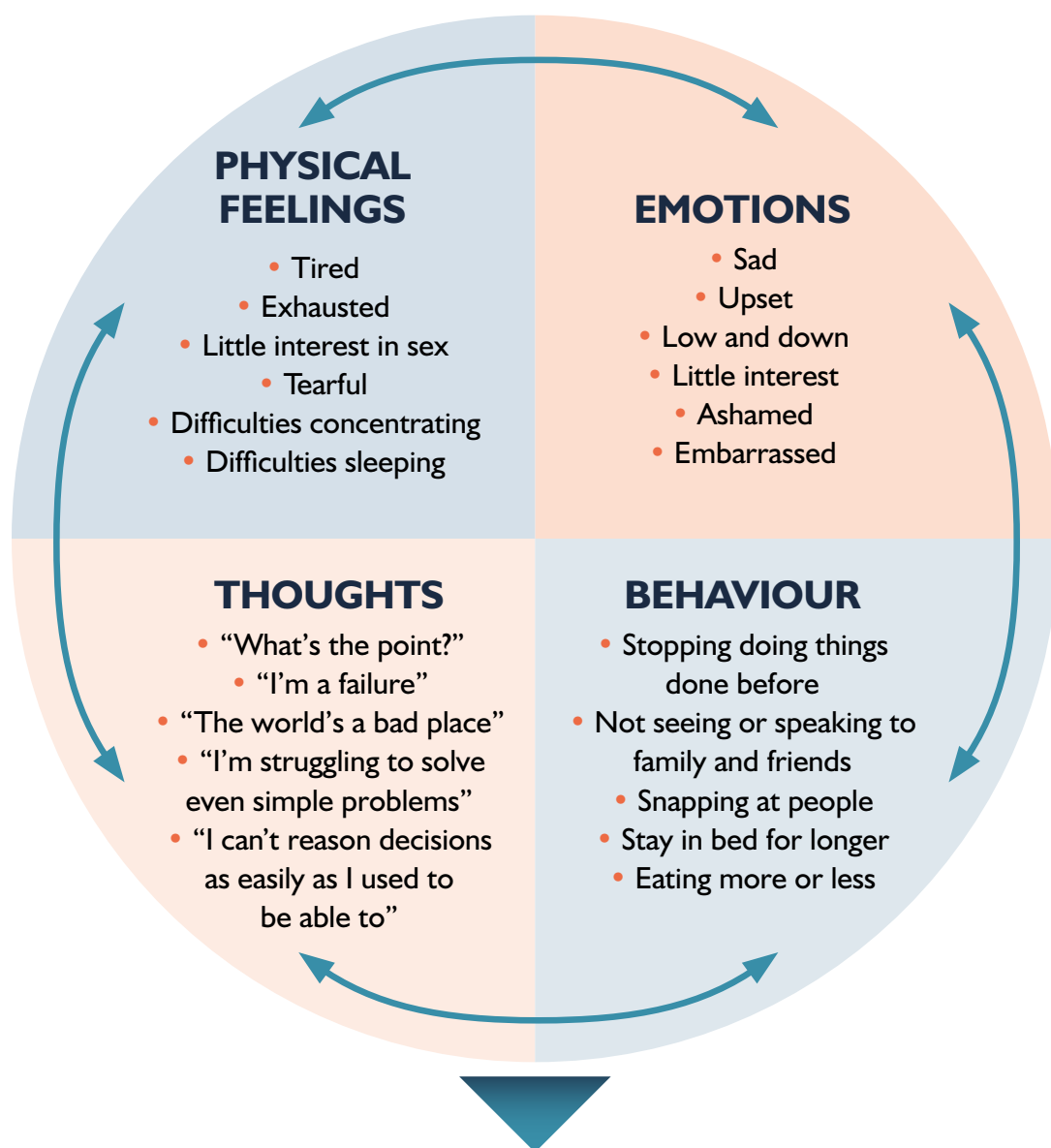
- Triggered by difficult and stressful life events.
- Giving up activities of importance, value and enjoyment.
- Thoughts going round and round in our heads becoming unhelpful and negative.
- Low levels of a chemical in the brain called serotonin.

Whilst any of these possibilities may contribute to our mood, it's likely the way we feel is influenced by a mixture of them.

What does Depression look like?

Although Depression and low mood are experienced by people in different ways there are a number of common signs and symptoms.

These are related to four main areas and may include things like:



Like a vicious cycle, each of these areas has a knock-on effect on the others and can impact on significant areas of life such as relationships, hobbies, or work.

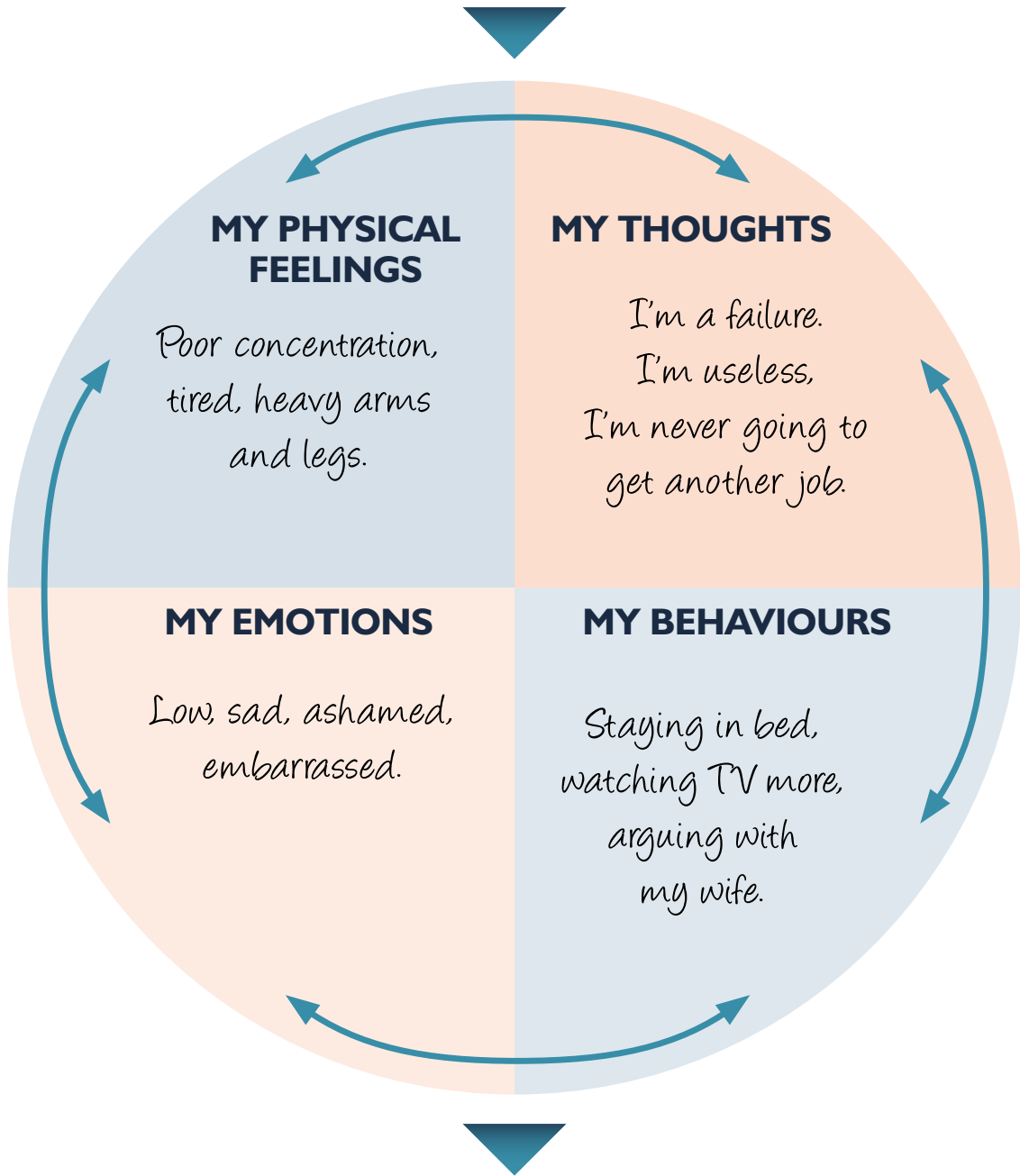
It can be really difficult to break out of this vicious circle and this is what keeps Depression or low mood going.

Using the My vicious cycle worksheet on the next page, try to write down the emotions, physical feelings, behaviours, and thoughts you are experiencing, thinking about how these impact on your life. You can see Tom’s example on the next page.

Tom's vicious cycle worksheet

MY SITUATION

I was made redundant.



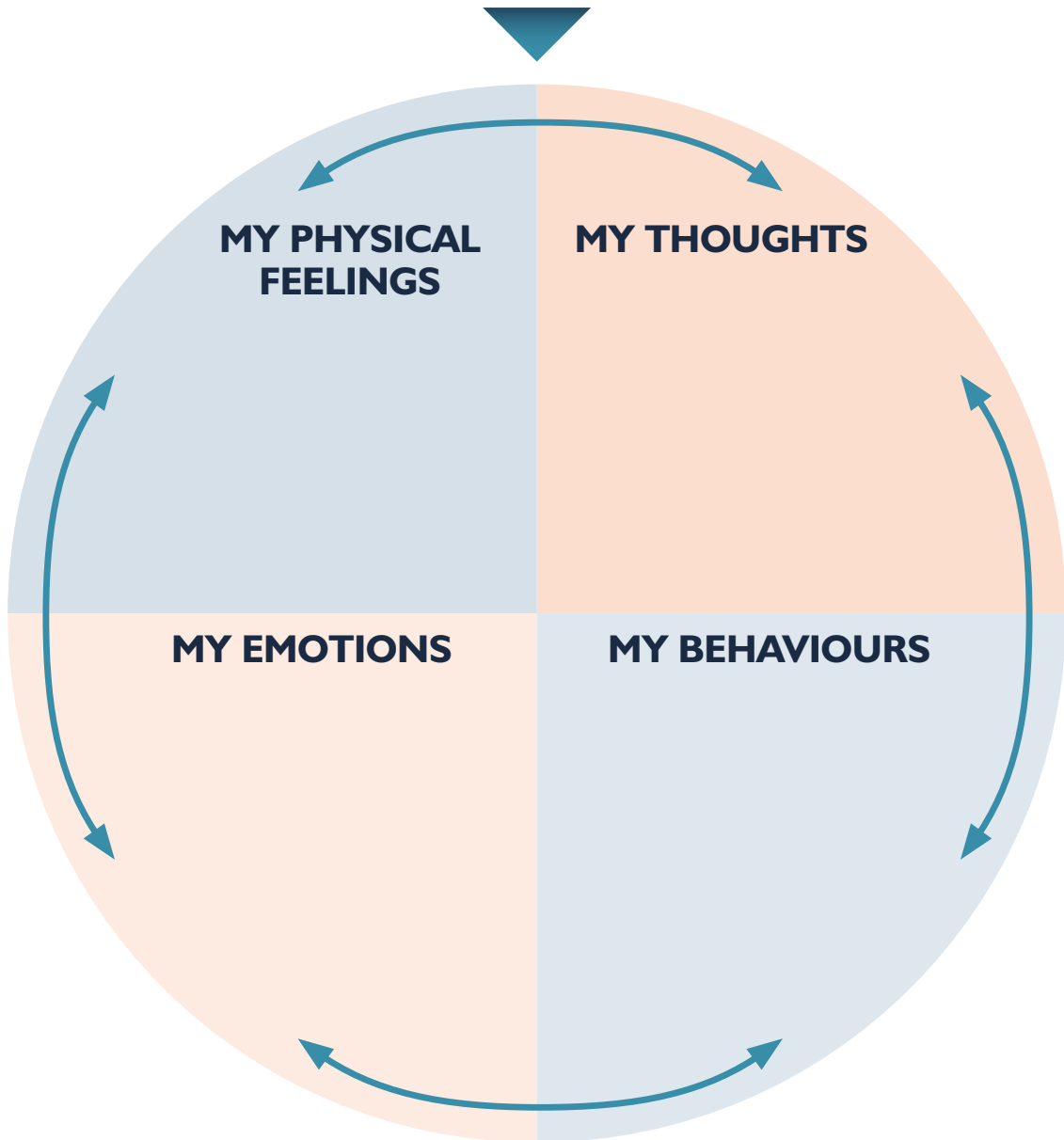
IMPACT

Very little money, feel isolated from my wife, kids and friends.



My vicious circle worksheet

MY SITUATION



IMPACT

Setting goals

Before we get started on Problem Solving, it can be really helpful to think about what you'd like to achieve by the end of treatment.

When setting goals it's important to think about the following ►



Top tips



Be specific

It's important to set specific goals for the workbook. People often think about setting broad goals for themselves such as "*feel better.*" However, it can be hard to know if, or when, a goal like this has been achieved. So instead, when setting goals, think about how you would know you were feeling better. For example, what sorts of things might you be doing if you were feeling better? Use this to help you set your goals, for example "*I would like to be able to walk into town at least twice a week.*"

Be positive

It can be tempting to put down a goal like "*Watch less TV*" or "*Eat less.*" However, it's more helpful when goals are positive – or striving towards something. For example, rather than "*Watch less TV*" try to think about how you want to make use of the time, for example "*Take up painting again*". Or, rather than "*Eat less*" maybe think about some of the benefits you may have from achieving this goal, for example "*Get back into my favourite jeans.*"

Be realistic

It's important to set goals that are realistic to achieve over the next few weeks. Having depression may make some goals seem unrealistic to achieve anymore. It may therefore be helpful to think about *Short Term Goals* – so something just out of reach, but not out of sight, as well as goals you may be thinking about working towards in the *Medium Term*. Finally there may be goals that currently seem to tricky to achieve however it is still worth thinking about these as they may begin to look more achievable when using this programme and your depression begins to lift. So think about these are representing your *Long Term Goals* that you will work towards. However, initially you will focus on achieving your *Short Term Goals*, with you working towards the others.

Remember

The goals you set are up to you! However to achieve them it can be helpful to follow these tips.

Tom's goals worksheet

GOAL 1	Today's Date: Monday 23rd November	
	Start applying for a new job.	
	I can do this now (circle a number):	
	0 Not at all	1 Sometimes

GOAL 2	Today's Date: Monday 23rd November	
	Take the kids to see our local football team.	
	I can do this now (circle a number):	
	0 Not at all	1 Sometimes

Now you have seen the **Short Term** goals that Tom set for himself, using the **Goals Worksheet** on the next page, it's time to set some **Short Term** goals for yourself.





My goals worksheet

GOAL 1	Today's Date:						
	I can do this now (circle a number):						
	0 Not at all	1	2 Sometimes	3	4 Often	5	6 Anytime

GOAL 2	Today's Date:						
	I can do this now (circle a number):						
	0 Not at all	1	2 Sometimes	3	4 Often	5	6 Anytime

GOAL 3	Today's Date:						
	I can do this now (circle a number):						
	0 Not at all	1	2 Sometimes	3	4 Often	5	6 Anytime

GOAL 4	Today's Date:						
	I can do this now (circle a number):						
	0 Not at all	1	2 Sometimes	3	4 Often	5	6 Anytime

GOAL 5	Today's Date:						
	I can do this now (circle a number):						
	0 Not at all	1	2 Sometimes	3	4 Often	5	6 Anytime

Well done getting this far

Now it's time for you to start working through the 5 stages of Problem Solving. This may sound quite daunting! But remember you're in control of how much you do at any time.

Stage 1:

Areas of my life that are really important to me

First of all, try and think about five or so areas that are really important to you right now. Although they are likely to be different for everyone, examples of such areas may include things related to areas such as family, relationships, roles and responsibilities, social and leisure activities, health, finances or religious beliefs. Thinking about areas of life of importance to you can help you prioritise problems to focus on solving in these areas.

The person supporting you can help you identify a few core areas of life you really value or find important. Use the **Areas of my life that are really important to me worksheet** on the next page to record areas you've identified. You can see Tom's example below:

Tom's areas of my life that are really important to me worksheet

List the five most important and valued things in your life right now here:

- 1 My relationship with my wife Claire
- 2 My relationship with my children, Mark and Sarah
- 3 Exercising
- 4 My job
- 5 Finances



Areas of my life that are really important to me worksheet

List the five most important and valued things in your life right now here:

1

2

3

4

5

Stage 2:

What are my problems?

The next stage is to think about your current problems and write them down in your **My problems worksheet** on the next page.

It's important to think about the types of problems that make you feel low or depressed, no matter how small they

might seem. Here is an example of Tom's worksheet:

Tom's My problems worksheet

My Problems

- 1 Arguments with my wife Claire
- 2 Keeping up with the rent
- 3 Finding a new job
- 4 Losing my job
- 5 Not getting to the shop to buy bread yesterday
- 6 Not knowing what benefits I can claim
- 7 No longer seeing my friends
- 8 Finding the housework overwhelming
- 9 No longer going to football with my old work colleagues
- 10 What if my wife and I split up?
- 11 What if I can't find another job?
- 12 Not managing to do the school run
- 13 Not being able to take the children on holiday
- 14 Overdue electricity bill
- 15 I don't know how to write a CV



My problems worksheet

My Problems

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

Stage 3:

Types of problems I am experiencing

Now try to think about the types of problems you are currently experiencing and categorise them into the following three different types:

Not important

These tend to be problems that have little to do with important or valued areas in your life.

For example, “*I was late meeting my friend for coffee*” or “*I forgot to buy milk*”. However, some problems may not be related to important or valued areas in life but are still important, and need to be sorted out or there may be serious consequences. For example, not renewing your car insurance and being involved in an accident! Therefore, although not important to you personally, to avoid any serious consequences you should still view these problems as important.

Important and can be solved

These are problems of importance and value to your life you should actively work towards solving.

Often these types of problems are related to practical difficulties affecting you now for which there is often a practical solution. For example, such problems include things like: “*I’m struggling to keep up at work but don’t know how to raise this with my boss*”, “*I haven’t paid my electricity bill and will get cut off soon*”. Later in the workbook we will discuss ways to help solve this type of problem.

Important but cannot be solved

These are problems that have no way of being solved but are still important to you.

Sometimes these are related to life events or things that can’t be changed or occurred in the past, for example “*I had a heart attack*” or are about things that might happen in the future such as “*What if there is an accident on the motorway and I’m late for work*” or “*What if my partner leaves me?*”. Worries about things that might happen in the future are also known as hypothetical worries. Although you may dwell on these a lot, there’s no way of solving them.

IMPORTANT

Sometimes we may find our problems are related to life events that have happened but cannot be changed, for example “I’ve lost my job” or “My partner has left me” or “My mum died”.

The way in which we cope with important events that have happened to us, and cannot be changed, is very individual. For example, some people find talking to someone they trust helpful whilst others might find talking to people who have experienced a similar event helpful.

When *coping with important life events* that have happened, but cannot be changed, it’s likely you will experience difficult emotions such as low mood, depression, anger or worry. These emotions are completely normal and to be expected. Therefore it’s important to accept these difficult emotions as they are part of the acceptance process we go through when experiencing difficult life changing events.

However, if you identify that accepting these life events is your main difficulty it’s important you speak with your PWP as they may also be able to offer you other types of support.

Next, take a look at the problems you identified on your **My problems worksheet**. Then try to transfer them onto your **My types of problems worksheet** under the three different types of problems you can experience. You can see Tom's example below:

Tom's types of problems worksheet

Not Important	Important and Can Be Solved	Important but Cannot Be Solved
<p>Not managing to get to the shop to buy bread yesterday</p>	<p>Arguing with my wife Keeping up with the rent Finding a new job Not knowing what benefits I can claim No longer seeing my friends Finding the housework difficult and overwhelming No longer going to the football with my old work colleagues Managing the school run with kids at different schools Not being able to take the children on holiday The electricity bill is overdue I don't know how to write a CV</p>	<p>Losing my job What if my wife and I split up? What if I can't find another job?</p>

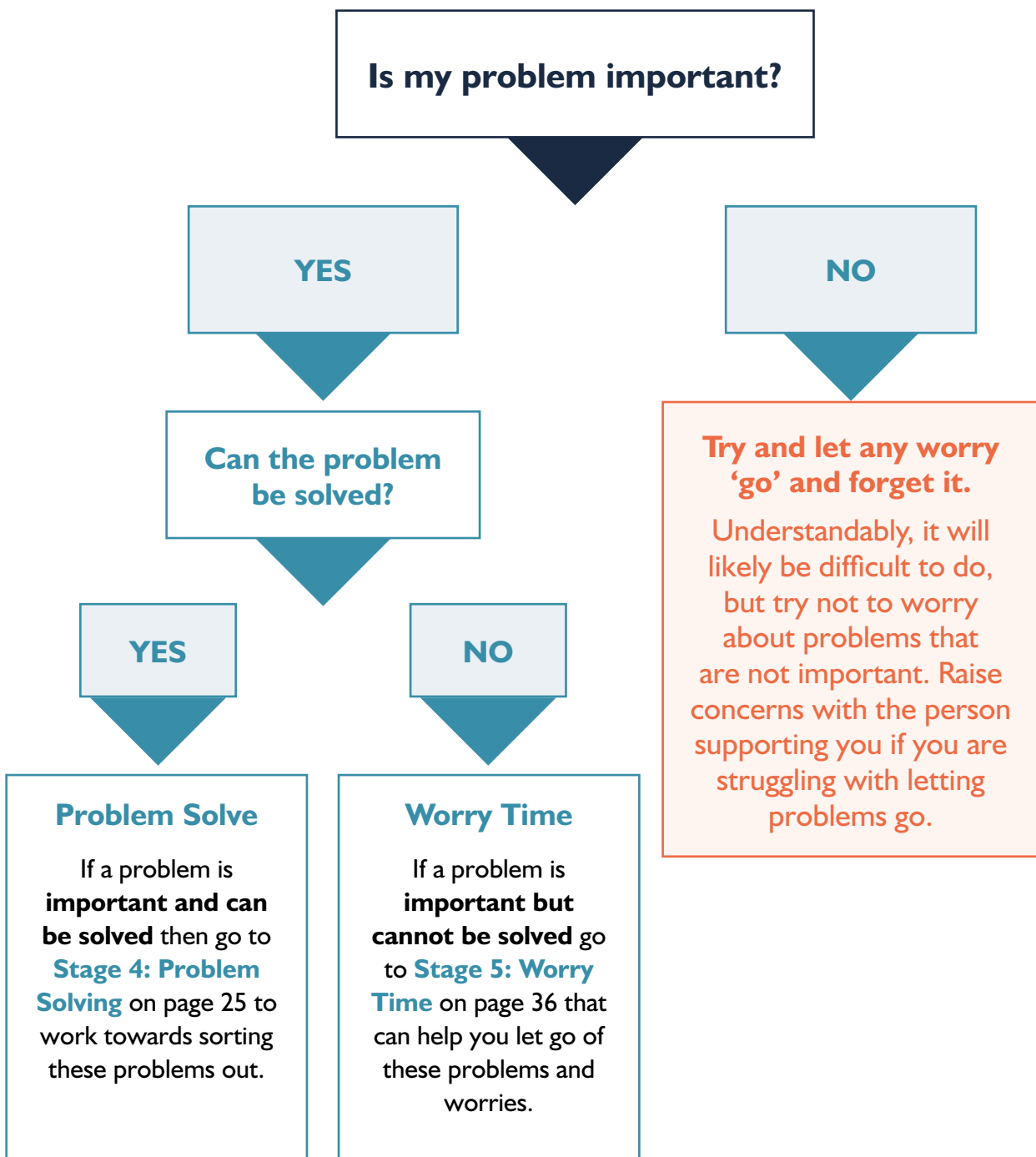


My types of problems worksheet

Not Important	Important and Can Be Solved	Important but Cannot Be Solved

Well Done

You've identified the different types of problem you currently experience. Now use the diagram below to decide how best to deal with your problems:



Stage 4:

Many problems we experience are solvable, but when you're feeling low or depressed it can seem like they are too difficult to solve. Following these 7 steps will provide you with a structured way to help you towards finding practical solutions to your problems.

Step 1	Identify the problem
Step 2	Identify potential solutions
Step 3	Analyse strengths and weaknesses
Step 4	Selecting a solution
Step 5	Planning the solution
Step 6	Trying out the solution
Step 7	Reviewing how it went

Step 1: Identify the problem

The first step is to select a problem you listed under **Important and can be solved** from the **Types of problems worksheet**. Remember, it's your choice which problem to begin to work on. If you find this difficult however, the person supporting you will be able to help. Now write the problem down on your **My problem solving record worksheet** on page 26.

Step 2: Identify potential solutions

Identify as many potential solutions as possible to the problem identified in **Step 1** and write them down on your **Problem solving record worksheet**. Don't worry if the solution seems ridiculous – it's important not to reject anything too early. When you've completed **Step 1 and 2** and written these into your **My problem solving record worksheet**, move onto **Step 3** on page 26.



My problem solving record worksheet

Step 1: Identify an important problem that can be solved

What is the problem you'd like to try and solve?

Step 2: Identify potential solutions

What are the potential solutions?

Step 3: Strengths and weaknesses

Use your **My strengths and weaknesses worksheet** on page 28 to write these down for each solution considered

Step 4: Selecting a solution

What solution am I going to try out?

Step 5: Planning the solution

What steps will I follow to apply my solution? e.g., What, When, With Whom, Where?
What resources do I need? What steps do I need to follow?

Step 6: Trying out the solution

Use your **Putting my plan into action worksheet** on page 31 to keep a diary of what you did

Step 7: Reviewing how it went

Use your **Putting my plan into action worksheet** on page 31 to review how well your solution worked

Step 3: Analyse strengths and weaknesses

Next, use the **My strengths and weaknesses worksheet** on the following page to write down the strengths and weaknesses for all of the potential solutions identified in Step 2. This allows you to think about the main advantages and disadvantages for each solution.

Think about the following:

- ▶ Is the solution likely to work?
- ▶ Are you going to be able to try the solution?
- ▶ Do you have everything you need to try the solution?
- ▶ Could the solution cause you even more problems?

In the final column of the **Strengths and weaknesses worksheet** put a **Yes** for any solutions you'd like to try out, **No** to those solutions you feel you can reject or **Maybe** for solutions you may want to think about more. The person supporting you or a trusted friend or family member may be able to help you think about these.





My strengths and weaknesses worksheet

My problem – write the problem that can be solved here:

**What are the strengths and weaknesses of each solution?
Write these below:**

Solution	Strengths	Weaknesses	Choice (Yes/No/ Maybe)

Step 4: Selecting a solution

Select a **Solution** you'd like to try out as identified on your **My strengths and weaknesses worksheet**. When selecting a **Solution** think carefully about whether you have the resources to try it out as it may

cause further problems if not. When you've selected a **Solution** write this into Step 4 of your **Problem solving record worksheet** on page 26.

Step 5: Planning the solution

Solutions to problems often require careful **Planning**. To make a solution more achievable it can be helpful to think about the steps you'll need to take and any resources identified that may be needed. For example, this may include resources such as time, support, finance, equipment etc. Ensure all steps are specific, linked and realistic. To make the steps more specific it can be helpful to think about the "**4 Ws**":

▶ **WHAT** are you doing? For example, phoning my electric company

▶ **WHERE** are you going to do it?
For example, in my kitchen

▶ **WHEN** are you going to do it?
For example, on Wednesday at 3pm

▶ **WHO** will you be with? For example, on my own

Now go back to your **Problem solving record worksheet** to write your plan in the space for **Step 5: Planning the solution**.

Step 6: Trying out the solution

Next, put your plan into action by trying out the solution! It's really important to write down what you did when trying out your solution and it's best to do this as soon as possible after doing it. You can use your **Putting my plan into action worksheet** on page 31 to record this.

People sometimes find it helpful to have this workbook with them if the solution requires them to be out of the house or to use another way of recording/writing it down, such as using notebook or your mobile phone. This will help you write down exactly what you did soon after doing it, rather than relying on your memory.

Step 7: How it went

Finally, use your **Putting my plan into action worksheet** to write down **Reviewing how it went**. This will help you to review how well your solution worked. Some solutions may have worked, some may have worked a little and some may not have worked at all. If your plan didn't work this can be very frustrating. However, try to remember that some problems are very difficult and may need more than one plan to solve. If the solution has worked, you may want to think about generating new ones based on what you learnt here, to apply to other problems.

If the solution didn't help solve the problem, then go back to **Step 4** on your **Problem solving record workbook** and consider a new solution to try.

However remember, regardless of whether the solution worked or not, every time you try out a solution to a problem you are learning, learning about the types of things that work and those that don't. All this information is good as it may help you generate further solutions that may work in future.

You can see Tom's example **Problem solving record worksheet** on page 33.

IMPORTANT

Sometimes, you may find that you have identified problems that seem too big or overwhelming to solve. This is normal and to be expected, especially if they are problems you've been looking to solve for some time.

One way of helping with problems that seem too big or overwhelming is to look at *breaking them down*.

For example, you may be experiencing difficulties paying the mortgage. When breaking down a difficulty with finance, think about the different components such as how much debt you have, what your income and what your expenditure is. Sometimes with specialist problems such as this it is also worth thinking if there are others who can help. For example, professionals with this specific type of knowledge or organisations and charities in the community that may be set up to help.

If you find yourself struggling with *breaking your problems down* then speak to the person supporting you who may be able to help.



Putting my plan into action worksheet

Step 6: Trying out the solution

What exactly did I do?

Step 7: Reviewing how it went

How successful was the solution? What went well? What didn't go to plan?

Remember

Keeping records of your Problem solving is essential for you and anyone supporting you review your progress and help you overcome any difficulties using the workbook.

Also, sometimes when a solution doesn't solve the problem, there may be parts of the solution that did work or you found helpful. Keeping records using the worksheets provided will help you improve your **Problem solving** skills for the future.

Checking-in

As you work through your problems, it's important to cross off problems you've solved or those that no longer bother you, from your **My types of problems worksheet. Remember some problems may take longer to solve than others and therefore stay on the **My types of problems worksheet** for longer. At the end of the programme you'll be able to see how you have managed to tackle various problems and difficulties in your life.**



Toms problem solving record

Step 1: Identify an important problem that can be solved

What is the problem you'd like to try and solve?

I don't know how to write a CV.

Step 2: Identify potential solutions

What are the potential solutions?

- 1. Just try and write one!*
 - 2. Find an organisation that can help with writing my CV.*
 - 3. Speak to a friend who works in my area to get some ideas about how to write a CV.*
 - 4. Use a CV template from a job advice website.*
 - 5. Ask my wife to write my CV for me.*
-

Step 3: Strengths and weaknesses

Use your **Strengths and weaknesses worksheet** on page 28 to write these down for each solution considered

Step 4: Selecting a solution

What solution am I going to try out?

Find an organisation that can help with writing my CV.

Step 5: Planning the solution

What steps will I follow to apply my solution? e.g., What, When, With Whom, Where?
What resources do I need? What steps do I need to follow?

- 1. Set aside time to use the computer and work out some terms I can use to help me search the internet and help me find a suitable organisation.*
 - 2. Book an appointment with the organisation.*
 - 3. Write down some questions I would like to ask the organisation.*
 - 4. Write down the jobs and roles I've held.*
 - 5. Ask my wife to help me as I'm worried about speaking with people over the phone.*
-

Step 6: Trying out the solution

Use your **Putting my plan into action worksheet** on page 31 to keep a diary of what you did

Step 7: Reviewing how it went

Use your **Putting my plan into action worksheet** on page 31 to review how well your solution worked

Toms's strengths and weaknesses worksheet

My problem

I don't know how to write a CV.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of each solution?

Write these below:

Solution	Strengths	Weaknesses	Choice (Yes/No/Maybe)
Just try and write one.	I need to do this so maybe I should just try, I might surprise myself.	I've tried this before and just felt lost. I really need some guidance.	No
Find an organisation that can help with writing my CV.	A professional organisation will know what to do and what employers might be looking for. They should give sensible advice.	I'm scared about sounding stupid, asking the wrong questions and not knowing what to say about the jobs I've held.	Yes
Speak to a friend who works in my area to get some ideas about how to write a CV.	They will know exactly how to write the roles and responsibilities I've held. They might have a CV I can look at to help guide me.	I'll sound stupid not knowing how to write a CV.	Yes
Use a CV template from a job advice website.	A template will show me exactly what sort of things I should put in a CV.	I know what a CV should look like, this won't help me explain my roles really.	No
Ask my wife to write a CV for me.	My wife is really good at this sort of thing. She knows what I used to do in my old job. I won't have to talk to a stranger or sound stupid.	My wife has already lost a lot of patience with me and we might have another argument. I do need to do more for myself.	Maybe

Tom's putting my plan into action worksheet

Step 6: Trying out the solution

What exactly did I do?

I spoke to my wife Claire about wanting to get my CV in order. She was really supportive and we sat down and wrote a list of search terms to find an organisation on the internet, and jotted down some responsibilities I held in my old job. She said she was happy to help this time, as getting a job soon is important.

When the children had gone to bed we searched for some organisations and the 'National Careers Service' looked really helpful. They had a lot of information online that I found quite overwhelming but I also saw that they provided discussion over the phone to help you write your CV and decided this looked like a good option. Advisers were actually available on the phone until 10pm at night so I popped one a call and booked in a time for the interview.

Step 7: Reviewing how it went

How successful was the solution? What went well? What didn't go to plan? If things didn't go to plan has anything been learnt that may inform another solution?

I think it went really well. I felt much more comfortable calling them knowing that I had all the questions I wanted to ask written down in advance and having Claire there to support me. It's great I've got an appointment booked with them over the phone next week and I hope that this is the first step towards helping me find a new job. I will need to ensure I stand on my own two feet next time.

Stage 5:

Worry Time

Even when problems can't be solved, it can be difficult not to worry about them. Worry is something everyone experiences on a day-to-day basis. However sometimes worrying becomes a problem in itself, and gets in the way of us doing other things. Often problems that can't be solved are hypothetical worries about something that might happen in the future such as *“What if my partner leaves me?”* or *“What if there's an accident on the motorway and I'm late for work?”*.

Although it's important to try and **“Let Go”** of these hypothetical worries this can be easier said than done! One solution some people find helps them **“Let Go”** of their hypothetical worries is to schedule something called **worry time**. **Worry time** allows you to **plan time to worry about your hypothetical worries**, but at a specific time so they don't take over your life, allowing you to stay more in control. Try following the **3 steps** described below to help you with this type of worry.

However, it's important to remember that you may worry about a problem that has a practical solution. If you find yourself worrying about a problem that something can be done about, it's important to go back through the **Stage 4: Problem solving** and the **7 Steps to problem solving** as discussed earlier, using the worksheets to help you do this.

Step 1: Schedule worry time

Think about a period of time each day you can set aside to allow yourself to worry about your hypothetical worries. Often

people report finding that 20 minutes is enough, although you will be the best judge of the amount of time **you need to schedule your worry time** when you get started. Having a scheduled worry time can help you stop your hypothetical worries from impacting too much on other things you are doing during the rest of your day, putting you **back in control**. You know you have this protected time where you can worry and do nothing else. Once you have decided on a suitable time for you, write this on your **My worry time worksheet**.

Top tips for scheduling worry time

Let others know not to disturb you

Find somewhere quiet and free from other distractions

Turn your phone off

Don't schedule worry time too close to your bed time

Plan your worry time for the week in advance



My worry time worksheet

Worry time

My scheduled worry time is:

My hypothetical worries

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

Step 2: Writing your worries down

Scheduling **worry time** won't necessarily stop worries from popping into your head during the day. However, if they do, write them down, then set them aside until your scheduled **worry time** using your **Worry time worksheet**. You're still taking these worries seriously as you'll be going back to them during your scheduled worried time. However, writing them down and putting them aside can help reduce their impact on what you are doing there and then.

Once you've written the worry down, try to **re-focus** again on whatever you were

doing at the time. Sometimes however, if you are struggling to **re-focus** it may help to do something different to what you were doing before. Remember, you have set aside worry time later so "try to let the worry go" for now. You're not ignoring it, just delaying it until **worry time** when you can give it your full attention!

It can be normal to be quite sceptical of using **worry time** at first. However, it has been shown to be really helpful for many people and can help put you in control of your worries.

Top tips for re-focusing

Remember you have your scheduled worry time later.

Try and pay attention to the present. For example, the task you were doing when the worry came into your mind.

If you find this difficult concentrate on the task you were doing by using your senses. For example, if you are cooking, focus on the smell of the food, or the sound of the food cooking.

If re-engaging in the task you were doing is too difficult, try engaging in a different task.

IMPORTANT

The worries that you write down during the day might not just be hypothetical worries.

They might be worries that have a practical solution – so *problems that can be solved*. However, when you come to your scheduled **worry time** later you will go through the worries you have written down, and if they are problems that have a practical solution you can go back through the **Stage 4: Problem solving** and the **7 Steps to problem solving** as discussed earlier, using the worksheets to help you do this.

Step 3: Your worry time

During your scheduled worry time read through the worries you've written down over the day on your **My worry time worksheet**. Then use your **worry time** to worry about these worries.

Sometimes, later in the day you may find some of the worries you wrote down are no longer a worry for you, or they may have resolved themselves. If this is the case put a line through them.

If however you find the worries you've written down do have a practical solution add the problem to your **My types of problems worksheet** in the **Important and can be solved** column. You can then use your **My problem solving record**

worksheet to solve this problem if you decide you want to work through it, using what you have learnt before to begin to solve new problems.

Using **worry time** effectively does take time and practice. However, over time you may find this a useful technique to reduce the impact of your worries on a day-to-day basis. As you begin to use **worry time** more often you may find yourself being able to reduce the amount of time you schedule each day for worry time. Over time you may not need **worry time** at all, but this is something you should look to work towards over time.



Staying well

Hopefully over the last few weeks you've started to see an improvement in your mood and been able to start to find practical solutions to your problems and difficulties.

To *stay well* in the future it's important to try and make the techniques you've learnt in this workbook part of your daily life.

As such it can be really helpful to think about things that have been particularly helpful to you when working through the workbook.

What signs and symptom may indicate you're experiencing low mood or depression?

At the beginning of the workbook you wrote down the physical feelings,

emotions, thoughts and behaviours you were experiencing that indicated you were feeling low or depressed. These can serve as **warning signs** in the future that you're experiencing low mood again. To make you aware of your **warning signs** it can therefore be helpful to fill out a **My warning signs worksheet**. So have a look back at the **My vicious cycle worksheet** you filled in at beginning of the workbook to identify your warning signs then use this to fill in the **My warning signs worksheet** below.

My warning signs worksheet



My physical feelings

My thoughts

My emotions

My behaviours

Staying well toolkit

Next, it can be helpful to write down activities, strategies or techniques you've found helpful whilst using the workbook, on the My staying well toolkit below. You can refer back to your Staying well toolkit if you find yourself struggling with your low mood or depression in the future.

Remember; feeling stressed, low, down, fed-up, sad or tired, for a short amount of time is perfectly normal. However, if you experience these difficulties for a while, and it begins to have an impact on how you live your life every day, it may be important to do something about it again.

The techniques in this workbook worked last time and they can do so again!

My staying well toolkit worksheet



What activities helped me feel better?

What skills have I learnt working through this workbook?

What helped me put these activities, skills and techniques into practice?

Checking-in

As you finish the workbook it can be helpful to find a regular time to check in and see how you're doing.

You may find this regular **check-in** useful to continue for a number of weeks after finishing the workbook to help ensure you're keeping up with the activities that helped you feel better and continuing to make them a part of your daily life.

Some people find having a **weekly check-in** helpful initially – especially if you've had weekly support sessions whilst using the workbook. However, over time, some people find they can reduce the frequency of their check-ins. Once again, you are in control and are the best person to know what you find most helpful.

You can use your **My checking-in worksheet** over the coming weeks or months.

Making a **written commitment** to use your **checking-in worksheet** at a regular time over the coming weeks can also be helpful and make it more likely that you will regularly check-in with yourself over the coming weeks and months. You can use the space below to make this **written commitment**:



My written commitment to check-in with myself:

I will check-in with myself every
over the next weeks



My checking-in worksheet

Am I experiencing any thoughts similar to those I had when I started this workbook?

Am I experiencing any emotions similar to those I had when I started this workbook?

Am I experiencing any physical feelings similar to those I had when I started this workbook?

Have I started doing more or less of any behaviours that might indicate I am experiencing difficulties?

What could I do to help me start overcoming my difficulties so I can manage again?

Authors

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